

**SUBVERTING RAPE CULTURE: A STUDY  
OF #METOO IN REBECCA SOLNIT'S AND  
ROXANE GAY'S WORKS**

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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES**

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**Subverting Rape Culture: A Study of #*MeToo* in Rebecca  
Solnit's and Roxane Gay's Works**

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Subverting Rape Culture: A Study of #MeToo in Rebecca Solnit's and Roxane Gay's Works** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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## ABSTRACT

### **Title: Subverting Rape Culture: A Study of #MeToo in Rebecca Solnit's and Roxane Gay's Works**

The current phenomenological research rationalizes Feminism's struggle to subvert rape culture after the re-emergence of the voyeuristic Young Adult stories in the twenty-first century's American literature and the popularity of #MeToo. The American women's role in subverting sexual violence, as their refusal to accept being inherently rapeable and being raped by White men, has been critically evaluated in the memoirs of Rebecca Solnit and Roxane Gay. For this purpose, Erin Wunker's and Sara Ahmed's intersectional concepts about *Feminist Killjoys' Willfulness* have been used to underpin the argument, employing Belsey's and Mary Evan's auto/biographical textual method. Solnit and Gay share their lived experiences of sexual violence, and the transition in their choices of dresses and body-size in the American rape culture, with the problematic 'I', 'We' and 'Me' to end the toxic silence. In this manner, their sympathy towards the incapacitated rape victims, through the craftiness of #MeToo moment, transform their *willfulness* into a movement. The purpose of the research is to critically investigate the rape culture, problematic androcentric societal values, customs, and beliefs as supportive towards rape culture and the resultant feminist killjoy's snap while subverting rape culture and asserting women's credibility. Feminists' *willfulness* has been assessed and justified in the research as their effort to undermine androcentric peer support for offenders that garners gendered and sexual abuse. *Feminist killjoys'* defiance against the patriarchy- assisted sexual violence becomes more problematic when they share their personal stories on digital media with the global audience through #MeToo networking. It has been understood that by substantiating Wunker's guerilla tactics of refusal, Solnit's and Gay's tactics of armouring the body with fat, steel armour, gun, or pepper spray, wearing men's dresses, and digital means of synoptic surveillance and Dataveillance of #MeToo on digital media, provide women the ephemeral security, and effective evidence for testification to end self-blaming and normalize #MeToo. Supporting victims through feminist friendships on digital platforms, creates anti-race, anti-rape, and anti-gendered-crimes society to create space for all victims in America. The outcome of such activism becomes the joy-killing experience for patriarchy, making feminists the problematic *willful* body against the status-quo.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DARCO	Denial, Attack, Reverse Victim Offender
LFL	Living a Feminist Life ( <i>feminist killjoy</i> written in italic)
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Mentioned in DSM-IV)
Reviewed Works <i>Agenda</i>	Mardorossian's work <i>Reviewed Works: Rape on the Public</i>
SWERF	Sex Workers Exclusionary Radical Feminist
TERF	Trans women Exclusionary Radical Feminist
USA	United States of America
WoC	Women of Colour
W	Willful Subject ( <i>Willful</i> , <i>will</i> and <i>willfulness</i> are in italic)



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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Parents, the victims and survivors of assaults,  
and to the *Me Too*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Racism, sexism, genderism, and the resulting misogynoir have transformed the problem of being a woman in the West into a more poignant disposition of belonging to a hierarchical categories of White, Black, and coloured women (Ahmed; Chandra and Erlingsdóttir; Cahill; Collins; Crenshaw; Jackson, Bailey and Welles; Wunker). Despite being the hegemonic and racially superior race, White women are equivocally victimized by White men. The gendered, and sexual violence at work places, and other professional and recreational areas in the androcentric world has supported the rape culture in America. The discriminatory, and stereotypical behaviours against Black, and Brown women have worsened the representation of the Western women and brought it to the least level of humiliation and indignity because of the ongoing debates on their dresses or their body configuration. These categories of women are devised by the androcentric patriarchal authorities to create distance among women, belonging to different races because of which the understanding of the problem has become complicated. Erin Wunker describes the patriarchal culture as “a culture in which masculinity- in people and in things- is privileged as inherently foundational to other states of being” (Wunker 19). According to her, the enforcement of patriarchy comes from the “systems, institutions, and social interactions” (Wunker 19) that need to be made neutral. To lessen such systemic discrimination on the basis of dresses, body, colour, religion, race, class, and gender, first Kimberle Crenshaw and then Patricia Hill Collins<sup>i</sup> and others have explained intersectionality as an analytical tool to provide the better approach towards the complexity of the world and the discriminatory behaviours (Collins and Bilge 2). However, sexual violence is a more severe problem associated with misogynoir.

In the contemporary America, though women of different racial identities have written plethora of memoirs to narrate their experiences of rape and sexual violence, their auto/biographical non-fictional writings have brought forward the problematic patriarchal norms of women’s subjugation by White men and normalization of sexual violence and rape assaults, which were considered earlier as *taboo* topics to be

discussed in public. Nevertheless, women have become *willful subjects* to resist sexual violence by raising their voices from different intersectional backgrounds to subvert rape culture by writing their memoirs for publication, and uploading on internet websites to approach the wider global audiences. These non-fictional memoirs include, Chanel Miller's *Know My Name*, Laurie Helsle's *Speak*, and *Shout*, Gloria F. Eveleigh's *One Small Word*, Rachel Finch's *A Sparrow Stirs its Wings*, Elizabeth Shane's *Silhouette of a Songbird*, Danielle Downey's *It's No Secret*, and many others. Solnit's and Gay's memoirs have taken the digital space as the virtual war fought against rape assaults, and street harassment that has become the source of instant global networking, spreading the hashtag moments in seconds. Because of such global activism, feminists have become *willful killjoys* who demand change in the pedagogical practices by teaching refusal to girls and respect and support for victims and survivors to boys also. The epidemic of assaults has been subsided because of such *willfulness* and digitized activism of Radical feminists through *#MeToo* networking, but not ended yet. In such chaotic era, the current research has been endeavoured to focus on the literary support, and normalization of *#MeToo* in memoir writings by the American women who faced sexual violence, and rape assaults. To subvert the violence, they need refusal as a strong rebuttal to the White men's stereotypical supremacist nuances of presenting women as the problem.

The current study is designed to incorporate an intersectional cultural framework to deal with the phenomenological problem of sexual violence, and normalized rape culture in America along with the tangential involvement of race, body and gender norms represented in American literature. This study of *#MeToo* has provided a way forward in plenty of previous literary researches on rape assaults, and sexual violence, which have been conducted to make sense of feminists' struggle, and their plight, as mentioned in fictional and non-fictional works by using digital space in collaboration with the written accounts. Considering literature as the connection between the soul, body, and the mind of a human being to make sense of the surrounding world, and the cultural practices, this research of *#MeToo* in the genre of memoir is an attempt to assign the lived experience of sexual violence in American literature an uncontended paradigmatic position. Concentrating on the impact of the social and personal life experiences on the writers' literary contributions, the selected American memoirs of the second decade of the twenty-first century have brought

forward the hidden, yet, normalized violence in the American society and its impact on the women's normal life routines, as also contended by Ann J. Cahill in *Rethinking Rape*.

In the current study, I have examined American rape culture's problematic standing in threatening women's existence at any public or private space. I have studied how the rape assaults and the constant harassment change women's living style, and affect the body configuration. For that matter, I have focused on the change in the dress preferences of Solnit and Gay to counter rape assault, which makes the problem more of a philosophical existence of a body due to the association of rape with the body and false accusation of wearing inappropriate dresses. Focusing on the significance of the body as the site of aggression, transgression, and willfulness against the status quo, I have highlighted that the American White and Black women's dress choices are not the cause of the prevalent sexual violence. The status quo that promotes White supremacy and male-dominant society is responsible for garnering women-hatred and associated sexual offenses.

My argument would provide the epistemic standing of *#MeToo* as the digital space for the victims, and survivors of sexual violence to assert their agency, through which they stand in the queue of the feminist killjoys, affirmed through memoir writing by Solnit and Gay. I have inculcated synoptic surveillance, and Dataveillance as the possible guerilla tactics of *#MeToo* networking, also suggested by Erin Wunker in her *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy*, along with the precautionary measures of keeping gun, pepper spray, and learning karate as advanced tactics of *willful* killjoys. These passive tactics are effective despite having the critical ephemeral role in ending rape culture. I have found Gay's, and Solnit's memoirs as the supportive stance for women of all races and religions to use refusal as the tactic on digital space. Both Gay, and Solnit sympathize with all the victims of sexual assaults in their activism beyond rhetorical politics of TERF or SWERF. However, the main focus of the study would be Solnit's and Gay's personal experiences of sexual violence as the precursor to initiate support for *#MeToo*, and the activism to undermine rape culture. Pertaining to the limitation of the study, I have *studied #MeToo* as American women's joy-killing *willfulness* in spreading awareness among young girls and boys.

Keeping in mind the digitized global spreading of *#MeToo* as the representative of White women only, sufferings of Black American women have been highlighted as

the constant sore spot as presented in American literature. Because of the painful memories of rape assaults or harassment, the victims' self-image changes to the 'tainted' self. Despite the predominant digital advancement, and activism in the twenty-first century, the patriarchal system ingrained in America has transformed human beings into annexed objects in the unreversed hierarchy of patriarchal culture, which is also seethed through the literature. The superiority of White men is still prevalent in the digital age. Due to such gendered, and sexist hierarchies in the androcentric world, women's empowerment has been restrained. They have to put more effort to vindicate their right to own self-respect, and resist the domestic, and sexual violence prevalent in the society as a consequence of economic pressures, and existential crises. Along with the gendered difference, the racial discrimination comes in tandem to build another layer of oppression for Black, and coloured women. In the American literature, these themes are the main concern in women's writings, especially in the paradigm of feminism, which highlight the problem of partial autonomy given to women.

I have argued in the current research using Ahmed's and Wunker's lens in my personal capacity of rationalizing feminist killjoys' activism that these defiant American feminists who are supporting *#MeToo*, are the resistive agents of *willfulness* in the American rape culture. They highlight the problematic spot of sexual violence and threat to their bodies irrespective of their race, gender identity, and colour. The purpose of my focus on American rape culture, with the positionality in the Eastern part of the global world as a Kashmiri Pakistani woman, is to highlight the supreme neo-imperial power's helplessness in resolving the critical problem of American women's humiliation and indignity. It becomes the basis of nonexistence of other Third world's occupied, tortured, and raped women where *#MeToo* is out of their reach due to media restrictions. Even Solnit has ignored their plight as the most oppressed ones in *Men Explain Things to Me*, because of her focus on the immediate misogynist surrounding in her essay collections and non-availability of such incident to quote due to the silencing of the victims. It rationalizes not only the spatial and temporal difference of the existence of the phenomenon between the first and the third world, but also the hierarchy of position in the problem, hence, imposing the racial, as well as geographical segregation despite all efforts. Paradoxically, the intersectional approach provides the optimistic view of subversion of rape culture in the third world as a part of the gradual process. To maintain the objectivity of the research in presenting the White Rebecca

Solnit, and the Black Roxane Gay in harmony to undermine the problem, intersectional approach devised by Sara Ahmed, and Erin Wunker have been employed for neutrality.

In the current study of *#MeToo*, I have not incorporated the real time social media posts with the hashtag because of the qualitative interpretive study's philosophical nature. On Facebook, the victims and vulnerable women share their personal anecdotes in private groups, which are free from any influence of White or other men and not available publicly. The basic purpose of writing memoirs is to open the debate on the real life hidden, and underlying problematic rape culture that is a part of the same movement to write the story without any foreign androcentric influence. The theorists Sara Ahmed, and Erin Wunker have given the references of these stories shared on social media with *#BeenRapedNeverReported* in their theoretical works (Wunker, *Feminist Killjoy* 89-92; 126).

The coinage of my research's title with *MeToo* represents my quest to examine the trend after 2010 to create a link between the memoirs, and the digital lives of the contemporary American feminists as the contemporary hashtag activism. The inception of the hashtag trend in Pakistan, which started after a renowned artist Meesha Shafi's harassment case, opened the debate on the unthinkable topic in 2018 but faced backlash because of its support for the controversial celebrities. Later on, the silencing tactic of patriarchal system also faced criticism, and questioning regarding the dignity of women. The critical conservative Muslim society of Pakistan has not accepted the trend on social media because of the defamation, and unethical debates on the topic, which increases victim's plight. However, the opportunity of studying literature provided me the leverage to research in the field, especially in the Covid-19 pandemic days, to examine the severity of the problem, and women's debilitated position because of their dress choices. My inspiration was flamed after the most hyped Motorway rape case of a French-Pakistani woman that occurred in September, 2020 and later the exposition of a White woman Brittany Higgins' rape case in Australia.

The rape epidemic is continued all over the world in parallel to the Covid-19 pandemic. The emergence of the published memoirs on rape assaults, and *#MeToo* in the mainstream American literary circle, increased my interest in American memoirs. Because of these *#MeToo* memoirs, I have conceptualized my research as the study of *#MeToo*. Where many of the people are against such trends on digital media to avoid further defamation of the victims, the constant debates have also been sparked on these

problematic hashtag moments, and movements. These trends have not only enlightened people in general to think about the severity of rape cases, but also provide a voice to the victims in particular to courageously speak against the snares, and nexus of injustice. Moreover, the White men have also become conscious of American women's increased agency to counter such attacks.

Previously, fewer people have incorporated the hashtag trends in their literary researches, including Brownlow and Amanda Spallacci, on fictional, and non-fictional American works. I started my quest while reading Tehmina Durrani's fictional novel *Blasphemy*, written in 1998, that may be taken as the first of its kind to disclose any such awareness movement against the status quo in Pakistani context. *Blasphemy* is the novel that has given birth to conscious raising among the people about rape, and sexual violence. It focuses on the interval of a pre-planned secret rendezvous between Heer, and her agential power to reveal the sin of sexual violence, and planned rapes hidden in the garb of piety after the arrival of a White woman and the death of the saintly character. The conservative Muslim patriarchal society banishes Heer like *Scarlet Letter's* Hester to limit her power and stop her from the so-called sacrilegious activism, because of which the conceptualization of *#MeToo* remains incomplete. The similar theme emerged in Toni Morrison's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, and then its sequel in 2019 with the title *The Testaments*. Pertaining to the conceptualization, and contextualization of *#MeToo*, I have focused on American memoirs with my supervisor's advice to study *#MeToo*, focusing on its birth place America. Another reason for studying *#MeToo* is the court decision of punishing the Hollywood director Harvey Weinstein as a rapist proved in multiple rape and sexual violence felonies or an American comedian Aziz Ansari's case as the sex-offender (Nicholls 18, 27,32), which came to limelight after 2017. The emergence of rape stories, written by many of the American women authors, highlights the significance of *#MeToo* and the American fictional works to support the voice against the problem. Such fictional works, including *Asking for It* by Louise O' Neill, *An Untamed State* by Roxane Gay, *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett and *What Red Was* by Rosie Price, elaborate the impact of rape on the mental health of the victims with all its toxicity.

Considering *#MeToo* as a connection among American women to support each other amidst all blames of racial discrimination, and backlash faced for fabricated rape stories, the research is based on memoirs as the qualitative, and phenomenological



study of #MeToo. Among the writers who have taken it as an opportunity to refute the conspiracy theories, and highlight their original suffering, Rebecca Solnit's *Recollections of My Nonexistence*, and Roxane Gay's *Hunger* have come forward as their activism. These writers have transformed themselves into *Willful Feminist Killjoys* by hiding their femininity behind the male garbs to debunk the myth of seductive dress and women's sexuality as the problem. Because of their problematic activism against the status quo with the self-reflective 'I' and 'We', they have changed their #MeToo moment into a *feminist killjoys' willful* movement.

### **1.1 Rape Culture, American Women's Writings, and Joy-Killing Willfulness**

Owing to the term 'rape culture' that was first used in the 1974 book *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* (Mendes, Ringrose and Keller 6), Erin Wunker has quoted Emilie Buchwald's definition of rape culture as a combination,

*[A] complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm... In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable (Wunker 54; Italics by Wunker).*

Conjunctive to this, Tracey Nicholls has described rape culture as catcalling, harassment, and verbal abuse directed towards pedestrian women. She mentions, if the abusive comments from the howling strange man makes a woman conscious about her exposed legs then it hints towards the rape culture (Nicholls 27). She describes that the daily practice of "getting-ready-to-leave-the-house routine involves standing in front of a full-length mirror and assessing your clothing choices with the question 'pedestrian or prostitute?' in mind" (Nicholls 27) is the major sign that the rape culture has entrapped women. According to Wunker, the White men as the sadist persons punish the normal women to counter their own strangeness (Nicholls 62). Such *willful* force of White men creates the difference that disturbs the normal society by bringing in heteropatriarchy.

After understanding the difference, and sadism prevailing in the society, the feminist resistance against rape assaults started in the form of movements on social media in 2006 as *#MeToo*, and *#TimesUp* (Brownlow). *Me Too* as a slogan of solidarity was first used by a Black woman Tarana Burke, and then used by Alyssa Milano (Edwards et al. (eds.); Leung and Williams 349; Keller et al.; Jackson, Bailey and Welles; Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 1; 29; C. Mardorossian 144-6) in 2007, against the rape culture in the American society. This *Me Too* slogan led to the emergence of *#MeToo* on social media, and similar themes in the literary genre of memoirs as the American women's journey of transformation from objectified, and silenced women to *willful subjects*.

Here, I have taken the concept of *willful women* as described by Sara Ahmed in the context of victims and survivors of harassment and rape assaults. Whereby, the victims and survivors are also categorized as those who remain passive; and those who *willfully* take courageous steps respectively. These *willful* women, mentioned later, have learned how to end the compliance towards the perpetrators and speak against them as a step of refusal to undermine sexual violence. The study has brought forward the critical research, and works on women's writings to highlight the problematic normalization of rape culture. In academia, women have raised their voices through writing memoirs and other fictional and non-fictional works to support the relevant digital movement *#MeToo*.

### **1.1.1 Memoir Writing and *Feminist Killjoys'* Struggle**

Memoir as a significant non-fictional genre in literary works, deals with the life-writing process. Although men have taken lead in all writing forms, memoirs have emerged as women's specific expertise of literary writings and the source of cultural articulation of their experiences. Helen M. Buss' description of memoir as a marginalized genre due to its flexibility in style makes it significant to serve as the historical resource in between history, and literature (H. M. Buss 2). Memoirs emerged to link the private, and personal to the public, and political discourse as feminists' representative literary form (H. M. Buss 2). Providing them a platform to designate these vernacular histories of their lives as the reclamation of their self as sinned against than 'sinning' (H. M. Buss 12), is itself an act of creating a hierarchical position in writings. Buss defines memoir as "a discursive practice situated on the borderline of genres, interfacing the discourses of history, autobiography, and prose fiction,

negotiating uneasy, shifting human subjectivities” (H. M. Buss 34; Khan). Memoir may also be described in Hart’s words as ‘the autobiography of survival’ (H. M. Buss 34) and the force to make us secure to confirm our survival and endurance of the traumatic experience.

Hence, the women’s literary works are the only source of justification for their defiant role in the cultural prospects of any event or happening. Consequently, these works provide women a platform to defend their position, and highlight the lopsided representation of women in literary works written by men. These memoirs are also the source of making the world cognizant of the looming threat of harassment, and rape as a tool to subjugate women. While highlighting the political nature of the problematic cultural aspects of sexual violence and rape assaults, these memoirs undermine the debates targeting women’s clothing and dress choices as responsible for their rape. The main purpose of the current research is to examine *#MeToo* as the subverting force against rape culture and this *willful* reaction of digital feminists and feminist writers as the problem for the sexually perverted and White supremacist patriarchal society. How the *willful feminists* kill the joy of the patriarchal agencies by adopting androcentric dresses and other tactics is the significant part of the study. Considering the main purpose of Feminism as ending sexual exploitation, and oppression as defined by ‘bell hooks’, the *willful feminists* have become killjoys for the patriarchal followers of set norms. In consequence of attaining such fraction of equity, and equality in all spheres, *#MeToo*, and *willfulness* of American women have been appeared as the conjoined problem for the androcentric world. Disjunctive to all activism, women’s survival and protection is the major challenge that needs to be addressed by acknowledging and researching the literary works of feminists.

### **1.1.2 Willful Digital Activism of Feminist Killjoys to Subvert Rape Culture**

The quality of *Willfulness* as a person’s determination to impose his or her personal choice (willfulness), brings forth the concept of defiance emerging in the personality of that particular human being. It becomes a refusal to accept the problem as normal. *Willfulness* is not a novel concept for its traces in human history. Previously speculated by Aquinas, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hume, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and many other philosophers as *Free Will*, it has now changed its connotation. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *willfulness* in the “positive sense of strong willed” is ‘both obsolete and rare’ (Ahmed, LFL 68). The negative senses of *willfulness* are deeply

entrenched in spreading the common perception of *willful acts* as unusual, non-compliant, and problematic. *Willfulness*, thus, has more of a feminist than a masculinist sense as expounded by Sara Ahmed (LFL 68). In the context of feminism, the joy-killing *willfulness* has become a problem in the patriarchal society, especially in the form of *#MeToo* digital activism.

The observance of *willfulness* or defiant nature in a human being, leads towards criminal offense that, either ignorantly or intentionally, counters the essential human nature by transgressing the limits. According to Stengel, *willfulness* is defined in many ways in the New York Legislative statutes. These definitions, as compiled by Stengel, are as follows,

Willful may or may not require an evil intent by an actor. Willful may mean that an actor simply intended to commit an act and voluntarily did so, a hybrid element composed of both simple, intentional mens rea and actus reus, i.e., a guilty act. Willful may be an intended act and knowledge that conduct was harmful and in violation of law generally or a specific statute, and therefore done with a specific intent to violate of a law. Willful may mean intentionally or purposely and offenses defined with the term may also require an evil intent (Stengel 782).

Marilyn Frye, as a radical feminist, has interpreted the adjective *willful* in the following words, “The willful creation of new meaning, new loci of meaning, and new ways of being, together, in the world” (Ahmed, W 134). Ahmed has also quoted Andrew M. Stengel’s thoughts on the matter, in which he describes *willfulness* as a ‘wild term’ in New York City (Ahmed 144). According to Stengel, *willfulness* as the willingness of committing a crime with the mental knowledge of it is considered as a crime (Stengel 784). Whereas, the innocent mind without the awareness of the crime is not liable to be termed as the criminal. The contextual meanings play a key role in deciding the nature of *willfulness*, especially about the culprit in the crimes including rape, murder, robbery etc. Such *willful* acts of the criminals and rapists, after their denial of the crime, create problem for the rape victims, and survivors, as also plotted in the mainstream literary writings. The rapist’s denial of the crime builds multiple oppressive layers. The victim tolerates the criticism in the form of victim-blaming or victim-shaming, which changes the status of the protagonist from a victim to the antagonist. To protect the integrity of their bodies, their dignity and self-respect, women have become *willful subjects* to

rationalize the defiant concept of *refusal* in the literary writings. They accept the representation of their joy-killing feminism as antagonistic to patriarchy. Such feminists are known as feminist killjoys. According to Wunker,

[A] task of the feminist killjoy is killing the slippery, hazy vagaries that surround discussions of both rape and rape culture. The killjoy's job is to interrupt the habitual flows of patriarchal discourse, of rape and rape culture. This act of interruption—of interruption as articulation—brings the spectre of gender-based and sexualized violence into focus, makes it harder to deny or justify. Naming that violence, articulating the conditions of its existence, and working to alter those conditions is the work of killing this so-called joy (Wunker 60).

In the current research, *willfulness* has been analysed as the most-needed act of *feminist killjoys* to subvert rape culture by taking *refusal* as their weapon of destruction to limit victimizer's power. Conceptualizing such *willfulness* as *#MeToo*, has the essence of bringing the offender to justice by undermining his self-defense or acquittal strategy. The study has demystified the American women's apparent nature, re-presented as emotionally weak and unable to protest against sexual violence in the fictional works like Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*.

In the current study, I have focused on the aspects of problematic *will*, and *willfulness* of American feminists as their resistance to sexual violence, and rape assaults to rationalize *#MeToo* in the selected non-fictional works. The significance of *#MeToo* is highlighted by the fact that the victims, and survivors have found a platform to experience their existence, and support each other to end self-blaming that has been given space in memoir writing. Previously, many researchers have examined rape assaults, sexual violence, and oppression in the American literature (Altrows; Charles; Fair; Gaskin; Schroot; Tigner etc.) and categorized the violence as racial, gendered, and sexual. Sexual violence as the cause of American feminists' *willfulness* to subvert rape culture is the main driving force, for which they have faced backlash. The writings are the main source of their resistance as a destabilizing project for the culturally normalized problem. Women writers' projects of enunciating such experiences, make the readers conscious of the factual problem that has become a part of culture and has been articulated in memoirs to call the authorities for action through the indirect medium of literary works.

In *#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, Bailey et. al (Eds.) expound that the trends globalized by *Twitter* and other social media sites have made it possible more quickly than mainstream traditional paper, and electronic media, to spread awareness, and create solutions for the problems. Digital media activism not only provides democratic platform for all victims, survivors, and activists to participate on equal grounds but also reduces the chances of marginalization by ensuring the inclusion of all women without any discrimination. *#MeToo*, as the powerful movement to register the victim's agency, has been globalized by the feminists to create space for the victims, and survivors of rape and sexual violence. It provides the virtual ears and hands to raise their voices against injustice and reveal the identities of the perpetrators, and violators. Moreover, the USA has become advanced in all fields with equal inclusion of all the genders and races, as expounded by the authorities. However, the discrimination, and racial segregation is still in practice, which has also been highlighted by Bailey, Jackson and Welles in their works and countered by the memoirists to spread awareness.

The current research hinges on feminists' effort to write about the prevailing rape culture by using the pronoun 'I' with the defiant feminist voice. Such gynocentric 'I' has become the main cause of Solnit's and Gay's *willfulness* and their *willful* acts as *Me Too*. In the time of digital activism, *Willful feminist killjoys'* refusal is the socio-political call to challenge the hetero-normative and femicidal patriarchal norms. The emphasis, in the study, is on the memoirs written to open the debate on the challenges faced by these American *feminist killjoys* for using *#MeTooism* as the counter tactic for rape epidemic. The realization of life in rape culture amid fear of harassment has grown to extreme limit where the acceptance, and acknowledgement by the American men is at the least level. Many of them have supported the movement *#MeToo* by starting the hashtag trend *#NotAllMen*, in line with Mardorossian's declaration that not all sexual intercourses can be categorized as rape acts. It has paradoxically provided leverage to the perpetrators for using the slogan of being a feminist man to gain legislative favour. Moreover, the same concept has been supported by Solnit in her works to highlight the importance of identifying the real perpetrators, and rapists through her essay collection *Men Explain Things to Me*. In the second decade of twenty-first century, misogyny has taken a new shape of backlashing *#MeToo* through the use of *#NotAllMen* as propaganda to continue women's oppression. Despite the passive attacks on feminism,

*#MeToo* has emerged as the required support system for women all over the world to craft the joy-killing feminism by supporting the slogan “The personal is political” (Jackson, Bailey and Welles)<sup>ii</sup>. The slogan was first coined by Carol Hanisch<sup>iii</sup>, which undeniably has revealed the androcentric systemic violence in the past decades. *#MeToo* has emerged as the agential power, and the muscular strength of American women to strive for much needed political support.

Literature as the main source of dissemination of cultural and moral values, has played a pivotal role in materializing the movement’s main purpose. This study endeavours to highlight the similar effort of Gay and Solnit to support *#MeToo*. They have incorporated their struggle as a war with the supremacist White men in their non-fictional memoirs as the significant part of American literature. Their writings are the main source to strengthen the courage of survivors by sharing their own personal accounts through the slogan *Me Too* (Italics in original) not as the rhetorical practice but the preemptive call for the collaborative *willful* body. Their collective effort at broader level makes the study significant in alleviating the discrimination at all levels. The purpose of bringing forth the literary research on such a ‘taboo’ topic is to counter the fictional works portraying women as inherently rapeable or morally corrupt. Such literary works, including Nabokov’s *Lolita*, or Edgar Allen Poe’s poetry as expounded by Solnit, have paved the path for women’s victimization and rapes in the past. In contrast, the selected non-fictional memoirs *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* and *Recollections of My Nonexistence* initiate the debate on body-shape, thinspiration and fatphobia; and its transformation through men’s clothes into body’s *willfulness* as the armour against the sexual violence.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Pertaining to the exposed American rape culture in memoirs as a constant threat for women’s agency onto their bodies, victim-blaming and blame-shifting to invalidate their credibility on the basis of seductive dress and previous sexual conduct, the *willful feminist killjoys* have disrupted the status quo and become defiant to subvert sexual violence by using *#MeToo* networking that has undermined the toxic authority and happiness of White men, and ultimately justified the problematic *#MeToo*.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The following objectives have been focused in the current study:

1. To investigate rape culture in the American society as the cause of feminists' resistance in the selected works.
2. To relate women's *willfulness* to the *#MeToo movement* in the selected works.
3. To examine *#MeTooism as feminist killjoys'* problematic *will* and *willfulness* in the selected works by using Ahmed and Wunker's theoretical underpinnings.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research is designed to bring forth the problem of women's defiance against societal norms because of the oppressive nature and systemic violence, which victimize them. Such disobedience in the part of women is categorized as their *willful* act to distort the notion of peace and harmony and defy the patriarchy, ultimately creating problems in the society. The following phenomenological research questions have been designed to examine the exclusivity of women's *will*, and *willfulness* as *#MeToo* to undermine rape culture:

- Q1. What are the main incidents in the selected authors' lives that highlight the adverse rape culture in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-first Century America?
- Q2. What kind of disobedience as *willfulness* does emerge in the selected works as the resistance of American women against rape culture?
- Q3. What kind of *willful* efforts of the selected authors highlight their recognition as *feminist killjoys* in accordance with the theoretical conceptualization of Ahmed and Wunker?
- Q4. In what ways does the *#MeToo* provide space to the *Feminist Killjoys* to subvert the prevalent rape culture in the selected works?
- Q5. How does these *Feminist Killjoys'* support for *#MeToo* become a problem for the American patriarchal system, as described in the selected works?

#### **1.5 Significance and Rationale of the Study**

The *willfulness* of the American women has become an area of increased interest in American literature, especially in the narratives focusing on rape assaults. It has also sought much attention because of the White women's increased understanding of the Black women's marginalization leading to friendship with Black feminists. The



sympathy for the victims transformed into activism, which Erin Wunker has normalized to counter the androcentric hetero-normative ‘hate’ politics against women. Wunker’s theoretical concepts have not been taken as the lens in previous studies. It provides ample space for the interdisciplinary research to devise philosophical, and literary understandings of the gynocentric sexual violence and problematic activism associated with *#MeToo*. Feminist killjoys, after understanding the misogynistic politicking, target the status quo, and the systemic inclusion of perpetrators that disturbs the happiness of the authorities. Roxane Gay and Rebecca Solnit, belonging to different races, have written their works to support the joy-killing feminists, and the *#MeToo* on the printed space. The conceptualization of critical intersectional theory of *Feminist killjoys’ willfulness* provides the philosophical, and phenomenological basis for the digital activism to deal with the androcentric sadism of rapists, and offenders. It has brought forward the underexplored aspect of problematic ‘willful subversion of rape culture’ by highlighting the unjustified criticism on dress choices of the victims, and their unruly bodies as the gap for the current study in Gay’s, and Solnit’s works as a part of decolonized anti-rape feminism in the collaborative struggle.

Following all the previous research in the past two decades, *willfulness* of American feminists in the current study has been examined as the resistive force of *#MeToo* towards sexual violence, and rape assaults. It rationalizes *#MeTooism* as the digitally incorporated muscular force to nullify self-doubting. It strengthens weak women’s *will* to assert their agency by owning the credibility *willfully*. The feminists’ radical literary writings in the twenty-first century have brought forward the significance of memoirs as literary part of the larger debate on *#MeToo* movement. The concept of women being ‘inherently rapeable’ prevailing in the American literature, as also described by Young in her research, led to women’s radical activism on social media. In the contemporary time period, majority of women’s writings are based on the ‘affects’ created by sexual violence, and rape assaults, on their normal lives. How this affect has forced them to change their sartorial preferences and made their body unruly are the aspects which create a novel aspect in the study of *#MeToo* for the researchers in social, cultural, and literary studies.

The rejection and subversion of the cultural problem by becoming a part of *#MeToo* movement, is an act of courage to include one’s own self in the list of victims, and survivors and then speak on behalf of them. Hence, in the current study, I have

examined the problems, and resistance faced by these *willful feminists* while revealing their personal secrets in public. Making the private ‘I’ as ‘We’ through anti-racist friendship, and then its transformation into the political ‘Me Too’ in bringing reform in the patriarchal society is considered as a *willful* activism. The purpose of such feminist writings is to destabilize the prevalent rape culture. Refusing the acceptance of sexual violence and raising voice on digital media platform, has become a killjoy for the oppressing forces. In the community of Western Feminists, this aspect of *willful Feminist Killjoys*’ subverting efforts as *#MeTooism*, is the unique idea of the research along with the suggestions of counter-surveillance, synoptic eye on the offenders, and Dataveillance to disturb the happiness of the rapists and sexual offenders, in relation to Sara Ahmed’s and Erin Wunker’s innovative concepts.

## **1.6 Selected Authors’ Significant Contributions in American Literature**

The following section is a brief overview of the fictional and non-fictional works written by the two significant American memoirists and essayists Rebecca Solnit, and Roxane Gay to acquaint the readers with their scholarly writings as the major contributions in American literature. The purpose is to highlight the plight of Black women in the racist American culture, and the struggle of a White woman to provide strength to the *willful* body of feminists to lessen down the discrimination and stereotypes.

### **1.6.1 Rebecca Solnit’s Scholarly Works in American Literature**

Rebecca Solnit is a White American writer, born to a Russian Jewish father and an Irish Catholic mother (Solnit 179). She is a historian, and an anti-racist activist who raises her voice against sexual violence. Her scholarly and journalistic writings on feminism, western and indigenous history, popular power, social change and insurrection, wandering and walking, hope and disaster, and other thematically significant aspects have transformed women’s traditional writing style. The works contributed by her in the American non-fictional literature include *Whose Story Is This?*, *Call Them By Their True Names*. She has also won the 2018 Kirkus Prize for Nonfiction *Call Them By Their True Names*. *Cinderella Liberator*, *Men Explain Things to Me*, *The Mother of All Questions*, and *Hope in the Dark* are some of Solnit’s significant works. Many among these works have received much acclaim because of her transcendental, and persuasive writing style. Her criticism on public, and political

life is received warmly because of just logics and daily life examples. She has also co-created a few works along with other authors to put her share in the feminist movement. Some of her major works are, *The City of Women map* that motivates women to assert their significant contributions related to histories, traditions, and cultures; *A trilogy of atlases of American cities*, *The Faraway Nearby*, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, and *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, which are the travelogues to present a woman's transcendental thinking and traveling skills. While *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (for which she received a Guggenheim, the National Book Critics Circle Award in criticism, and the Lannan Literary Award) has opened the debate in the literary world about the problematic male misogyny, and women's incapacitated choices.

Her explanation of strategic violence and systemic oppression faced by American women has proven to be the glass-breaking step in American political milieu. She has become a feminist by exposing American men's prejudiced and opinionated nature in *Men Explain Things to Me*. Her latest memoir, as her contribution in the women's writings to show solidarity against injustices and violence, is her *Recollections of My Nonexistence* in twenty-first century's America where she has put her share by writing about Black women and relating her own self to them to subside the racist sentiments and highlight the rape culture and the countering force of #MeToo, with all oppressive practices of White men.

### **1.6.2 Roxane Gay's Scholarly Contributions in American Literature**

Roxane Gay is a Black Christian Haitian-American author, a novelist and an essayist who also contributes in the well-known newspapers through her creative articles. She lives in Lafayette, Indiana, and sometimes Los Angeles (Roxane Gay). She has written the essay-collections *Bad Feminist*- a *New York Times* bestseller. In *Not that Bad*, she has described the systemic violence in the form of sexual assaults in America along with other victims' experiences, compiled in book form to navigate the gaze of the legislative authorities from mainstream equality slogans towards the sexual assaults, and harassment, encountered by Black American and Haitian women in daily life. *How to be Heard*, is another addition in Gay's many other non-fictional works.

The novel *An Untamed State*- a finalist for the Dayton Peace Prize; *World of Wakanda*, and the short story collections *Difficult Women* and *Ayiti* (Roxane Gay) are some other jewels on her credit. She is a contributing opinion writer to the *New York Times*. She has also written many essays and articles for *Time*, *McSweeney's*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, *The Rumpus*, *Bookforum*, and *Salon* (Roxane Gay). Her fiction has also been selected for *The Best American Short Stories 2012*, *The Best American Mystery Stories 2014*, and other anthologies. The selected memoir *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*- published in 2017, is the memoir of her resistance and development into a strong and *willful killjoy*, which is a non-fiction as compared to *An Untamed State*. It is the enunciation of a Haitian woman's experience of rape and sexual abuse. Her latest graphic novel *The Banks* is published in 2019 and revolves around the stories of women thieves who assert their agency. Moreover, her graphic novel published in 2020 which is *Sacrifice of Darkness* is also among the bestsellers. However, the interesting personal account of her life in her autobiographical *Hunger* presents the struggle, trauma, defiance, body-shaming, obesity politics, racism, cultural patriarchal norms, subjugation, and above all her courage to take challenges uncompromisingly. *Hunger* focuses on Gay's hunger for a fearless and dignified life. It brings forth a new dimension of fatphobic world's non-acceptance and problematic resistance against the obese people amidst rape culture.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Current Research**

The study has been delimited to the problem of feminist killjoys' *willfulness* in support of *#MeToo* as the subverting agency in the current decade along with the focus on women's dress choice and body configuration in particular. For that matter, Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* and Solnit's *Recollections of My Nonexistence* have been taken as the sample. The phenomenological standing of *#MeTooism* as the *willful guerilla* tactic, would be examined through the theoretical concepts of Sara Ahmed and Erin Wunker, employed in the context of American territory. The theoretical concepts have been taken in support of anti-race and anti-rape culture to undermine discriminatory politics working within twenty-first century feminism.

## 1.8 Organization of the Research

The research has been planned to follow an organized division of chapters to bring forth the rape culture and its problems and then interpret the efforts of American writers to subvert it by supporting the survivors and raising the slogan *#MeToo* to disempower the violators. The scheme of the research is as follows:

**Chapter 1** *Introduction* is designed to introduce the problem of American rape culture discussed in the selected memoirs. For this purpose, statement of the problem, objectives, questions, significance, rationale, and delimitation of the study have been designed.

**Chapter 2:** The *Review of the Previous Literature* provides the comprehensive understanding of the previous researches related to *the #MeToo* and the theory to create a gap for the current study. It encompasses the debates surrounding the rape culture and the philosophical responses of feminists to design a way forward, especially in relation to American literature.

**Chapter 3:** *Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework* provides the methodological steps for the phenomenological auto/biographical textual analysis and the theoretical framework of *Willful Feminist Killjoy Theory* for the study of *#MeToo* and its link with American literature.

**Chapter 4:** *Analysis* i.e. Subverting Rape Culture through *Willfulness*, and *#MeToo* in Rebecca Solnit's Works is based on the analysis of the selected American memoir *Recollections of My Nonexistence*. The discussion has brought forward her transformation into a *feminist killjoy* to assert her resistance as *Me Too* as a refusal and a surveillance strategy to counter and subvert the rape culture.

**Chapter 5:** The chapter of *Analysis* is based on the evaluation of Subverting Rape Culture through *Willfulness* and *#MeToo* in Roxane Gay's Work *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* and her *joy-killing feminism* against the normalized American rape culture. How she counters the effects of sexual violence, then uses the power of online space *#MeToo* in the digital world to gaze back at her rapist through the synoptic surveillance and Dataveillance, and become a problem for the status quo.

**Chapter 6:** The argument has been concluded in this chapter, titled as *Conclusion and Recommendations* with all possible outcomes of the research and the workable suggestions for the future researchers.

## CHAPTER 2

### TRACING THE TIMELINE OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON AMERICAN RAPE CULTURE AND #METOOISM

The feminist activism in America, started by Betty Friedan to support women in their professional endeavors, brought forward the hidden problems of harassment, sexual abuse, and rape assaults. It later became the trope of Radical feminist's activism. Incapability to resolve the problem of sexual violence, not only supported postfeminism but also failed Radical feminists to thrive, hence, revealed its political agenda. The constant suffering and the fear of rape assaults have given rise to the feminist digital movement *#MeToo*. The trending hashtags of *#MeToo*, *#BeenRapedNeverReported*, *#YesAllWomen*, and *#NotAllMen* etc. are the clear signs of feminists' struggle to subvert rape assaults and the source of relief in the twenty-first century for all the victims of the rape culture. Despite the problematic use of *#NotAllMen* on digital media, the aggressive feminists' call to end the racist and supremacist culture subsided because of some feminist men's support who provide them political grounds to counter the defaming project.

To provide a holistic view of literary studies related to the concerned aspect of the research, the relevant studies of the past twenty years (or more) have been collected here to design a background understanding. Pertaining to the purpose of reviewing previous literature and establishing the link with the current study, the intersectional approach of chronological advancement of research on the selected aspect has been established. The phenomenological study has been designed as a textual interpretive analysis to comprehend the *willfulness* of *feminist killjoys* against rape assaults, and sexual violence to subvert the culturally embedded problematic phenomenon in America. The emerging themes of sexual violence, and other problems in the twentieth century American literature bring forth the multiple folds of oppression faced by American women. The source of these oppressions traces the supremacist White men as the common offenders in all the crimes, who dispel and shift the blame onto the victim women. The literary endeavors to portray women as consenting in all terms in fiction, is the major concern for the contemporary researchers.

To support *#MeToo*, American women have written their memoirs, as an important genre of non-fictional works to write their personal lived experiences of

sexual violence. Giti Chandra, and Irma Erlingsdóttir's *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*<sup>iv</sup> has been published by the Routledge to deal with the problem in the interdisciplinary academic setting and to support the scholars in the aforementioned scholarly aspect of feminist debates. The book provides the theoretical, and thematic ground especially in connection with the emerging resistance literature. In her essay, Cynthia Enloe has highlighted the return of the fear of being raped, or harassed in the post-pandemic days of 2021 (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir xviii) as a part of professional women's lives. Such assaults are the regular part of epidemic or pandemic of rape in the *#MeToo* time period.

To make sense of the context in the current research, I have focused on these distinct types of rape assaults in American rape culture:

1. Gang Rape that is committed by multiple rapists onto the body of a single victim
2. Grey Rape that is also defined as the date rape in which the chances of blame-shifting increase, as also described by Linda Martin Alcoff in *Rape and Resistance*. Blame-shifting, or in Jennifer Freyd's term, DARVO: Dare, Attack, Reverse Victim Offender, leads to victim's self-blaming and loss of accuser's credibility (Harsey, Freyd and Zurbriggen 644; Harsey and Freyd 897).
3. Statutory Rape that is the rape of teenaged girls (between the ages of sixteen to eighteen) who cannot give their consent, or forcefully stop the rapist.
4. Serial Rape is committed by the serial rapist who knows how to remove the evidences of the crime through sophisticated methods and without hurting or injuring the victims.

In all these types, the victims prefer to remain silent to avert blame-shifting onto them and the consequence of becoming 'tainted or raped' willingly. While, street harassment is considered as the common phenomenon because of the White men's and boys' superior position in the androcentric world. There are two basic narratives at work in rape culture,

- i. The lone wolf/ stranger/ sadist who rapes the blameless woman (Wunker 86), and
- ii. The at-fault woman who creates a fuss because of her misunderstanding of corrective rape. She manipulates her personal experience of sexual violence out



of regret or desire for fame (Wunker 86) as re-presented by patriarchal thought, which either results into gaslighting or the victim's loss of credibility.

All these identifications of rapists are presented to dismantle the warped representations of women in literary works. The argument also initiates debates on the act committed on women's body and their reaction in the form of *#MeToo*, especially after Andrea Dworkin's revelation of women's re-presentation as witches, and 'morally bad' against the 'good girls' Cinderella, Rapunzel, and others. Dworkin in her book *Woman Hating* describes the Cinderella syndrome or fairy tales witch mothers who are the evil souls (Dworkin 40-2). Dworkin writes, "For a woman to be good, she must be dead, or as close to it as possible" (Dworkin 42; Solnit 160). She also defines a good boy, as a person who

[T]ravels far and wide. He has a mission, a purpose. Inevitably he fulfills it. He is a person of worth and a worthwhile person. He is strong and true. Of course, he is not real, and men do suffer trying to become him. They suffer, and murder, and rape, and plunder (Dworkin 43).

Hence, Dworkin's exposition of the mollified, and fabricated re-presentation of offenders as heroes, has opened the eyes of the feminists. Solnit's major works are based on such fantasizing of Cinderella stories, on response to which she has written the modern fairy tale *Cinderella Liberator* to redesign Cinderella's emancipation, and her autonomy over her body and fate (Solnit, CL).

## 2.1 Reviewing the Literature on Rape Culture and *#MeToo*

Non-fictional works in the American literature based on *#MeToo*, and rape assaults include *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo* in which the author Mithu Sanyal grapples with the ambiguous meanings of the utterances 'Yes' and 'No', focusing on the contemporary *#MeToo* as the movement on social media to raise consciousness. In twenty-first century's digital humanities debates, *#MeToo* has been taken as an aspect of research by many scholars. Sanyal quotes Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* to argue on the men's superior power, and women's victimhood especially in the contemporary time period (Sanyal 22; Nicholls 26-7). According to her, the rape narratives, and discourses are 'cultural sore spots', which are practically avoided in open dialogues (Sanyal 2). Whereas, women constantly face the threat of harassment

or rape assault and then get blamed for it pertaining to their gender's inherent weakness (Sanyal 4).

The “vampire model of male sexuality” (Sanyal 4), embedded in the American fiction, has been constantly appreciated and admired, highlighting the double-standards of the American society. Instead of focusing on women's problems as unnegotiable, they have been re-presented as the sinners against men. Sanyal has organized a historical timeline of events tracing the legislation on the act of rape. Despite the fact that women are still raped and harassed publicly, the advancement in the twenty-first century's problem has also included multiple gendered identities as victims. According to Sanyal, rape crime makes us gender the women, and other identities (Sanyal 8). In addition to it, Sanyal has also cited Foucault, Brownmiller, and Mackinnon's assertions about the rape as a violent act. The critics and theorists admit the fact that if the violent shock is the main purpose of the perpetrator then the physical harm or injury is enough for him to violate women's rights. Rape as the apparatus of women's subjugation, and forced willingness to accept the occupation of their bodies, is itself problematic. The act of rape initiates controversy, and raises the critical question of women's body's integrity, and dignity. Whereby, contrary to the current debate, Lucretia herself committed suicide to get rid of her defiled body. It was her act of resuming her honour as a heroic deed (Sanyal 39).

Feminist Killjoys' activism has made women cognizant of their basic human rights, and focus on breaking the silence against sexual violence to subvert the falsely claimed heroic deed of getting banished, and ending lives. Instead of committing suicide to end their personal defiled body and letting the rape culture continuously normalizing rape as the men's inherent right, these women have selected the courageous option. Using digital platform to share their stories of rape assaults, and abusive relations, has not only brought the backlash for creating the unnecessary debate, and/or giving undue importance to unauthentic, and fabricated content, but also made them killjoys and a problem for the status quo. Notwithstanding, such debates continued for the longer period of time, the problem is still persistently portrayed in the American literature.

Sanyal has also given the reference of an American radical feminist Marilyn French's novel *The Women's Room* and asserted that French's novels have become synonymous to ending the categorical alignment of men in feminists' circle by labelling

all men as rapists (Sanyal 29), and bringing them to accountability. Such essentialist approach sabotage the postcolonial debate on Brown and Black men's double marginalization by treating them as the proven rapists. Mardorossian also rejects the claim along with "all sex is rape" to highlight the significance of rape/ not rape discourse as crucial in attaining justice for the victims, especially in context of micro and macro dynamics of aggression involved in the process (C. Mardorossian 144). Racism and postcolonial sentiments create more problems of justice for the brown men than the hierarchically superior White men in American context. Cynthia Hamilton has examined Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* as the politics of narration. The researcher has highlighted the portrayal of rape as sexist and racist by criticizing Brownmiller for her essentialist and disparaged portrayal of Black men as being possible rapists than white men (Hamilton 383).

Susan Elizabeth Sweeney has examined the fictional works *The Madonna*, *The Women's Room* and *The Scarlet Letter* to rationalize the feminine, female and the feminist role of a woman. Her criticism of the readers' responses about the fictional works and the understanding of the texts bring forward their anxieties and fears onto the texts as a psychological process (Sweeney 412). She has also quoted Umberto Eco's theorizations from *The Limits of Interpretation*. According to her, the reader's individual experiences contribute in meaning making in a purely individualistic way to create a holistic view of that particular community (Sweeney 412). Taking Hester's banishment, and solitary prison cell as the sign of her evil existence, women are portrayed as sinners who do not conform to the traditions, and religious customs and assert their *will* to commit the sin. The invisible boundaries confine only the women and not the men, which create the basis of discrimination despite men's equal contribution in the sin. In the case of rape crime, the perpetrator is the sole criminal and responsible for the transgression. Whereas, *The Women's Room* is the depiction of women's banishment from the public space (Sweeney 419) on which Sweeney expounds,

Instead of closeting myself, like Dimmesdale, or hiding in the women's room, as Mira does at the beginning of Marilyn French's novel, or "passing," as Clare Kendry does throughout Nella Larsen's text, I needed to show myself freely to the community (Sweeney 421).

Hester's scarlet letter 'A' is the modern day *#MeToo* inscribed metaphorically on all the victims' and survivors' digital accounts of victimization. Sweeney's *will* to experience her 'self' willfully, is the urge to reinforce her humanness without the bounds of sexuality or fear, which are possible only by subverting the culture of rape, sexual violence and harassment against women. Maria Lauret has declared such texts as the "feminists' fictions of subjectivity" to explicitly announce, "[H]ow I became a feminist" (Sanyal 29). Similarly, Linda M. Blum has analysed feminism and mass media in the case study of *The Women's Room*, in which she argues on the basis of different liberal philosophers' (Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, and Smith) perspectives about the autonomy of the individual's rational authority. On the parallel ground, *The Women's Room's* depiction of asymmetry of gender roles highlights the oppression faced by American women. While, the other fictional works written by many of the American authors including Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*, Joyce Carol Oates' *Rape: A Love Story*, Alice Sebold's novel *The Lovely Bones*, and Roxane Gay's *An Untamed State*. Non-fictional works including *Not that Bad*, *Bad Feminist*, Solnit's *Men Explain Things to Me*, and many others are the source of women's freedom and liberty as the resurrection after facing the symbolic death of rape assault. Whereas, Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* is criticized for representation of rape with a one-sided narration, that distorts rape and sexual violence and presents it as the intimate relation.

Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand has investigated the rape as the power strategy to reinforce the pattern of domination. The researcher has argued while taking the support from Carine M. Mardorossian's theorization and rejecting the passivity of rape victims to look at them as empowered survivors who counter the powerful agencies as actively voiced subjects. They raise consciousness against the androcentric patriarchy (Roshnavand 20). However, rape crime is irreversible in nature. Despite facing all the adversaries and the male's transgression and exploitation of her body in incestualizing a sacred relation, she herself transgresses her boundaries by developing lesbian relations as her defiance. The researcher has also targeted the Radical Feminists' 'sexism in reverse' scheme and presented *The Color Purple* as the groundbreaking work for the feminists on global level, including all races, ethnicities, and identities in the movement against sexual violence, "far from being a homogenous strategy" (Roshnavand 20).

Roshnavand has deconstructed the main event of rape as incest in Walker's fictional work, while, Young describes Postmodern feminists' efforts to undermine rape culture on the grounds of "psychologizing and victim-blaming tactics" (Young 4). The depiction of rape profoundly annihilates the idealized imagery of a father belonging to the same family and the same race as a puncture in patriarchy. The author, in the researcher's argument, has demonstrated incest or the act of rape in both public and private spaces as dismantling the moral norms. Questioning the problematic androcentric norms of patriarchy, appears as an undeniable enigma. It portrays the victim as more suppressed and unable to view herself as "an untainted self" (Roshnavand 22). However, the primal act of raping the woman to assert power, considering her 'inherently rapeable', is decisive in nature. It triggers the American women to take prompt action through the robust phenomenological agential power by rising from the ashes and secure their honour from men (Roshnavand 22). The criminal disposition of men to rape, and harass is an upshot of worsened sexism because of peer support, which is depicted by Walker in her fictional work and theorized by Brownmiller and Madoone Miner. According to Roshnavand, raping, and getting raped create a binary system in which the two sides of the gamut expose the perpetrator or the victimizer as a part of the dialectical disposition of power. The offender disposes himself at a paradigmatic position with the asserted power. His powerful position is evident from the fact that he has already committed the irreversible crime. He secures his position as being replaced by any other subject or a perpetrator, which debilitates the victim's weaker position. The same paradigmatic position also hints towards the severity of the rape culture in America. Similarly, if found guilty, the same perpetrator comes to the forefront, which becomes problematic for him due to *#MeToo* that helps the victims to join together and support each other against the rapist on a global platform.

Mardorossian criticizes the discursive practice of presenting women as inherently rapeable in the literary works as a problem itself that harnesses such crimes in the society. Tiffany Ann. Young, on the other hand, disapproves women's image as rapeable in the American literary writings by highlighting the works of contemporary feminists, like Wendy Brown, who break down the already existing arguments on the rape crisis as gendered sexuality script (4). Young and Mackinnon understand Brownmiller's analysis of the sexist crime and quote her words as,

Rape is a man's act, whether it is male of female man and whether it is a man relatively permanently or relatively temporarily; and being raped is a woman's experience, whether it is a female or male woman and whether it is a woman relatively permanently or relatively temporarily (Brownmiller; Mackinnon; Young 10).

The children and the physically stronger women are also included in the victims' list due to their familial and economic conditions. All such previous works conceptualized as rape narratives, initiate the debate of consent, clothing, racial oppression, credibility, past sexual performance, and bodily strength and weakness in the twenty-first century when digital networking has provided the platform to expose such crimes in the real world. Many women writers, memoirists and feminists have opened up their secrets and become a part of *#MeToo*. The use of social and print media to expose the evils of society by approaching the global community through the internet, has empowered women in the real sense. But, the paradoxes of ill-fame and fabricated incidents are continued, which have created a backlash for *#MeToo* as a problem not only for men but also for women for their activism.

### **2.1.1 Researches undermining Rape Narratives in American Literature**

Katy Lewis has investigated the Young Adult literature to expose the epidemic of rape culture. According to her, because of the publication of voyeuristic literary works without any moral implications (Lewis 8), sexual exploitation of American women with lopsided narration has been bolstered as a norm. While Lisa M. Schroot has examined rape narratives in American Literature by taking the theoretical framework from Susan Brownmiller, Ann J. Cahill and others. According to her, rape is used as an instrument of power to undermine women's effective subjectivities, and to subjugate them (Schroot 129). Schroot's comprehension of victim blaming as the major tool, used by the perpetrators in the novel, is a breakthrough to dismantle the culturally normalized practice of oppressing the victim. The victim is termed as *Lolita*, defined by the dictionary as the 'precocious young girl' (Schroot 130) or nymphomaniac.

Tiffany Ann Young's examination of Catherine A. Mackinnon's and Susan Brownmiller's assertions on the problem of rape assaults and the victim-survivor or victim-perpetrator role in the contemporary American literature, annihilates the

patriarchal exercise of making and training women to be victims of rape (Young 8). The representation of victimized women in male writers' versus female writers' works, creates a clear difference of narration that paradoxically sets the monolithic image of women as rapeable and men as powerful. Disjunctive to this, in women's writings, female powerfully counter the act of rape by standing against it. Women's vulnerability, and rapeability, regardless of their active role, voiced character, or powerful persona, poses them as rapeable on which the novel is based. "Whereas the attackers deem these women as transgressive and punish them with sexual assault" (Young 18). Mackinnon explains the concealed hypocrisy of the system based on selective proliferation of racist or class-based *willful* sexuality due to which some women are labelled as rapeable because of their courageous acts, while others as innocent or 'always foolish' (Young 18). The latter's inability to prove rape, in consequence, brings their abandonment and further victimization.

Demonstration of rape in the fictional world, where the vulnerable girl is raped and then lived with a tainted self or a self-blaming guilt, has been normalized as an intentional patriarchal practice. To counter this inhumane practice, women writers have taken the stand to write about the fight for justice. In both the cases, the women readers feel sympathy for the victimized and idealize her, hence, creating space for such literary works. Such idealization leads to the increased demand of the fictional fairy tales and paradoxically supports the rape culture. Nevertheless, the perpetrator is not mentioned to get any punishment. Evasiveness of any such crime in the philosophical understanding of the problem, evades the problematic standing of the rapist that aggravates the problem. Consequently, women characterize their characters as attaining power after surviving the crime of rape, whereas, men subjugate them as victims. It puts the sole responsibility on women for what happens to them, making them disgraced with tainted or contemptible character.

Zoe Brigley Thompson's and Sorcha Gunne's underpinning of their argument by using Jessica Benjamin's *Theory of Intersubjective Space* and Ann Cahill's *Theory of Intersubjectivity and Embodiment* grapple the problem of sexual violence. Cahill's assertions about rape highlight the powerful place of men as compared to women, which she criticizes by quoting the description of rape as White men's quintessential act to prove their civility, and hierarchy (Cahill 15). Mardorossian, in her research, declares sexual violence as the 'undertheorized' taboo topic (C. M. Mardorossian,

Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape 743). She mentions, “Contemporary feminist theory, by contrast, tends to ignore the topic of rape in favor of more ambivalent expressions of male domination such as pornography and sexual harassment” (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 743) in American culture. Kenrick et al. mention in their research, “Before World War II, the American workplace was much more sexually segregated than it is today. Subsequent increase in sexual integration has resulted in increase in sexual relationships within organization” (Buss and Malamuth 30). The integration of women in American social set up becomes problematic because of the sexist attitude of men who indirectly blame women for the sexual violence. Now, despite all these efforts to bring women in the mainstream productive and political sphere on equality basis, the phenomenon of sexual violence has been increased. Such manifold rape and sexual harassment cases have failed in attaining recognition and the requisite significance by the postmodern feminists. Ultimately, the problem of rape assaults has become the trope of radical feminists only (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 746). Feminist scholars have criticized the “voyeuristic depiction of rape” (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 746) in movies and other media, however, there is no notable contribution in theorizing rape or anti-rape movements in and outside academics which in Stuart Hall’s words is “emptied of any signification” (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 746).

Owing to the *backlash* faced by the radical feminists for “warped and unnecessary alarmist representation” (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 748) and the conservative and self-proclaimed feminists’ propaganda (C. M. Mardorossian, *Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape* 748), victims start doubting their victimhood. In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, Sharon Marcus argues on Mary E. Hawkesworth’s essay entitled *Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth* by highlighting that rape as a language does not support the insight of imagining women as “already raped or inherently rapeable” (387). She quotes Hawkesworth’s words,

Rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment ... are not fictions or figurations that admit of the free play of signification. The victim’s account of these experiences is not simply an arbitrary imposition of a purely fictive meaning on an otherwise meaningless reality. A victim’s knowledge of the



event may not be exhaustive; . . . But it would be premature to conclude from the incompleteness of the victim's account that all other accounts (the assailant's, defense attorney's, character witnesses' for the defendant) are equally valid or that there are no objective grounds on which to distinguish between truth and falsity in divergent interpretations (Marcus 385).

Marcus asserts that the same postmodern "impossibility of ascribing blame to a rapist and innocence to a victim" (Marcus 386) is paradoxical in nature. She also quotes the postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault who "cautions against repressive measures which might stigmatize male sexuality and advocates instead making economic reparation to raped women" (Marcus 386). Foucault's materialistic approach in assigning women a monetary value and neglecting their traumatic experience, and humanness (Cahill 1), itself exposes the patriarchal thought. Linda Martin Alcoff has also criticized Foucauldian notion of treating rape as analogous to burglary or battery and dispelling the violation of body integrity as the normalized inducement of shame, and guilt (Alcoff). While in the United States of America, racism is more actively used to charge Black men more instantly than White men, hence, patronizing the racial prejudices and "illegitimate violence" (Marcus 391). Therefore, "A rape act thus imposes as well as presupposes misogynist inequalities; rape is not only scripted—it also scripts" (Marcus 391).

Mardorossian has reviewed the works of Ann Cahill, Maria Bevacqua, and Sharon Lamb, in which she has examined the consciousness of rape and race as well as the politicization of the rape charges to politically invoking grounds for lynching of Black men (C. M. Mardorossian, Reviewed Work 265). While analysing *Rape on the Public Agenda*, the researcher focuses on the political edge of Racial movement, and its subsidence because of racist approach. She also examines Ann J. Cahill's theorization of rape in her book *Rethinking Rape* that challenges "unproblematic histories of the body and subjectivity" (C. M. Mardorossian, Reviewed Work 266). Cahill, in her philosophical assertions, criticizes the two schools i.e. one supporting Brownmiller and the other supporting Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin and declare them as violent in nature and perpetuating the nature/culture binary without any reasonable results. According to Cahill, the main cause of rape is men's aggressive assertion of their subjective power and women's subjugation as passive objects as a neat social binary (C. M. Mardorossian, Reviewed Work 267). Cahill, in her book

*Rethinking Rape*, presents the case by criticizing modern philosophers' conceptualization of subjectivity based on intellectual and rational ability of brain that works in a peaceful condition without the bounds of the flesh or the body (Cahill 50). According to her,

Bodies were subject to desires, emotions, and drives that were appallingly outside the realm of the subject's control; rational thought was a careful, self-conscious process that the subject could undertake in a context of choice and autonomy. Human agency, then, was defined in terms of the capacity of reason, for only reason made such autonomy possible. Insofar as human beings remained susceptible to bodily dynamics, they were still mired in the realm of the animal, the instinctual, the unfree (Cahill 51).

In the binaries of nature/ culture, reason/ emotion, activity/ passivity, and mind/ body, women were excluded as the passive objects with exchangeable commodities, which blurred their humanness and transformed them into objects without any agency (Cahill 51). She criticizes Rousseau's assertion, which he presented in his book *A Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, that "woman is made specially to please men" (Rousseau 358; Cahill 51). While Kant undermines women's rational agency by presenting beautiful body as the cause of their inferior position among rational faculty. Cahill highlights men's supremacist politicking of assigning them the rational agency and declaring women as merely bodies (Cahill 53). She has highlighted Elizabeth Grosz's and Braidotti's attempts of refiguring body as the agential power and not the mind to refute the objectification of women through the logic of presenting body as the "locus for the interplay" of previously mentioned binaries and other factors (Cahill 77-82). Cahill writes, "The embodied subject is not the free, autonomous, rational subject of the modern period, but rather a situated, located, specific subject with specific, individualized abilities and characteristics" (Cahill 83). Incorporating this bodily agency into the *willfulness*, which the defiant person attains after experiencing sexual violence, the limiting effect of the violence on mental faculty of the victim becomes evident because of the traumatic experience.

While, blaming women's passivity as the cause of rape is itself victim-blaming instead of curbing men's aggressive subjectivity. According to Mardorossian, questioning women's innocence is baseless as they have not committed any crime, rather a crime is committed onto them. Cahill's assertions of promoting self-defense is

itself a preserve of men's aggression, and failure to amend the cultural pervasiveness of rape and to devise the method to lessen down androcentricism. It paradoxically maintains the centrality of rape within women's or womanly men's bodies (C. M. Mardorossian 267). Similarly, the researcher has also investigated the duality of meanings in victimhood in its representation of trauma as, "extreme suffering and pathological mental states" (C. M. Mardorossian 269).

Aiyana Altrows has examined the rape narratives while bringing to light the absence of feminism in the selected fictional works (Altrows 1). She examines the authorial intention of raising consciousness about rape assaults, however, "implicit anti-feminist neoliberal ideologies in the texts undermine that goal" (Altrows 1). She finds that the rape-prevention discourse, used in the selected novels, reinforces victim-blaming ideology instead of empowering and supporting the survivor in her trauma (Altrows 225). The same unjust treatment leads to sexual violence and rape assaults and normalizes the rape culture, which is also researched by Thompson and Gunne. Tessa Roynon has analyzed Toni Morrison's fictional work and the representation of rape. According to her, the questions of masculine and feminine identity, sexuality, difference, and cultural origins are highlighted through performances in rape plays (Roynon 4). Morrison's novels are the fictional accounts of rape and the cultural superiority of rapists. These works depict the feminized representation through language instead of masculine "glamor of shame" (Roynon 39), which highlights the heroic actions of the perpetrators instead of shaming them. The use of euphemism and graphic detail in Morrison's novels is the effort to subvert rape through writing about it by manipulating the narrative voice and explaining the silence through the female characters' fear of getting raped or silent victim's lamentation and trauma on getting raped.

### **2.1.2 Rape Jokes, Humour and #MeToo**

Meg Tully has demonstrated the possibilities of feminist incongruity and critiquing postfeminists' stance of ending feminism (Tully 339). Tully has explored the three underlying incongruous strategies of the comedy that are mimicking the patriarchal norms and logics, inverting the grotesque, and juxtaposing serious feminist issues with parodies of frivolous pop culture texts (Tully 339). It helps in debunking postfeminists' justification that feminism is no longer needed (Tully 339). In the similar way, Strain et al. have explored that rape humour or making humorous statements on

rape also leads to the normalization of rape culture. Exploring the reinforcing and/or subverting nature of humour and its potential to normalize rape, Strain et al. argue that the American popular culture i.e. comedies, sitcoms, and T.V. series' humorous content either reinforces or subverts rape culture (Strain et al. 86). Their findings in relation to the current cases of rape assaults in the USA, have made the study important. They have found humour as the weapon against rape culture and the rapist.

Casey Ryan Kelly has researched the cultural misogyny and the subverting of the patriarchal mythologies by a female castrating character (Kelly 86). The researcher has examined the movie *Teeth* as undergirding the gendered logics of both screen violence and cultural misogyny. Dawn's transformation from a passive defender of women's purity to an avenging heroine with the role of a woman villain, 'castrating genitals' as violent and strong, is found as the gendered politics of spectatorship in which the heroine refuses the stable binary between masculine violence and feminine victimhood (Kelly 86). *Teeth* provides the feminist critique resource for rape- revenge narratives as critique on cultural misogyny in which the main female character regulates women's body by updating the sexual politics of the second wave of feminism.

While arguing that rape is a systemic violence against women which needs to be subverted through political power, Leigh Gaskin has investigated the relation of power, profit, and politics with the promotion of rape culture as an institutionally rooted phenomenon in the American patriacho-political system. Female identity as the marker of a politically marginalized group is controlled by imposing punishment in the form of racial, sexual and gendered violence (Gaskin vii). According to Gaskin,

The biggest difference between the act and a culture of rape is the overarching presence of permissiveness and acceptance in American society and the ability to overlook predominate structures that enable and celebrate sexual violence (Gaskin viii).

In the twenty-first century, where the advancement of technology has transformed the activism into digital and globalized hashtag movements on social media platforms, the American writers' memoirs as literary works have also become a part of the print media activism. Such activism is the counter-normalization. Normalizing rape jokes in the sense of subverting the rape culture may affect in reverse to end the fear of rape among women.

## 2.2 *#MeToo* as the Rape Subverting Agency of Feminist Killjoys

*#MeToo* is not only an area of increased interest for contemporary women studies, but also provides a reasonable use of digital technology to render the women's experiences available transnationally to support the global feminism. It creates the feminism's offshoot i.e. digital feminism. The online availability of fictional and non-fictional works not only delivers the message globally but also sensitizes the topic especially related to the prevalent rape culture. The awareness of such complex topics after spreading worldwide, enable the contemporary feminists to grapple consciously with the sensitive topics of rape and sexual violence that might otherwise remain latent.

The survivor's narration of her traumatic experience are 'subsided' and not 'subsidized' by the fetishized capitalistic system (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 3). However, these survivors claim their agency on their bodies by asserting their voice through written stories as a snowball of *#MeToo* to experience the painful relief (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 3), as the pain of rape cannot be relieved and re-emerges on discussion about it. The archive of all such voices and unheard stories in the form of written words, as also conceptualized by Helen Cixous, collectively militate against the hegemony of patriarchy by breaking the silence and creating injunction to remember their sufferings (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 3).

Bruner and Lefevre in their research on *#MeToo* examine the 'rhizomatically networked collective' effort for the 'expanded audiences' (Brunner and Partlow-Lefevre 166) to comprehend the widespread impact of social movement and feminists' efforts in subverting rape culture by giving voice to the silent victims. Trott has examined the intersectional issues of *#MeToo*. She speaks on behalf of black feminists to remind white feminists their efforts to report sexual violence and rape assaults without discriminating on the basis of race and colour (Trott). Calvante et al. highlight the suffocating whiteness and comradery with coloured feminists to create spaces of change for the purpose of decolonization (Calvante, Calafell and Chavez 202). The need of the time is to support each other as sisterhood for bringing more rapid and radical change in the society, which has been rationalized by the researcher.

Rosemary Clark-Parsons, in her research *#MeToo and the performance of networked feminist visibility*, argues that feminist media repertoire has been established by using twitter and social media platforms to spread *#MeToo* (Parsons). While dealing

with hashtag feminism, “activists develop tactics while working within particular sociotechnical constraints” (Parsons). Parsons enunciates the importance of social media sites to relate and connect the individual experience with the collective response as a contentious performance to reveal the systematic nature of social injustice. In this manner, the personal becomes a political experience and radical efforts become solidified. Moreover, the movement takes more momentum and becomes a topic of discussion among household women as a transformative politics of visibility. Besides, Megan Murphy has introduced *#MeToo* trend to the common people through her research *Introduction to #MeToo Movement*. Murphy has rationalized *#MeToo*, started by Tarana Burke, as the movement to support the survivors of harassment and rape assaults, specifically the women of intersectional identities, and of low income class. She has examined different researches conducted to reveal the rape culture and the cases of harassment reported by women. Moreover, in the patriarchal system where women are silenced considering it a taboo topic, speaking about harassment and rape assault by writing about it is a *willful* act. Murphy calls it *#MeToo*.

Michelle Rodino-Colocino’s *Me too, #MeToo: Countering Cruelty with Empathy* is the research to empathize with the rape survivors. According to her, those who share their experiences of harassment and rape assaults, need empathy to topple systems of oppression and cruelty (Colocino 96). Her essay examines Burke’s *#MeToo* and *#TimesUp* and their challenge to the very “systems of power that underlie harassment, discrimination, and assault by promoting empathy from the ground up” (Colocino 96). She has also highlighted the negative impact of passive empathy spread by the difference of ‘I’ vs ‘You’. In response to the passive empathy, ‘You’ emerges as the difference of survivor and the empathizer which leads to development of the emotions of fear and guilt among the survivors of rape assaults. Colocino also quotes Sarah Ahmed, “empathy sustains the very difference that it may seek to overcome” (Colocino 96). Moreover, the researcher also emphasizes on the notion of ‘I’ vs. ‘You’ difference by taking bell hooks’ theorization of the fact that “marginalized people are viewed as exotic others to be consumed by gazing oppressors” (Colocino 96). According to her, the gazing ‘Westerneye/ I’ never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection (Colocino 96). Instead, their passive empathy poisons the emotions and act as the transforming agent of an active movement into passive and hostile sharing only. Clare Hemmings puts it, “Empathy may lead to sentimental attachment to the

other, rather than a genuine engagement with her concerns, then; or worse, it may signal cannibalization of the other masquerading as care” (Colocino 96). Hence, her revelation of the empathy project as paradoxical in nature reveals the fact that it conveys both active and passive empathy by creating the toxic difference. Such passivity separates the empathizers into two distinct categories. Notwithstanding the damage to the cause, the toxic empathizers create the spaces from where the hatred emerges against *#MeToo*. They may also subjugate or oppress the victims and survivors of the assaults as an inevitable paradox of such digital movements.

Keller et al., in their research *Speaking ‘Unspeakable Things’: Documenting Digital Feminist Responses to Rape Culture*, enunciate their efforts to digitalize *#MeToo* as the important movement and its link with the academic field. According to them, the digital feminism has become common because of the use of digital platforms including *Myspace*, *Twitter*, *Facebook* and many others (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose 22). The prevalent rape culture in the America has propelled the girls and women to raise their voices against harassment by using these digital media resources. Speaking about these taboo topics on social media platforms is beneficial in this manner that the identity of the survivor is not revealed to the general and global public without consent. *#MeToo* and *#BeenRapedNeverReported* are such movements which have supported these feminist killjoys who have raised their voices for the helpless victims. Many of the feminists including Gay have come forward to raise their voice in support of victims and survivors. Roxane Gay has written many essays and started blogpost as well as a web series to support rape victims and to subvert rape culture by using online platforms.

The author of *Tainted Witness*, Leigh Gilmore, has examined the emergence of memoirs on sexual violence and rape assaults and the digital movement *#MeToo*. She has observed the vigorous use of hashtag in digital movements as the main element to address global audiences and the radical spread of *#MeToo*. She enunciates the global reckoning of personal experiences of sexual violence and rape attacks as “entering self-representation through the survivor’s signature” (Gilmore 162). The main purpose is to acknowledge life writings as the memoirs of sexual violence and personal incumbency to count oneself as a part of the community and speak as *#MeToo*. According to Gilmore, the memoirists and life writers take this challenge of incorporating *#MeToo* in their literary works to tackle the trauma of survivors (Gilmore 162). She writes, “Less confessional than testimonial, *#MeToo* provides a vivid example of the

autobiographical first-person interrupting dynamics of erasure and silencing” (Gilmore 162). The complex narratives of white, coloured, and queer identities are interwoven with *#MeToo* in the memoirs from the margins to grasp the clutching hands of patriarchy over the mouths of the victims and rape survivors (Gilmore 163). Among these memoirs are the works of Gay including *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* as the collection of such voices. According to Gilmore, “the essays document the hold rape culture has on every aspect of life” (Gilmore 163). The courage and *willfulness*, which women need to counter such problematic aspect of American culture, also brings to light the implication of self-importance to survive in rape culture.

Doherty has examined the testifying of young victimized girls about their trauma of sexually violated by an older person to be the healing process (Doherty 184). She has quoted the examples of narrating such traumatic experiences as *#MeToo* in the fictional and non-fictional works of Lisa Halliday in *Asymmetry*, Susan Choi’s *Trust Exercise*, and Carman Maria Machado’s memoir *In the Dream House* (Doherty 185), reckoning the unimaginable and unforgettable truths of their lives. She writes, “[T]elling your own story inevitably means telling the stories of others” (Doherty 198). Listening and reading these stories provide motivation and support. Hence, the support system of *#MeToo* empowers the victims and survivors and they regain their self-integrity as agency, despite not forgetting the tainted soul.

### **2.3 Researches on Rebecca Solnit’s and Roxane Gay’s Works**

The following researches are included in the current study to rationalize the gap of the aspect of dress choices in the studies that has been filled in the current research. The main problems of traumatic rape experiences, association of memory with such traumas, body-shaming of fat people and the suffering attached with such stigmas in the fetishist society of America need to be evaluated to counter the normalization politics. In American literature, many of such works by Gay and Solnit have broken the glass-ceiling effect and brought forward the unique ideas interwoven in their auto/biographical sketches of lived experiences.

#### **2.3.1 Previous Researches on Solnit’s Works**

Solnit’s journalistic ventures of writing and sharing her private experiences of self-love, walking, writing, and dreaming to explore the world have been examined by Marcus O’Donnell. He studies the exhibition of Solnit’s agential powers and



embodiment of liberty as expounded previously by Virginia Woolf. However, the fear of sexual violence limits her movement and liberty to assert her *will* in America, despite being a White woman. O'Donnell expounds Solnit's daring and polyphonic voices to highlight her "evocative to proclamatory to exegetical modes of writing" (O'Donnell 1). Teresa O'Rourke has studied the works of Adnan, Dillard, Robinson and Solnit, focusing on transcendentalism in intersectional and deterritorialized contemporary context. According to her, the previous transcendental works were "individualist, abstract and ultimately the preserve of white male privilege" (O'Rourke i). Her research, thus, narrows 'the gap of us vs. them thinking' (O'Rourke 18). Hence, the reexamination of New England Transcendentalism in American women's writings challenges the common belief of 'White male privilege' (O'Rourke 244), and brings to light the epistemic value of women's writings. The study highlights that White women are also struggling for the acknowledgement of their literary work as Black women are.

White women have supported the promotion of *#MeToo*, which has transformed the movement and given the women of other racial identities an equal opportunity instead of belonging solely to White women. Therefore, their works' acknowledgement along with Black women's activism as sisterhood feminism would bring more radical change. To support the same sisterhood in feminism, Solnit's essay collections, based on the concept of highlighting misogynist men, appear as her *willful* activism against those who consider themselves as the real torch-bearers of knowledge. One such example is her essay *Men Explain Things to Me*, in which she comes forward as the fighter and courageous woman to counter men's narrative of women's subjugation as men's systemic violence to weaken women's knowledge faculty.

### **2.3.2 Rape Trauma, Fat, Race, and Gender Oppression in Gay's *Hunger***

Roxane Gay's works are the significant contemporary feminist writings that break the norms of traditional literary works focusing on the mainstream issues of American women. She has brought forward the problematic cultural normalization of sexual violence in the twenty-first century America and opened the debate on discriminatory treatment towards fat people as the dilemma of existence. Gay's choice of inhabiting a fleshy body to resist the White supremacy and the patriarchal pressures invokes interest to comprehend her negotiations, trauma and angry resolves to prioritize

the safety of her bare body in the racist and sexist society. Her memoir *Hunger* becomes a paper-printed form of force to reconnect her private experience of sexual violence to the public narration of her traumatizing emergence in the rape culture.

Black women's and more specifically Gay's existence as inbetweenness between being a Black and a woman in contemporary Black American literature is the main focus of Julia Tigner's research, which she has underpinned using the framework proposed by "bell hooks", Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberly Nichele Brown, L.H. Stallings, and Elizabeth Alexander. Tigner has described how Black women transform spaces through liminality at the intersection of race and gender. Tigner's argument focuses on how Morrison, Parks, Trethewey, Gay, Tayari Jones, and Adichie design their black characters that transgress boundaries and create space for themselves by establishing their subjectivity. The main characters' subjective positions complicate the space to assert their existence as the survival strategy. Gay, on the other hand, intentionally designs her body to cover more space to assert her existence and paradoxically become invisible as a hypervisible human being by negotiating her choice and traditions and showing resistance (Thomas). The researcher has comprehended the sense of the flesh on Gay's body as a site of biopolitics and necropolitics. Gay's social death is materialized through this transformation because of the patriarchal pressures to reduce her body.

Freda L. Fair, in her research *Unruly Intimacies*, presents the female body as racialized, gendered and sexualized (Fair 117). Focusing on Gay's writing, she has analysed the undisciplined body and its unruliness through the 'indelible traces of intimacy' (Fair 18). Her research covers Gay's themes of "emotional deprivation, loneliness, social isolation, trauma, addiction, desire, abuse, psychological and social defense mechanisms, and love among others" (Fair 18). She, as the isolated fighter for her integrity and honour, faces all those problems, which later transform her into a *feminist killjoy*. Her killing joy behavior lessens down the space for intimate relations because of her memories of the past trauma. The process of becoming *willful*, which is the main question to be analysed in the current research, also brings the irreversible traumatic memories of agony and pain in Gay's life.

Spallacci has examined Gay's state of melancholia due to the recurring pressure she faces after her victimization. Spallacci has cited Leigh Gilmore's assertions related to "doubts about rape allegations in legal context" (Spallacci 79) to solidify the source

of victim-blaming and rape apology, lying in the actuality of rape. The rape in the current research has been taken in the context of transgression of body's integration without consent as corrective rape or through the use of coercive means, whereby Alcoff in *Rape and Resistance* terms 'coercion' and 'consent' as traditional and old tactics of rapists to reverse the blame. The cultural nuances of racism intersected with oppressive system suppress the voice of Black people. The Black victim is taken as responsible in all cases, whether be the victim or the blamed one. Whereas, the privileged class of superior race always takes advantage of being White and the vulnerable.

Black women find themselves caught in the noose of justice system as an inferior race where provision of evidence stands against them and proves to be the source of silencing them for the disbelief prevalent in the racist society (Spallacci 80). The reason is the embodied subjectivities and the Black women's objective representation as inherently rapeable for belonging to an underprivileged race and ex-colony. The solution lies in bringing decolonization as the concept of approval for all races to be equal. Such equality in the American racist and sexist society is required to lessen down the oppressive pressures faced by different races.

To continue the process of resistance, Elizabeth Ryan Brownlow has explored the bad feminist moments and feminist identity of Black and coloured writers Gay, Cottom, and Nelson (Brownlow ii). Her main focus is on the inadequacies, disarticulation and rearticulation of the critical feminist identities (Brownlow ii-iii). She asserts that those who label themselves as *Bad Feminists* are not categorized as postfeminists (Brownlow 6). Brownlow has used Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* as the intersectional Feminist theory. According to her, the activism of Black feminism, womanism, and Crunk feminism, gives space to the marginalized Black women to raise their voices and counter White women's separatist and colourblind activism that has ignored multiple identities, especially in the postcolonial context (Brownlow 13-4). It previously became the cause of backlash faced by Radical feminism (Brownlow 20), which later changed into *#MeToo* movement to support the victimized women and the survivors of rape assaults (Brownlow 30). However, the hijacking of *#MeToo* by White women, is still an unresolved issue.

Brownlow has also used Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw's *Theory of Intersectionality* to deduce the comprehensive multiple layers of oppression faced by

Black women (Brownlow 21). MacKinnon also relates to Crenshaw's *Intersectionality Theory* by criticizing the method of strategizing race and sexual discrimination in the system, instead of tracing the roots of race and gendered phenomena as a cultural practice. The problem has become a part of cultural norm of normalizing colonial mindset of sexual assaults, which has transformed the rapists into Black men and victims into White women<sup>v</sup> (MacKinnon 1021). Brownlow's examination of the difference between a pure feminist and the bad feminist has underpinned Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of the collective feminist snap. The explanation of Black women's snap because of the emotional stress, anger, and the moment of feminist killjoys lead to make women's image as bad feminists (Brownlow 296), which, however, does not refute their feminist identity. According to Andreina Fernandez, "current system of sex and gender is born out of the context of chattel slavery and the Black flesh it produced" (Fernandez 62), which excavates the basis of such misogynoir faced by Black women.

Brownlow has also given the reference of digital feminist movement *#MeToo* and *#TimesUp*, through which women have created spaces for them as a departure from traditional feminism. Brownlow's acknowledgement of the significance of digital activism in the form of blogs and podcasts hosted by Ahmed, Gay and Cottom has opened new avenues of research on printed literary works and digital feminism's collaborative efforts. The rationalization of digital activism in Brownlow's research has also created space for the current study.

Another patriarchal strategy of subjugating women, is to make them compliant subjects to follow the general patriarchal *will*, designed to suppress them. Women have to follow the set beauty norms, defiance to which leads to their marginalization and othering. They are made liable to feel guilty on becoming feminists. Greeshma S. Prasad has examined Gay's *Hunger* in comparison with Daniel Steel's *Big Girl*. According to Prasad, the worthy human body is classified in the world on the basis of colour, size, and beauty norms (Prasad 44). The comparison of *Big Girl* Victoria and Hungry girl Gay brings forth the parenting mistakes in the fat phobic world. Gay's parents support her in her trauma while Victoria faces body shaming from her parents (Prasad 45). Victoria learns self-love from her friend Collin White (Prasad 46), which is also a parallel element in Gay's memoir in which she learns to take care of her body by eating more, and countering her hetero and homophobia by making online friends. Her strategy to avert rape is actually her strategy to destroy her body as avenging her

own body on its failure to protect her dignity. The decadence of flesh within the body makes it a transient object that needs care to be healthy. Moreover, Prasad also highlights the importance of love for one's own self, which defies the societal pressures onto the self and makes one feel important.

Gay's works are focused on the aspects of American women's identity and the oppression they face throughout their lives. She breaks the tradition of writing about traditional topics and brings to light the trauma faced by fat people. Obesity, as a problem for the cultural and societal set norms of beauty, becomes a pressure for women to conform to the cultural values to get fitted in the androcentric world. Gay has brought the fat consciousness among young people to discursive stage along with the normalized attractiveness of the thin people. According to Rayhan et al., fat studies have become a novice field in humanities as a part of literary works and researches that Gay has brought into discussion through her memoir *Hunger*. Solnit has taken the same fatphobia as the basis of her struggle as a thin woman in rape culture.

The multiple folds of traumatic experiences of sexuality, blackness and fatness all have conjoined in tandem to harm the personality of a woman. The process of fat-shaming brings fat people's unhappiness, stigmatization and defamation (Rayhan, Jannat and Rahman 109), making other people indifferent to the criticism and problems faced by fat people. Cahill writes, "A rape victim may react to the horrific experience of not having control over her own body by engaging in strict and sometimes dangerous dietary practices, or in self-mutilation, as if to solidify her own agency even at the risk of her health ((Rayhan, Jannat and Rahman 108-9)" (Cahill 196). The researchers have explored Gay's naivety when she becomes nothing by becoming invisibly hyper-visible to men as her strategy to avert rape. Her act of seeking maximum place to reduce the place for any perpetrator has brought her into light. The hatred and discrimination for fat people as recursive experiences change her outlook of life and her reaction as a resistive force to counter body-shaming. Cat Pause has brought forward the stigma attached with fatness especially with the Black people who face multiple oppressive forces of racism, sexism and fat-shaming. According to the researcher, sharing such stories is a key aspect to disrupt and undermine the normative "obesity epidemic discourse" (Pause 175), for which the researcher has used the autoethnographic method.

Meghan Hogg criticizes the White supremacist projects of saneist and ableist logics of fat-shaming and inspiring anxiety among undisciplined fat people. She

describes the fatness and madness as the Black women's strategy of countering such shaming by rejecting healthism. She criticizes the neo-liberal understandings of fatness and madness as giving the impact of queer failure (Hogg 71). According to her, white supremacy designs the nexus for such madness and fatness. Her analysis leads to the ultimate need of dealing such obese people with bio-pedagogies through self-disciplining. Gay's logic, of becoming invisible by becoming fat, enigmatically undermines her invisibility by making her hyper-visible and subject to staring, gawking and gaping or abnormal, as examined through the lens of Robert Crawford and Rosemarie Garland Thomson (Hogg 71). Her undisciplined body faces marginalization because of the intersection of race, class, sexuality and fatness.

White people's thin, healthy and able archetypal bodies provide the cultural criteria of active and responsible citizens. Consequently, such fatness and disability imparts embarrassment and anxiety on both the viewer and the viewed, hinting towards the cultural anxieties and discomfort (Hogg 73). Gay's hunger for an impenetrable fortress or avoiding becoming a public space pushes her into an un-ending war between her fat body encapsulating her thin body, transferring her to the threshold of multiple Personality axis disorders (Hogg 75-6). Her defiance of the status quo puts her into the category of burdened citizens who selfishly adhere to their own choices. Gay declares her story as a story of shame, guilt, and self-destruction (Hogg 78). According to Hogg, "The hetero-patriarchal, white supremacist system that underpins capitalism and neoliberalism relies on the invisibility of bodies that do not adhere to a schema of self-sufficiency, that is unruly and flagrant in the manifestation of their need" (Hogg 79). Gay's powerful mode of dissent and resistance is visible in her fight against the unjust treatment that she faces in the liberal environment of the twenty-first century America.

Amber Moore reviews Gay's *Hunger* as a riveting memoir of her resistance against sexual violence and rape assault. Moore declares Gay's fatness as hunger for reclaiming her existence. She, in her poetic audacity, paints Gay's choice of Indigo as her trauma of non-existence (Moore 270). Amanda Spallacci has also analysed the traumatic past of Gay as the main cause of her fat body. She has tried to connect Gay's memoir as a resistance against sexual violence and undermining project of rape culture as a part of *#MeToo*. According to Spallacci, the first hand narration of rape from the rape victim provides the most authentic account of the suffering. However, the event centered legal approach demands evidence (Spallacci i). In majority of the cases, the

lack of evidence or any valid proof of rape further the damage to the victim. Spallacci describes such situation as a way forward for the victims and survivors through which they find the opportunity to write about their trauma. Conjunctively, Theresa Brown sympathizes with Gay for her fatness. She considers it a matter of consciousness for all health care workers especially nurses to deal with fat people with care. Because of her traumatic childhood memory of rape and victim-blaming, she is socially ostracized, as also found by Theresa Brown. Her stigmatized body is the memory of her painful past that she tries to resist by becoming fat.

Shirley Jordan and Still Judith have explored the phenomenon of Gay's eating disorder as not only a health concern but also a literary problem to be analysed especially in the context of American cultural priorities in comparison with French, Spanish, German and Italian cultures. Tiffany L Carson also examines the medical implications of Gay's Hunger and her fatness and the different meanings of hunger and body weight, which they need to manage as a cultural and historical implication. Shannon Callahan examines the fragmented bodies of Gay, Maggie Nelson, and Jenny Boully. Callahan's research brings to light the bodies as spaces of existence in the form of texts presented to the public for further exploration (Callahan 10-11). The researcher has presented the white page in the texts as the connective tissue, connecting the unspeakable with the speakable and the reader to the unsaid along with the reparation of the bodily disfiguration and fragmentation. Camelia Elias' *theory of fragmentation* provides her the lens to gauge the fragmented body wrestling with the amount of control on their bodies within the text (Callahan 11). Usher C has also examined the traumatic experience of Gay and the psychological implications of the problem in the research titled as *The Body and the Traumatic Real*.

Hence, the examination of Gay's trauma, her fatness, body-shaming, Blackness, and the indelible spaces for intimacy in her life that have made her isolated from the real world's happiness, have brought forward the previously explored multiple oppressive forces which she has faced in her life. All these previous researches have also brought a virtual hyperspace to study Gay's real life *willfulness*. Her *willful* transformation into a *Feminist Killjoy* and the process of learning the strategy of 'Refusal' have been found as underexplored and examined in the current research as a novel idea in relation to the similar efforts of a White feminist Solnit's life experiences,

especially in the time period when *#MeToo* has become a problem in the American patriarchal society.

## 2.4 Subverting Rape Culture by Becoming *Willful Feminist Killjoy*

Freyja Haraldsdóttir has analysed the role of *feminist killjoys* in determining the worth of *#MeToo* as a movement to support the victims and survivors. Haraldsdóttir is a disabled woman herself and works for the recognition of psycho-emotional effects of multiple oppressions on disabled women's identity. She is a feminist killjoy for highlighting the problem with *#MeToo* "affected by the multiple and complex entanglements between gender and disability" (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 221). Haraldsdóttir has examined the effectivity of *#MeToo* for only White supremacists, making the movement racist in nature for not supporting the marginalized, disabled women and those who have no approach to digital media to register their voices. She has focused on the significance of *#MeToo* while arguing in favour of the disabled and Black women in Iceland by using the theoretical framework of Sara Ahmed's and Audre Lorde's lens. Her bad feminist moment or feminist snap detaches her from the world of normal feminists who share their role in *#MeToo* and ignore the disability discourse, ignoring Haraldsdóttir's need, which silenced her for that moment and created a grudge for belonging to an unacknowledged intersectional identity. According to her, the experience of being disabled and sexually humiliated and rejected through sexual violence is an experience of difference that makes them killjoys for raising voice against the happiness and set norms of women with dominant feminine traits (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 224). Examples she has cited include "putting in a catheter, to rape" (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 224), which radically changes the sense of care to sense of being raped and harassed. Their identity, as desexualized and disabled, creates extreme approach to their body, and makes them unable to protect the integrity of the body.

Bringing to dialogue the critical situation of disabled women, whose traumatic experiences of rape and sexual assaults are not considered as sexual violence, led to their being labelled as killjoys and trouble makers among the feminist communities (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 225). Their solidarity comes forward as remaining silent for the problem they face. She cites,

As Audre Lorde teaches us, speaking out is not just about making a public statement, or confronting oppressors or perpetrators. It's about finding your



voice, connecting to people we trust and who hear you, searching for and inventing words and terminology to describe our lived experience (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 225).

Sara Ahmed advised to devise guerilla tactics for the similar problem to avoid becoming killjoy and preferably becoming *feminist killjoys* to raise voice for the blind, deaf, dumb, and women with other disabilities.

Trish Reid has used Sara Ahmed's *Willful Subjects* and *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* to analyse the strong and willful female characters that resist the inclusion of the external patriarchal agency by enforcing their *will* (T. Reid 47). Reid has also analysed the aftermaths of the traumatic events in the life of a black woman character 'Three' in green's play *hang* (T. Reid 390) and described her as a confrontational playwright. She has examined debbie tucker green's "striking and meaningful contribution to this discourse, by staging black women who kill joy by articulating their resistance via angry resolve, belligerence and intransigence" (T. Reid 390). She has explored the urge in the black woman to take revenge (T. Reid 391). Cahill also justifies fighting back and approves victim's retaliation (T. Reid 203) to prove her innocence. 'Three' wants the perpetrator to be hanged as a punishment for his undescribed crime against her family (T. Reid 391). The Black playwright 'green' has subverted the cultural imperatives of getting along with people or things. She has become a feminist killjoy by making her characters more outspoken and resistant towards the norms and traditions of the patriarchal society. Three's revenge is her happiness, as Reid has analysed. Her willingness to communicate her unhappiness is her willful act which makes her a killjoy (T. Reid 397). But, in the play and also in the research, the problems are still unidentified, on the basis of which the perpetrator is hanged. In the similar way, Elisabeth Weber has analysed the willful child in Grimm's fairy tale (Weber 231). In feminists' context, the feminists who *will* against the general *will* become feminist killjoys. These feminist killjoys resist sexual violence and raise consciousness in the society that is the main argument in the current research and the gap in literature.

Samantha A. Langsdale reviews Sara Ahmed's *Willful Subjects* as the new examination of "the intersections of concepts of will, time, the body, and society" (Langsdale 239). She has reviewed how Ahmed categorizes her *Willful Subjects* as not philosophical in nature, rather based on historical conceptualization of *will* and *willfulness* and the different experiences of *will* and its possible meanings (Langsdale

227), as also reviewed by Margrit Shildrick. Ahmed argues that a certain form of *will* renders others' *wills* as *willful*, assuming the right to eliminate them (Langsdale 239). According to Langsdale, Ahmed's methodology of developing her concepts on *will* is interdisciplinary and based on "Literary Theory, Phenomenology following Edmund Husserl, Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, philosophy, and feminist critique" (Langsdale 239). According to her, "Ahmed demonstrates that when objects, or certain subjects, become obstructions to the will, force is employed in order to make that thing willing" (Langsdale 240). Langsdale writes that "the demand for obedience is not simply a demand that the part obeys the whole but is willing to become part of the whole" (Langsdale 240). Contrary to this, the unwillingness as disobedience creates the problem in society as not becoming the part of the whole will or the general will (Langsdale 242). She describes willfulness as the technique of dismissal, and not inhabiting the norms of an unjust institution (Langsdale 242-3). These willful subjects then become invisible to those who are a part of the institution and consequently, assert more power to insist on their existence (Langsdale 243). In feminists' context, the feminists who *will* against the general *will* become feminist killjoys. These feminist killjoys resist sexual violence and raise consciousness in the society.

Becoming *willful* is a controversial phenomenon from Dante's time. In *Towards a Poetics of Freedom*, Jenna Brooke Sunkenberg has compared the concept of *will* present in Dante's and Ricoeur's works. She has analysed Paul Ricoeur's phenomenological assertions on poetics of freedom as paradoxical in nature i.e. both free and bound (Sunkenberg ii). She expounds on Ricoeur's and Dante's conceptualization of *will* as the dialectical relation "between freedom and nature, between objectivity and subjectivity, between perspective and meaning, and between oneself as another; or in Dante's terms, between my life and *la nostra vita* (our life)" (Sunkenberg 4) to reconfigure reality and the presence of such juxtaposed paradoxical realities within our body in the form of either-or dichotomies. Such dynamic reciprocity allows one's self to experience both of the realities vice-versa within the confinement of the body. It allows one to experience the phenomenological existence in intermediary status as freedom or the nature of the self as well as the horizons of the possibilities to enunciate the humanly attributes of a personal lived experience as being-in-the-world. Her findings highlight the belonging of Ricoeur, Heidegger and Gadamer in the

hermeneutics of subjective interpretations of the texts as a culturally autonomous discourse (Sunkenberg 8).

It is the idea of a harmonized yet dialectical interplay of freedom and nature, of what is for Dante the eternal happiness of the Paradiso, a state of being that is not either the oneness of selfhood or the wholeness of universality, but simultaneously and paradoxically both (Sunkenberg 11).

In the similar fashion, the application of the Ricoeur's conceptualization of *Will* is also reflected in Ahmed's *Willful Subjects*. She theorized the *will* and *Willfulness* of a woman who raises her voice against the problematic patriarchal norms. The androcentric world stops her from asserting her *will*. When she starts understanding her *will* as a dialectical experience of asserting her being-in-the-world or in Heidegger's words as her *Dasein*, then her anger transforms her into a *willful subject*. Hannah Lee has traced out the similar anger and *willfulness* among the women characters in Shakespearean tragedies using Ahmed's lens to gauge the feminist snap, re-presented as madness or unreasonable. She argues that the feminist snap is productive and highlights the powerful presence of women characters especially in the patriarchal world where anger is associated productively with men only. Women's emotions place pressure on their bodies that push them to snap. She examines the different shades of women's anger and *willfulness* as their play either for freedom or for power to challenge the patriarchal norms and ideas of productivity (Lee 3). Women experiencing authority and power, taking revenge in response to their anger as snap, and exerting their existence as significant in the world rife with androcentric rule and authority, are the important tropes of Shakespearean plays.

Similarly, Elisabeth Weber has analysed the willful child in Grimm fairy tale (Weber 231). The tension of the collapsing boundaries between a virgin and the tainted woman create a pressure on the oppressed woman as an overt anger, which becomes her *willfulness*. Such defiance becomes the disobedience to the norms of the patriarchal culture and casts a woman off from the obedient body of the patriarchy as experienced by Antigone. Ultimately, she becomes a feminist who resists and puts all her efforts to undermine the cultural oppression especially the rape culture in which women's body is suppressed as an object to make it obedient. This aspect of a feminist's self as feminist snap and her *Willful acts* is explored in the current research as a part of the debate on the women's oppression in the rape culture.

## 2.5 Finding and Filling the Gap to Rationalize the Current Research

It has been found in the review of previous research that the problematic narration of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ in many fictional works has created ample debates and researches on women’s willingness and unwillingness. The previous works have also questioned the offender’s intent and the double-binds of victimization especially at the moment of sexual assault in the culture where rape is already normalized. All the above-mentioned researches have brought forward *#MeToo* as the clue to check the American rape culture. The number of memoirs came forward in the past decade, has also highlighted the resistance and radical activism of women writers to challenge the narrative forces of fictional works as *Lolita*. Catherine A. Mackinnon, Susan Brownmiller, Ann J. Cahill and many others have theorized the rape and many American women like Elizabeth Tallent, Danielle Downey, Gloria Steinem, Adrienne Miller, Mackinnon, Oprah Winfrey and others have narrated their personal experiences of rape assaults and sexual violence to support *#MeToo* in the literary genre of memoirs and essays. Gay’s essays *Bad Feminist, Not That Bad- Dispatches from Rape Culture* and many other essay-collection books are written to challenge the American authorities’ notion of normalizing rape culture and victim-blaming strategies.

Erin Wunker’s and Sara Ahmed’s concepts as a collective force of *willful feminist killjoys* to subvert rape culture, have not been taken previously in any study of *#MeToo* to study Solnit’s and Gay’s memoirs within an intersectional cultural framework in the paradigm of feminist phenomenology. It has provided a novel idea for the current research. Hence, concluding the whole discussion, the rape culture as the constant threat for the American women, needs to be subverted using *#MeToo*, which is highlighted in the selected memoirs of Solnit and Gay and dealt in the current research as the cause of the *willful* resistance of the victimized American women as a stand for *#MeToo*. Moreover, the problem of *Feminist killjoys*’ activism to kill the happiness of patriarchal agents is the gap in the present research, especially taking Solnit and Gay in focus to justify their role as *#MeTooists* in the fight for acknowledgment of their existence. The main problem to be highlighted is the problematic nature of the similar *willfulness* of the *willful subjects* after their take on subverting the rape culture through the narrativized attack on the patriarchal nerve by supporting *#MeToo*. Taking the digital media platform and proving *#MeToo* as not a small moment of testification, rather a social and digital movement to support the

victims and survivors, is the significant realization. The politicization of *#MeToo* debate, on the basis of women's choices, needs to be decolonized to end the backlash or silencing strategy. For that matter, the current research would provide the necessary tactics of refusal and the sympathetic sisterhood as the powerful force against the androcentric hetero-patriarchal politics. The study of *#MeToo* would also provide the examination of agential power the *willful feminist killjoys* attain after they share their lived experience of sexual violence on digital media. The blame-shifting towards women for their choices of dresses as the crucial factor in increased rape cases, has also tangentially been touched upon in the current study. The main purpose is to build the argument that *#MeToo* is supportive against all types of sexual violence. The revelation of sexuality from women's dresses, cannot be taken as the justification for rape as the corrective measure. The backlash faced by *#MeToo* on the ground of women's sexuality or revealing and seductive dresses is baseless, which has been argued in the study. The study also caters American women's bodily *will* in building it as a fortress in Gay's case or a thin version in Solnit's case to avoid rape and sexual violence. How a common American woman gets rid of a patriarchal noose of thin body and restricted clothes' choice through her *willfulness* to end rape culture, has been studied in relation to *#MeToo*.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Details can be read from the book. The handbook is a detailed account on digital feminist movement and *#MeToo* activism to understand its multidisciplinary nature. It incorporates the thematic and theoretical discussions of researchers, scholars and policy makers in the fields of Political Science, Women studies, Gender studies, Literature, Anthropology and others (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir).

<sup>2</sup> Catharine A. MacKinnon has presented her well-articulated critique on Rape Laws and intersectionality in her article titled as *Intersectionality as Method: A Note* in which she has explained Crenshaw's assertions on the topic. The detail is available in the article on page number 1022 and onwards in which she criticizes the problems in legislation and the struggle of Ms. Dafro Jefferies (MacKinnon 1022).

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study is qualitative in nature, designed to investigate the rape culture and the *willfulness* of American women to support *#MeToo* as the significant field of invested interest for many feminists in the contemporary American society. The cause of these feminists' becoming killjoys for the androcentric world has been examined in the study of *#MeToo*, using the phenomenological framework based on Sara Ahmed's and Erin Wunker's scholarly works on intersectional cultural feminism. They have also shared their personal experience of sexual violence amid rape culture. The focus is on tracing the auto/biographical narration of lived experiences of sexual violence and rape assaults of the selected American authors Solnit and Gay. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the philosophical understanding of the thinkers' and cultural experts' notion of the problematic rape culture to underpin my argument. Considering the theoretical framework's basis on the memory of sexual violence in rape culture as the continued lived experience with the identity of a raped woman; her embodiment, and her agency as *will* or her *willfulness*, Sidonie Smith's method has not been employed. The investigation is girded to the textual analysis devised by Catherine Belsey and *Auto/biography as a Research Method* by Mary Evans, given in *Research Methods for English Studies* to make sense of the text present in the auto/biographical memoirs with the first personal voices 'I' and 'We', with different women's life memories. The selected memoirs, based on the aspect of rape culture, are not only the autobiographical accounts of the writers but also the biographical incidents of rape and sexual violence faced by the American women with a holistic view to testify the existence of the problem in a systematic manner.

The autobiographical segment of the memoirs is analysed keeping in mind the historical or real 'I' as an important contribution in the collective movement of individual voices as *#MeToo*. Buss is of the view that 'I' is the collective effort and the voice for the whole community and their specific actions in collaboration (25), which hints towards the consciousness of the contemporary philosophers about the cultural aspects. Reading such real life experiences and counting one's self as among the victims and survivors of sexual violence is one such example that is the

phenomenological assertion of courage. Solnit and Gay have crossed the threshold and become feminist killjoys by supporting the *#MeToo* movement to strive for women's *willfulness*. Heidegger's and Husserl's phenomenological approach has been advanced by Sara Ahmed in *her Willful Subjects*, which has provided the methodology for the study to comprehend the Dasein moment of the rape victims and survivors. Solnit's and Gay's consciousness of their existence at the digital space with *#MeToo* as eternal and historic artefact in technological practices would be investigated to make sense of their existence in the digital world with *#MeToo*.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework for *Willful Subjects as Feminist Killjoys***

For the current study, the theoretical framework has been taken from Sara Ahmed's and Erin Wunker's intersectional concepts about the *Feminist Killjoys* and their *willfulness*, which is the quality of a defiant person who determinedly imposes his or her personal choice (willfulness). While Ahmed describes *willfulness* (emphasis) as the quality of the (female) *willful* child who disobeys her mother and becomes defiant (Ahmed, W 1). According to Ahmed, "willfulness is assigned to girls because girls are not supposed to have a will of their own" (Ahmed, LFL 68). Whereas, boys are considered superior and this superiority paves the path for their being *willful*. The negative sense of meanings, entrenched in the society, make *willfulness* more as feminist than masculinist. Ahmed describes the inequity prevailing in the patriarchy as acceptance of a boy's *willful acts* and rejection of the girl's *willfulness*. When used to counter sexual violence, it is criticized as disobedience to societal norms. According to her, "To become she is to become part of a feminist movement" (Ahmed, LFL 4). Owning the body, in Ahmed's words, means owning the mind also (Ahmed, LFL 4-5), which also gives power to speak against injustice and oppression. She describes the phenomenon of willfulness as,

If authority assumes the right to turn a wish into a command, then willfulness is a diagnosis of the failure to comply with those whose authority is given. The costs of such a diagnosis are high: through a chain of command (the mother, God, the doctors) the child's fate is sealed. It is ill will that responds to willfulness; the child is allowed to become ill in such a way that no one can "do her any good" (Ahmed, W 1).



Such dualistic treatment as deceitful act committed by women is categorized as a proscribed action in a place where the authoritative crimes and injustices are normalized despite threatening or negotiating the *willful subject's* survival. For the crime of *willfulness*, the punishment is as severe as death either symbolic or material (Ahmed, W 1) to curb the defiance of the disobedient women before it spreads.

The main causes of *willfulness* are oppression, violence, sexual abuse and, in Ahmed's words, the decisions taken by the authority against the *will* of the subject (W 1). These decisions also authorize the White supremacist men to make women willing by permitting sexual violence onto their *willful* body as a rod to correct their actions. Resultantly, such sexual violence leads to rape assaults and then to a proper rape culture. The cultural oppression that, according to Wunker, is responsible for women's fear and victimization, gives way to rape culture (Wunker 52-4). Sara Ahmed explains her painful experiences of harassment and sexual violence, in the form of writing by mentioning "you" and not "me" to keep herself distant from the direct relation "but with qualification" (Ahmed, LFL 14), to avoid the disgrace associated with raped women as a stigma. She redefines Butler's gender performativity, according to the oppressed position of women,

No one is born a woman; it is an assignment (not just a sign, but also a task or an imperative...) that can shape us; make us; and break us. Many women who were assigned female at birth, let us remind ourselves, are deemed not women in the right way, or not women at all, perhaps because of how they do or do not express themselves (Ahmed, LFL 15).

The inability and incapability of not expressing one's pain, or the problem that makes women untrustworthy, logically become the feminists' problems, which they dare to address in order to support the weak woman. Using 'I' for expression becomes a hyperactive noun that is subsided in androcentric world. It becomes a patriarchal assignment to eliminate a woman's 'I' from the pivotal position. Wunker also describes the decisive nature of the resolute act of "being able to say *I* in a public sphere" (Wunker 14) and of experiencing the authority of one's life in one's own hands as assertion of one's existence without any fear. Buss disagrees with the autocritical reflective use of 'I', following Susan D. Bernstein's focus on the "relative complexity of 'reflexive' voice" (H. M. Buss 17), which endorses its usability as the assertive 'I'. Wunker describes the writing with 'I' at the subject position as 'feminized' (Wunker 14).

Disclosing any feminist idea in public, as an individuated and personal experience, needs courage to face the killing joy experience. Instead of using 'I' as an isolated individual feminist voice or joy-killing collective 'We' at the subjective position of power, 'Me' rationalizes the victims' and survivors' more objectified position that rightly justifies the position of a raped woman under androcentric pressure. 'Me Too' asserts the individual, but collective empathy from the same position. According to Wunker, using 'I' assertively dictates others of assurance and acknowledgement of the right to speak (Wunker 14). But, unfortunately, the use of 'I' is dismissed in the literary field (Wunker, Feminist Killjoy 14). Wunker declares such a problematic use of 'I' as risky not only for the speaker but also for the status quo (Wunker 15), which is a critical problem in patriarchal society.

The critical use of 'Me' locates the central position of the victim as *#MeToo*. This particular central position on which the illegal and illegitimate act of rape is committed, enunciates the problem of the androcentric patriarchy, especially as the zeitgeist of the epoch. In this manner, the feminists assign the rape a name i.e. *#MeToo*. Ahmed describes the process of assigning the problem any name "as magnifying the problem" (Ahmed, LFL 34) and becoming a problem for those who avoid dialogues on such problems in the patriarchal society (Ahmed, LFL 34), which is also elucidated by Wunker. Ahmed categorizes *will* as a sphere of gradation as "stronger and weaker, healthier and unhealthier, better and worse, such that the state of the will becomes the truest measure of the state of the person" (Ahmed, W 61). When the *will* of any part asserts its *will*, it negates others' *will* that disturbs the wholeness and the general *will* (Ahmed, W 2). Therefore, *willfulness* is considered as a problem for women especially when they face violence and become *willful*. It has been analysed in the current research as the American women's *will* in relation to the *#MeToo* movement as a broader discourse on rape culture and not the transitory *#MeToo* moment only, hence, transforming the feminists into killjoys.

According to Ahmed, the consciousness of the problem comes after becoming a victim and experiencing the "violence and power concealed under the languages of civility, happiness, and love, rather than simply or only consciousness of gender as a site of restriction of possibility" (Ahmed, LFL 62). On the basis of Ahmed's assertions, Wunker describes the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' as traded for 'endurance' (Wunker 27). Both of them describe the triviality of happiness and the juxtaposed pain covered

by the happy faces. Ahmed writes, “[V]iolence has intruded into scenes of bliss” (Ahmed, LFL 63). Such subtle terms practically employed by men to harm women bring the normalization of violence in happy moments to make women realize that they are made to be harmed. In response to such silent victimhood, women become defiant. According to Ahmed, *willfulness* is considered as pejorative in nature when assigned to women. They resist their femininity and pursue feminism to have their voices heard.

Submission to parents’ *will* is the sign of obedience and femininity (Ahmed, LFL 69), while the opposite behavior needs a rod for its elimination (Ahmed, W 2). She confers the difference of obedience and disobedience by designing the models, “obedience is associated with good cheer: to be willing is to be happy to obey. She is happily willing or willing happily. The girl who does not cheerfully submit is the girl who insists on getting her own way” (Ahmed, LFL 70). She further elaborates the concept by mentioning the model of disobedience or willfulness as, “the acquisition of a voice as a refusal to be beaten” (Ahmed, LFL 73), opted by women as their *will* to survive. She alludes to many historical references and explains the experience of violence and abuse as a part of women’s history.

Ahmed’s feminist killjoy does not prefer others’ happiness as her cause. She creates the chaotic problem by becoming obstinate (LFL 74-5) to join the centrality from the periphery. That killjoy “makes the world about herself” (Ahmed, LFL 75) to be heard and understood. She is maladjusted for not conforming to the roles set by the patriarchal society and becomes disobedient because of the problem of owning her own *will* (Ahmed, LFL 84). This maladjustment is taken as an excuse to correct women’s role only and not men’s. Ahmed writes,

How queer is this will! As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has elaborated, the word “queer” derives from the Indo- European word “twerk,” to turn or to twist, also related to the word “thwart” to transverse, perverse, or cross (1994, viii). That this word came to describe sexual subjects is no accident: those who do not follow the straight line, who to borrow Lucretius’s terms, “snap the bonds of fate,” are the perverts: swerving rather than straightening, deviating from the right course (Ahmed, W 11).

Such swerving, deviating, and snapping the bonds of fate has been employed in the current research to deal with the *willful feminist killjoys*. The self-certainty of such

obstinate and perverse *willful* persons (Ahmed, W 18) is not how the *will* becomes what is given to a subject. Rather, it refers to the rebirth of a powerful subject owning the *will*. Such *willfulness*, countering the existential crisis, is not only a sign of existence, “I will therefore I am” but also an impulse to existence: “I will then I am” (Ahmed, W 23) by challenging the authoritative volition. According to Ahmed, the importance of *will* is evident from the fact that its weakness or fragile nature makes the subject “self-shackled” due to her *will* in a state of imperfection (Ahmed, W 28). With the passage of time, the *willful* person becomes non-compliant.

Husserl declares the human body as “an organ of the Will” that transforms the invisible *will* into objectified and moveable body as a slave to “the will of the pure ego” that is “moveable immediately and spontaneously” (Ahmed, W 35). Ahmed agrees with him and describes the *will* as countering the demands of others who, in consequence, block the *willful subject* (Ahmed, W 37). She asserts that *willingness* implies forced compliance in reaction to the force to avoid the punishment (Ahmed, W 42). The employment of unjust force to achieve the required results by the authoritative subject, confirms its *willfulness*, which is right because of its nature of traditional and cultural ritual. Such objectification is victimization which is unacknowledged. While Ahmed describes the defiance of the weak objects against the tyrant’s *will* as their *willfulness* (Ahmed, W 42). When the object rejects the external *will* and gains power to assert its own *will*, then the object’s trait of carrying a *will* would be its *willfulness*. The reason behind such double standards are put forward as the compliance to patriarchy, necessary to continue the process of collective goodness under general *will*.

A victimized woman’s consent by force in the critical moments is the situation in which their body’s safety is compromised to avoid death. Under forcible pressure, the *will* to assert ‘No’ subsides and their ‘No’ is heard as ‘Yes’ by the perpetrators (Ahmed, W 55). The weakness and objectification of women is the main cause for their inability to counter rape assault or sexual violence. Their weakness has been culturally incorporated in their bodies, which stops them from becoming disobedient. The same culture in the process of supporting the willfulness of offenders has normalized rape culture.

According to Ahmed, the process of discovering the body’s *will* and recovering it after the trauma (W 140) of patriarchal pressures becomes a memory project. The signs of the patriarchal force may not be completely eliminated from the body. When a

*willful* body experiences self-recovery, the collective aftermath is observed in the whole body as a vital and shared inheritance. According to Ahmed, such stigmas and tainted signs on their bodies are remembered by the victimized bodies (Ahmed, W 140) as a cultural remembrance of the traumatic past. Ahmed enunciates such embodiment of painful memories of women's reluctance and incongruence as a problem for patriarchy (Ahmed, W 140). Hence, *willfulness* is a problem associated with girls especially when they disobey to avert rape attack.

In the process of willing to *will* the right things, women become puppets to follow the necessary course of action to avoid exertion and conflict with the authority (Ahmed, PC 236). Ahmed describes Rousseau's process of directing the child's *will* under the label of freedom as compromising the subject's survival (Ahmed, PC 238-9). Agreeing to her stance of revealing the general *will* as the veiled system of surveillance onto the child, which when compromises his/her 'individual will', leaves him to be an obedient subject to the system. Even such compliant subjects become unable to learn self-defense. Hence, such general patriarchal *will* is the process of creating compliant subjects with limited liberty. Contrary to this, she describes *willfulness* of the problem character as, "Asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against, persuasion, construction or command, governed by will without regard to reason, determined to take one's own way, obstinately self-willed or perverse" (Ahmed, PC 240). Therefore, Ahmed's justification liberates and empowers the *will* which feminists own and become killjoys to raise voice against the unjust power exerted onto them in the patriarchal society.

### **3.1.1 *Willfulness* as #MeTooism- Killing Patriarchal Joy**

Wunker's conceptualization of feminist killjoys is truly based on Ahmed's explanation of feminists' real position in the patriarchal society. Her attribution of feminists as those people especially women who do not take care of others' happiness, is the sign of the *willfulness* which these feminists have achieved after facing and examining prevalent rape culture and normalized sexual violence. Wunker enunciates her personal pain from the locus of a body-gendered-female who has no space of her own (Wunker 13; 194) and whose existence is challenged at every corner.

I am a somatic archive. We all are. And the culture we live in—a culture in which women fear for their safety and must protect themselves from sexual

violence—begets the oppressive system that has taught me to enact or metabolize concrete and abstract acts of devastating violence. Women are surveilled, regulated, and objectified (Wunker 54).

She examines her emotions at the time of walking outside her house, and being followed and harassed, as an overreaction on a normal situation (Wunker 52), which hints towards the victim-blaming and apology as a common practice in the rape culture. Nonetheless, in the contemporary time period, the same experience opens up the factual position of the subject caught up in a place with normalized rape culture. She writes about her personal experience to become a part of *#MeToo* and to support the movement which has taken the responsibility to undermine the fear of getting raped or harassed outside the house. Both, Wunker and Ahmed, highlight the problem of compliant general *will* that cannot support the victim when a woman gets trapped in the snare of the rapist.

It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm... In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable (Wunker 54).

Wunker's and Ahmed's collective intersectional notes on feminist killjoys highlight the anxiety of teaching young girls about fearing rape. Such anxiety hints towards the problem which is a challenge of its kind and intrigues Wunker's mind. She poses the difficulty of teaching the girls not to fear rape as an enigma (Wunker 101), especially when the cultural interpellation of rape is evident from the daily incidents faced by majority of the women. Women are surveilled by men to get the chance to condoning them to physical and emotional terrorism. *Willful* men are always potential aggressive subjects who use rape as the outcome of their aggression, hence, creating a culture where women fear for their safety.

In the similar rape culture, another problem that Wunker observes, is the questioning about the act of rape, its place, time, possibility, nature, aspects and impacts on victim and her credibility in the phenomenological process. Such testimonial investigation damages the crucial nature of the case and weakens women's credibility.

Paradoxically, the time taken in investigation gives more relaxation to the perpetrator. Feminists need to be political to counter such challenges. Ahmed calls such politicization of feminism as craftiness of *willfulness* or becoming ‘crafty’ (Ahmed, W 133) to devise guerilla tactics.

Ahmed’s theorization of the women’s actions’ interpretations in the androcentric world highlights the racial segregation along with the sexist differences. She cites Alice Walker’s concept of “womanism” as the same defiance of Black women, “referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered ‘good’ for one. . . . Responsible. In charge. Serious” (Ahmed, W 134). Ahmed criticizes White women for their supremacy because of the White race but also brings intersection between races for the common cause of supporting feminists to support *willfulness*.

### **3.1.2 Willful Feminist Killjoy’s Sympathy and Audacity**

Society as the group of connected human beings emerges after the collective efforts of all the members. Whereas, the willful subjects enigmatically become a community after supporting the defiant bodies as a sympathy project. Ahmed writes, “Sympathy can be understood as accordance: the verb “accord” derives from heart. A sympathetic part is an agreement with heart” (Ahmed, W 101). The sympathy shown by the passive subjects to the active subjects, for empowering them to survive, leads to laying down the milestone of *#MeToo*. The successful execution of command leads to the conformity of the body. Whereas, condoning the body from becoming obedient is the disobedience to the authority which is an unquantifiable anathema for the feminist killjoys, which make them the unwanted beings. Such active persons’ empathy project of *#MeToo* kills the happiness of the patriarchal authorities. Sympathy among the *willful subjects*, keeps them motivated and in motion against authority.

Wunker as a White feminist gravitates on Ahmed’s pondering on the idea of feminist killjoys by presenting them as a ‘positive figure’, criticizing the status quo (Wunker 46). Her resistance as a killjoy highlights the feminist’s role as a combination of “restrictive categories of gender or gender performance”, “[S]he will not tolerate casual instances of racism or classism. She won’t keep quiet to maintain the smooth dinner conversation” (Wunker 46). The feminist killjoy makes space for herself and for all the weaker classes and races in the world. She plans to “disrupt the complacency

that the happiness imperative demands” (Wunker 46). With Wunker, the women surviving in the rape culture recognize the complications associated with the presence of “a hopeful feminist killjoy, complicated and necessary” (Wunker 34). Her intersectional feminism interconnects and dissects the “different oppressive conditions—sexism, ableism, homophobia, racism, transphobia, classism, and so on” (Wunker 38), which snatches the productive space of all victims and survivors, and bars them from living independently. Feminist killjoys raise their voice against such oppression and suppression, declaring women’s engagement as the main effect of the racist, sexist and misogynist society.

### 3.1.2.1 *Willfulness as Audacity*

Ahmed problematizes the willing body as the source to provide extra arms and ears to the powerful system of bodies who gain strength from the oppressed. She writes, “To become subject to the will of the tyrant is thus to provide him with the very organs of this power” (Ahmed, W 139). Such a powerful oppressor uses the victim’s arms as a rod to make her more willing. The provision of the rod to the rapist, in the culture where women already lie at an inferior position, is the expression of supporting the rape culture. Women who comply with the orders and commands of the oppressive force willingly dismiss their security and protection by empowering the tyrant’s limbs as an agent of harm against their own body (Ahmed, W 139). To be forceful and *willful*, implicates the rejection of outer force onto the body of the *willful subject*. Countering the outer force, needs the exertion of *will* as ‘No’. If the victim does not have the power to assert her *will* as No, then the perpetrator takes the same *No* as *Yes* against their *will* and hence seeks power from the same fake consent or reluctance<sup>vi</sup>.

Rape as a life-long scar remains on the body. The same scar as a constant memory pushes the victim and the survivor to stand as a disobedient subject and raise voice against the injustice to reopen the already closed window and take back the *will*.

Indeed, thinking of the history that allows Rosa Parks as a black woman radical to become a symbol of the civil rights movement allows us to explore the complexity of the relation between individual and collective willfulness. A community is willing for an individual actor to receive the willfulness assignment before an individual can receive this assignment. At the same time,



a collective will can only be realized through individuals who are willing to push back in order not to be pushed into obedience (Ahmed, W 142).

Ahmed embarks upon the efforts of feminists, and expose them as prohibited due to the lopsided patriarchal representation. Because of the defiant nature, mindful commitment and orientation towards *willfulness* to reveal the social injustices and legal loopholes (Ahmed, W 135), these feminist killjoys create unhappiness for the authorities. According to her, to qualify for becoming obedient, the requisite unconditional willingness is absent in the *willful* and insolent feminist body (Ahmed, W 135), hence, she is disqualified. She is unheard because of her defiance (Ahmed 137), which, according to Ahmed, threatens the general body of the national *will* (W 100). More precisely, *willfulness* makes the feminists as killjoys of perpetrators' or their patrons' happiness (Ahmed, W 100). Ahmed reveals the Janus-faced society designed by patriarchy to debilitate women's *will*. She writes, "To have no rule but will is to bid for freedom without permission" (Ahmed, W 114). Such willful freedom on men's part works to oppress women's bodies, which is not considered as disobedience, rather a defined role of patriarchy to curb women's audacity.

Ahmed brings forth the example of Lucretia who commits suicide and Ramola who discards Monk's warning by not listening to him. Ramola is characterized by Monk as angry and defiant as antisocial who violates all relations of affection<sup>vii</sup> (Ahmed, W 115) because of the pressure of anger. While Lucretia fails to admit her rape as her desire and under this pressure, she commits suicide. Ahmed writes, "Desire is presented as the loss of serviceable parts. And desire is understood here not only as disobedience to will's command but as the punishment for disobedience" (Ahmed, WS 120; Belsey 175). Ahmed has philosophized how men's desire becomes women's punishment. Such desire dismantles the *Willfulness* and makes the woman's body compliant. He tries to fulfill his desires by using force against the norms. Resultantly, he falls against his cultural *will* to fulfill his body's *will*.

Women become liable to be raped by all men whether belonging to the known faction or unknown, meeting or assaulting while walking in the street. Whereas, when they become *willful*, they are othered out as the sinners to rationalize their general error of causality. The predisposition of *willfulness* for women becomes their predicament. They are represented as passive, defiant, audacious, disobedient, and pernicious because of their manly actions. Such women transgress their boundaries to blur the

threshold of manliness and womanliness, which brings chaos in the patriarchal society. Controlling such women becomes a challenge and a problem for the exploitative patriarchy. The same problem highlights the inequality as the hidden agenda and the ideological pursuit of patriarchal body, which gives women a limited space to live but under the sexualized and gendered directives of the rape culture.

### **3.1.3 Subverting Rape Culture by Becoming *Willful Ear, Hand, Arm, Rod and Stone***

Subverting such systemic violence towards women and the rape culture prevailing in American society needs women's support for *#MeToo*. Women of all identities need to grasp their arms as a complete *willful* body to undermine the problematic cultural practice. The systemic race and gendered society divides the individuals into different classes as a hierarchical categorization in which the discrimination of colour on the basis of race, gender, immigrants and nationals, aids in developing the difference. Ahmed names these differences as 'moral markers', which hinder the progress and create self-consciousness among *willful* individuals who need to assert their existence. Ahmed writes, "A diversity of individual parts is even encouraged but on condition that each part is willing to participate in national culture, where participation requires an agreement with a common end or purpose" (Ahmed, W 128). Contrastingly, the nation itself gets failed in recognizing the different classes and their individual requirements for developing equity. Such failure leads to the resistance and retaliation from different factions either this be feminists or anti-racists and then they become indigestible for the general body of willing subjects or the nation as a whole.

When the radical feminists raise the slogan of 'The Personal is Political' then the *willfulness* is demonstrated as the scattered wills of feminist killjoys whose disobedience is the major source of killing the joy of patriarchal forces. Giving all these individual voices a platform to become a collective defiant body leads to the formation of a global force of a *willful* body to subvert the oppressive governing body. Ahmed provides the example of the Heterodoxy Club as "a little band of willful women" (W 134) in *Willful Subjects*, who undermined the norms and traditions of patriarchy as a wonderful group of feminists. The placards raised by feminist killjoys have the attached rod which, according to Ahmed, provides further strength to the *willful feminists* who have become a part of *#MeToo* movement (Ahmed, W 162). She makes an analogy of

the Radical feminists' movement of *Reclaiming the Night* with the 'angry feet of feminists' who want justice for the rape victims and survivors, as a sign of safety for women who want to travel safely (W 163). For feminist killjoys, she has devised a maxim to be followed, "Feel Like an Arm, Act Like a Rod" (Ahmed, W 168). To curb *willfulness* declaring it a political mass movement, the sovereign power uses rod as happens in Grimm's story mentioned by Ahmed to illustrate the Godliness of the mother's rod to bury the *willful* child. The same rod has the audacity to become *willful* (Ahmed, W 136), needed to make the objectifying subject willing to submit.

Unlike the *willful body*, obedience demands listening to the authorities, creating a willing body of ears who are in favour of the patriarchal culture of suppressing the speaking bodies. Contrarily, the provision of *willful ears* provides the platform to the oppressed and tyrannized women who are the victims and survivors of rape and sexual violence. Ahmed writes about such *willful ears* as a historical project of disobedience (Ahmed, W 138) in which the ears hear wrong to block the legal message of obedience and are prepared willingly to hear wrongly (W 138). She explains the unwillingness to listen to the authority and willingness to listen to the sufferers lead to the uprising of feminist killjoys who mutilate the joyful face of patriarchy.

The joy-killing activism and standing against the authority is not death rather a birth after facing the tyrannical rod. Ahmed mentions, "[P]arts for whom unbecoming a member is birth not death" (Ahmed, W 193). The birth as a solid stone makes the existence more acknowledged when Ahmed denotes the human body as a stone after rolling onto it. She writes,

[H]ow human bodies cannot be made exceptional without losing something: how we matter by being made of matter; flesh, bone, skin, stone, tangled up, tangled in. The entanglement of stone and skin matters: skin too, skin like stone, is capable of receiving impressions. Damage can be understood as a form of reception (Ahmed, W 189).

The damage experienced by victims, aggrandize their anger to become a stone or a stony being. Wunker reveals the White men's derogatory performance and mimicry of Women's anger, especially of *Angry Black Women* "under the umbrella of too-muchness" (Wunker 68-9) to categorize it as animatedness, hysteria or otherness.

Hence, in this process, these angry feminist killjoys become a part of *#MeToo*. For the same *Too* Ahmed writes,

The “too- ness” of course refers to the qualities of something only in relation to actions that I might or might not perform. But we learn that actions involve judgments about the qualities of things in the world. Actions are successful if we judge rightly, a judgment that reaches things, touches things, and shows how we are touched by things. To act requires being in touch with the world (Ahmed, W 189).

The passiveness of mimicked ‘too’, becomes the activism in case of feminism where all women whether harassed, raped, or feared, provide psychological and moral support to the isolated victim. Such connection with the victimized person, creates a globalized network of all the *willful Feminist Killjoys* as *#MeToo*, which expunges the passivity and inertia through sympathy. The credibility, and audacity increases with such digital support for those victims who are unable to approach any direct aid.

### **3.1.4 Willful Feminist Killjoy as a Patriarchal Problem**

When feminists go against the flow they become killjoys for the willing and obedient bodies (Ahmed, W 152). Obstructing the way and striking hard against the grain, provide them agential power. Saying problematic things makes them a problem in front of those for whom the things are the problem. Such a feminist becomes a killjoy for saying wrong thing as stringent being (Ahmed, W 153). Becoming mouthy or reduced to a small part of the body, is the strategy to become a *willful* killjoys. Sara Ahmed criticizes the authorities’ reasoning, “she disagrees because she is disagreeable; it is as if she opposes something because she is being oppositional. To be filled “with will” is to be emptied “of thought” as if speaking about injustice, about power, about inequality” (Ahmed, W 154) is not meant for her. Feminists have the history of being disobedient and not hearing the voice of the authority. Their anger makes them hysterical as the feminist snap. Ahmed explains the moment of feminist snap as the force that enables the women to leave the room for making room for life by breaking the bond of femininity (Ahmed, W 157) and using the anger as a force of killing the joy of authority. The histories of black movements, even *#MeToo* itself as Tarana Burke’s activism against sexual violence and rape assaults, bring forth their *willfulness* by showing the tainted self in the public. Ahmed writes, “If your body is already

stigmatized, you might have to be willing (at least) to double that inheritance, to be stigmatized *all over again*” (Ahmed, W 161; Italics in original) by becoming a part of #MeToo. Passing the sign of #MeToo as a digital activism is described by Ahmed as passing “a sign onto others” (Ahmed, W 162). She writes,

We might, in assuming we are the killjoys, not notice how others become killjoys to us, getting in the way of our own happiness, becoming obstacles to a future we are reaching for. Activism might need us to lose confidence in ourselves, letting ourselves recognize how we too can be the problem. And that is hard if we have a lifetime of being the problem. But the lessons of willfulness are that we can loosen our hold on willfulness, even if, or maybe because, willfulness is used by others to hold us in place (Ahmed, W 170).

In the similar manner, Wunker also describes feminists’ anger as righteous, mediated and opaque, making it oppressive (Wunker 74). However, the androcentric patriarchy looks at the men’s anger as their just emotions, oppressing women in their totemic, universal, and fetishized capacity (Wunker 74). In contrast with the avant-garde, Ahmed’s theorizing of *willfulness*, as ‘an optimistic relation’ (Ahmed, W 174) to continue the struggle in the process of subverting the problematic norms of patriarchy, rationalizes feminists’ anger. Wunker also tries to portray her solidarity after acknowledging her whiteness and relative privilege attached to it to serve the community of the marginalized women as the need to bridge the difference against misogyny (Wunker, Interview; Wunker, Feminist Killjoy) as the *raison d’être* of her existence.

In a *Killjoy Manifesto*, Ahmed expounds the feminist killjoy’s tactic to end the violence faced by women as her egregious purpose, especially the rape culture prevalent in the patriarchal society. She concludes in *Living a Feminist Life*, “Feminists are not calling for violence. We are calling for an end to the institutions that promote and naturalize violence” (Ahmed, LFL 252). The intense pain and oppression felt by the victims and the survivors, after the violation of their body’s integrity, leads to the internal pressure. It pressurizes them to strive for their existence as a complete human being and their agency on their bodies to end the ‘coerciveness of patriarchy’ (Wunker 23; 46), without succumbing to racism, sexism, and classism. The main effort is to rationalize the feminists’ purpose of making the authority realize that their cruel happiness is not the happiness of all, rather the humiliation of women.

The efforts to end the systemic violence, becomes unhappiness not only for the oppressive machinery but for the feminists also. According to Sara, “To be involved in political activism is thus to be involved in a struggle against happiness” (Ahmed, LFL 255). Wunker also expounds on Feminism’s major goals by writing, “The first step to shifting patriarchal culture into something more fair and equitable is to recognize the imperative and urgent need for feminism” (Wunker 23). Such killjoy manifesto is an outstretched hand which makes the feminists *willful subjects* because they kill the silence and expose the perpetrators. According to Ahmed, getting employed in an unjust system and then exposing its cruelty and injustice is even harder a job for killjoys (Ahmed, LFL 263). The support system built through collective efforts of all the *willful* killjoys maintain the resistance against the status quo by raising their voice individually on all platforms leading to form the individual but unique voice of *#MeToo* as a radical (Wunker 29) or in Ahmed’s words, a *willful* act.

The ultimate knowledge of understanding the Black Feminists’ struggle especially Beyoncé’s song and her power in patriarchal system leads to the acknowledgement of the hope which is lighted by these *feminist killjoys* by crushing disappointment which is termed as ‘cruel optimism’ by Lauren Berlant (Wunker 33). As a White woman, Wunker expresses her hope of reinvigorating the culture and making it more acceptable (Wunker 33-4). Ending the rape culture, needs the acceptance of the problem first. The major step to subvert rape culture is to acknowledge that being alone at any public place is not the only element to determine the rapeability of women. She dismantles the concept by sharing her own personal experience of getting raped by an acquaintance in the party full of people (Wunker 36). Her intersectional feminism integrates all marginalized women of colour and other racial differences. Through her framework, I have intersected the problem of rape culture in America as the problem faced by American women and its depiction in memoirs as the problematic patriarchy and its criticism on women’s body and dress choice.

While countering the backlash faced by feminism, Wunker rationalizes the passive forces which dominate to subside the main cause of the activism. She mentions, “[W]e see from the myopia of our own experience; we feel that ours is the hardest path, or “theirs” is not “our” problem. How wrong. How narrow. How cowardly. But also, how normal, or at least, how normalized” (Wunker 39). Wunker and Ahmed’s

collective theorization of happiness as the term associated with the joy of some selected elites who are protected from the problematic sexual violence, faced by the common women. Only these privileged people can comprehend the term “happiness” more practically than those philosophers who have defined happiness from the lens of sadness, wretchedness, emptiness, or dejection. She rationalizes the killing joy experience in the world rife with capitalistic pursuits to annihilate happiness as the socialized and commodified products as also elucidated by Ahmed in *The Promise of Happiness*. Wunker mentions, “Happiness as restricted access. Happiness as a country club, a resort, an old boy’s club for certain boys only. Happiness as body-shame, as racism, as transphobia, as misogyny. These are some of the joys that need killing” (Wunker 45). She tries to limit and obliterate the joy-killing problems from the normal life, which are harmful but present in the cultural practices because men are nonchalant towards these feminist problems.

The rupturing figure or disturbing personality of a *willful* person who has become a *Feminist Killjoy*, is ready to subvert the cultural interpellations of problematic norms especially rape culture by discouraging “complacency that the happiness imperative demands” (Wunker 46). Her pessimism cannot stop her because it is a continuous process of becoming a hopeful person to channelize cruel optimism. Wunker writes, “We learn quickly that, like a spectre, the possibility of rape is everywhere at once. We are taught that, like a spectre, rape is almost impossible to pin down...Rape and its spectre are both an *It*” (Stephen King’s novel) (Wunker 58). Countering the same *It* in a woman’s life is the main task to get rid of rape culture as the craftiness and guerilla tactic.

The process of identifying the rapist as stranger or acquainted is the process of making women stranger to themselves and to their bodies (Wunker 66) that alienates them from the whole body of society, ultimately leading to their becoming *willful* after facing victim blaming.

The moral arc of the show tends to reinforce the otherness of violence without asking us to consider the systems in which the violence is fostered. The rapist is always a sadist and not “normal.” What gets punished, then, is the difference that the rapist manifests—his strangeness, his sadism—rather than the rape itself. We cannot afford to let rape remain alien, other, or strange, because clearly that narrative doesn’t work. It doesn’t stop anyone from raping. Rather,

it offers an alibi to the more common occurrence of rape by friend or acquaintance (or a loved one or a family member or new dating interest or co-worker or boss) and to the quotidian nature of violence against women and the cultural structures that foster that violence (Wunker 62).

Wunker describes such conditions as physical reminders of anger and aggression which one faces in rape culture (Wunker 67). Wunker's anticipation of taking *Feminist Killjoys' anger* as the reason for their oppression (Wunker 74) is what hints towards the politics of patriarchal system. She hopes against hope to move the aggression towards the right direction of usurping the power of rapist. She exposes the critical nature of anger as also prescribed by Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*. Wunker's notes are the warning advice for those who consider their anger as universal and meaningful for all the women (74). Parallel to this, the reality exposes the intersectional differences lying silently beneath the angry resolve of feminists. She warns against fetishizing the anger to give a reasonable response in rape culture for its subversion.

Despite being a White cis- woman with privileges on the basis of race, Wunker takes the responsibility, "we have to learn how we become weaponized against certain bodies. And then we need to learn to re-weaponize against the systems, not the bodies. Learn how you experience certain "joys" that afford you comfort zones that others don't get" (Wunker 70). Activism 'against internalization' of rape and rape culture to dismantle its power, is what the main aspect to be focused to reconfigure the feminists' anger. *Willful Feminist Killjoys* become a problem for patriarchal status quo. Their annihilation becomes the main goal of patriarchy to continue its oppression.

To protect women from the danger of slut-shaming and the threat of getting blamed "by cast[ing] the rapist as a misunderstood and persecuted youngster" (Wunker 86), she has harnessed on such topic to put her efforts as a *feminist killjoy*. Wunker has also elaborated on the cases inclusive of those rapist men who call themselves feminists to seek attention as innocent and actual victims. The blame-shifting situation makes the raped woman solely responsible for her act as the liar (Wunker 88). It is necessary to explain such situations to protect women from further victimization for facing such lies and blames.

El observed how women tend to speak about rape and rape culture in online space. There, she notes, women have forged online spaces to process sexual



assault and trauma. Digital space is, as El notes, one place where one woman's statement of factual affect—I couldn't look at him, for example—is recognized and validated by other women rather than interrogated for objective and evidentiary support (Wunker 89).

Wunker has also given the reference of hashtag *#BeenRapedNeverReported* (Wunker 90) which became the cause of backlash when the victim women were blamed for reporting the rape late. While sharing many tweets of victims of minor age or professionally bound women, she also highlights the objective treatment towards such cases and the representation in “objective language” (Wunker 91), which created space for such women in digital media where they shared their stories in solidarity with victims without any discrimination.

[T]hrough Jones's thinking, come to a reason for why digital space has become an incredible site of solidarity for women, people of colour, queer, and trans people to talk. Digital space is a habitually colloquial space. Testimonial space. A space quite literally engineered for excess, for connectivity, for intersectionality and linked thinking (Wunker 92).

Such linked thinking builds up the body of *willful feminist killjoys* to strengthen the resolve of debilitating victims and survivors.

### 3.1.5 Conclusion

My major focus would be on Wunker's optimization of the situation through the augmentative turn towards 'Hope' to subvert rape culture. Wunker establishes its practicality by teaching not to fear rape rather understand it as a phenomenon which can be countered and undermined. She writes, “[R]ape culture is atemporal and it requires atemporal, non-linear methods of putting words one after another to tell it and to tell it again” (Wunker 103). She shows her resolve to end rape culture by using her teaching profession (Wunker 107) as a White woman to raise voice for all the victims and survivors by providing them an agency on their bodies. However, girding the toxicity of the rape culture and the difficulty in attaining and continuing hope, Wunker establishes the fact that being hopeful is not a straight-forward and easy task, while it can be a “fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience” (Wunker 33).

Hence, Ahmed's and Wunker's propositions of ending fear and adopting counter-surveillance as guerilla tactic, which possibly can undermine the rape assaults

in America, are based on the support system for *Feminist Killjoys* as friends. They highlight the significance of “speaking out and speaking with” (Wunker 260) other women about the problem to make *#MeToo* global in the world-making process. They prefer to refuse, at the time of assault with audacity than to be a part of the problem (Wunker 204), by becoming a passive observer or victim. The act of refusal is the support for *#MeToo* to undermine sexual violence. Despite the problematic nature of such refusals for feminists, these acts of courage save women and undermine the pressure of the society. Breaking of the glass-ceiling effect of such rape culture leads towards taking the first step to show audacity as *feminist killjoys*.

### **3.2 Research Method for the Textual and Auto/Biographical Works**

The method of the research is *Auto/Biographical Textual Analysis* based on Catherine Belsey’s and Mary Evans’ provision of their close reading approach for the provided texts. Evans and Belsey formulate their indispensable methods as part of the research procedure to deal with the cultural criticisms (Belsey 160). Alan McKee extrapolates textual analysis as the method of making sense of the world by using educated interpretations (A. McKee 1) of the selected text. His method of analysis focuses on the context, genre and modality of the selected text as the critical elements, which provide the different aspects associated with the specific argument. The selection of the topic of interest; listing the texts relevant to the research question; selecting the relevant data from the text and making its sense; and then interpreting the selected texts by analyzing meanings (A. McKee 146-7) collectively formulate the method. Correspondingly, Catherine Belsey describes textual analysis to be based on the people’s understanding of the meanings in relation to the outer environment (Belsey 164). She illustrates Lucretia’s rape by using the painting that shows Tarquin’s dagger drawn towards Lucretia’s defensive arm, while the left arm pushing Tarquin back.

Understanding the figure, in accordance with the cultural practices and patriarchal pressures, gives it a different phenomenological connotation as the consenting action. Contrastingly, the same picture provides a different understanding in the context of American rape culture. Capturing the arm by force, is the willful action of Tarquin to violate the safety and dignity of Lucretia’s body. Belsey contends that Brownmiller declares rape as the power play to victimize women (Belsey 163). The direction of Tarquin’s eyeballs and the dagger hints towards amputating Lucretia’s arm, which brings to light the significance of the current research on the defiant arm as the

main criticism of feminists' *willfulness*. Belsey relates the extra textual knowledge with the fictional and non-fictional works by discarding the strategy of "pure" reading (Belsey 163). Her method is focused on the cultural interpretation of the phenomenon and the views of critics on the internet, libraries, and in academic institutions. Her reliance on such vast cultural prospects aids in connecting the *#MeToo* with the selected memoirs in the background of American culture.

Belsey compensates Lucretia's enigmatic representation and the interpretational gap by citing Augustine's examination of rape in *The City of God* and his disregarding the *will* by blaming Lucretia to be involved in sexual relation. He distinguishes the *willful act* from the involuntary act in case of fallen human beings (Belsey 175). Sara Ahmed, in her research *Willful Parts*, describes the similar characterization of fictional stories as creation of the reality which exists before the act of creation (PC 232). According to her, the three-dimensional interpretation of character reveals the intentionality of the readers' expectations. She quotes Helene Cixous, "how fulfillment (of norms that enable recognition) is what establishes "the commerce" between the reader and text" (Ahmed, PC 233). She describes the purpose of the problem character that teaches us about the problem of the character (Ahmed, PC 233). Belsey's interpretation and her method of analysis pose questions about the direction of sympathies, presentation of historical differences, and the problem with surprises (Belsey 174). She has used Ronald Barthes' "proposed execution of the author" (Belsey 164), while reading the text which contemplates the life experience as a part of contemporary culture with no fixed meaning, hence, opening myriads of ways to interpret the texts.

On analyzing the memoirs written by Solnit and Gay, the textual examination of *willful subjects* in the selected works reveal the *willfulness* as not only an individual type but, in Belsey's words, "an ideal type, the oppressed, who will rise up and seize control of their collective destiny" (Belsey 166). Belsey concludes that Barthes does not discuss the authority of the individual reader over the text but the ideal type for whom the text has been written. To make it relatively more understandable, Belsey also subsumes the transitivity of the verb "to read" which needs an object or "something" to be read which is different from "us" and not what the reader actually assumes from the given vocabulary (Belsey 166). Therefore, textual analysis is advanced by understanding the process of interpretation as the effect of a relation between the target

reader and a text with the cultural background (Belsey 166), which has been established in the literature review. Belsey describes the quality of good textual analysis as its awareness of the “text’s requirements” (Belsey 168) and the approach towards reaching the exact meaning of the text.

Therefore, the meaning making of the text in the literary nonfictional works is the main task of the textual analysis, using which the selected memoirs have been analysed. The auto/ biographies and other such non-fictional works provide a deep insight into the lives of the narrators and the people connected to them. According to Evans, the modern West has connected education and the knowledge of culture and life experiences in the literary field which “emphasises the importance of information and claims openness about it as a civic virtue” (Evans 33). In her devised method, she brings to light the imperfect representation of a single personality in auto/biographies as a failure to represent the whole population or society ‘with the fluidity of public and private boundaries’ (Evans 32). Whereas, the memoir fills the gap by providing the personal as political outlook to the existence of human beings in a specific condition. The increased publication of rape memoirs also hint towards the problem, which has not been considered as a problem in the past.

The auto/biographies assist in endorsing the public image of the social icons as “part of a cultural response to the modern world” (Evans 33). We believe these provided information as publicized, without knowing many of the facts of their real lives. Evans expounds that the auto/biographer only provides justifications for the said facts or the already provided information which is a biased account in relation to his/her own personal life. “Living in the culture of fear” (Evans 36), relates our comprehension of other people’s life in the similar culture. According to Evans, the West has normalized the increasingly little surveillance of individuals. However, the moral practice increases in public places where the people follow the ‘normative order of capitalism with internalized sense of the normal’ (Evans 37). She writes, “Once we simply define individuals as members of classes, genders or races, we obscure, I would argue, not merely individual difference but also much of the dynamic of social life” (Evans 39).

From the margins, when Buss describes memoir as the life writing discourse (1), then the emergence of the women’s lives come to the surface who were otherwise lifeless or hysteric beings without any humanness. While detecting the social change in the auto/biographical and memoir reading, the fault lines of our culture are established

“that enable change and creativity” (Evans 46). Such fault lines in the American culture are highlighted by these memoirists who have become feminist killjoys in resisting the cultural shift and degraded morality. In this process, they narrate not only their autobiographical anecdotes, but also the imagistic and factual testimonial details of others’ problematic experiences.

### **3.3 Summary and Relevance of the Methodology**

Hence, the textual and phenomenological interpretation and explanation of *willfulness* among feminist killjoys is the novel concept to study *#MeToo* as the digital embodiment of the phenomenon of women’s defiance as feminist killjoys. It provides the critical details related to the problematic rape culture and its effects on American women lives especially their lived experiences of sexual violence. The methodology devised for the study provides the insight into the digital phenomenon of *#MeToo* as feminist killjoys’ willfulness after the normalization of sexual violence in America. The study is rationalized as the understanding of the real life experiences and writing about rape in memoirs to assert one’s agency.

Focusing on the conceptualization of *#MeToo* as the agential power of the victims and survivors who willfully assert their credibility of proving the existence of sexual violence as a hashtag movement, the memoirs and other non-fictional works provide the written account of the victimization in the rape culture as a struggle through writing and publication in printed form to assert the significance of digital space as the platform to meet the friends and sisters having similar experiences to name the offender. Therefore, the collaborative willful efforts of feminist killjoys to write about the problem not only in non-fictional literary works but also on the digital space provides credibility to *#MeToo* and helps in subverting rape culture through countering the backlash faced by feminism as well as *#MeToo* as a collective empathetic movement. These memoirs, and essays are also readily available on digital websites and also referred to declare war against the rapists and perpetrators while promoting *#MeToo* discussions. Unfortunately, the willful offenders are not proven guilty in many of the trials, the feminist killjoys’ activism profoundly supports the survivors through *#MeToo* and helps in spreading awareness through their writing practices about the problematic heteropatriarchy in their essays and memoirs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed has described reluctance in her book *Willful Subjects* which can be read in detail (Ahmed, W 140-1).

<sup>2</sup> See Sara Ahmed's Book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* for further details (Ahmed, Cultural Politics 174-178).

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### SUBVERTING RAPE CULTURE THROUGH #METOOISM IN SOLNIT'S *RECOLLECTIONS OF MY NON-EXISTENCE*

The argument that I have developed for the current study is focused on the collective efforts of the American women within their individual feminist killjoy capacity to support #MeToo in the process of subverting American rape culture. In this argument, I have discussed the individual efforts of two significant American writers, one of them is Rebecca Solnit whose joy-killing feminism is visible in her political and feminist writings as a part of the anti-race and anti-rape movement. *Recollections of My Nonexistence* reveals her activism for the victims and survivors of rape culture, among whom she has instilled her voice to support the victims as a process of speaking up for them and involving them in the movement #MeToo. She has taken the *willful* step of writing the memoir to counter the status quo for her and others' survival, using the feminist embodiment of *willful* agency. Her 'I' has replaced the androcentric 'I' and transformed itself into a *willful Me Too*, after recalling the experience of sexual violence. She makes armour for her thin and brittle body to protect it from getting raped. The argument that the women's bodies get raped not because of their dresses, rather because of White men's masculine power that needs authentication of owning the sexual desire, has been advanced by Solnit.

#### 4.1 Critical Summary of the Memoir

*Recollections of My Nonexistence*, published in 2020, is Solnit's critical commentary on sexual violence. In her memoir, she has iterated her past experiences of men's influence on her life as a series of harassment and gaslighting events. While discussing how she made her choices in different ways to assert her existence, she recalls the fear of getting raped that hampered her from achieving her desired goals. It makes her memoir the voice of the oppressed and victimized American women who were silenced after rape. Her experience of "vanishing from the world" (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 2) while looking into the mirror and assessing her dress, make her realize her existence as a woman and not a ghost. She becomes horrified

by Edgar Allan Poe's depiction of a dead beautiful woman. While reinvigorating herself with a new motive of life to live without having fear of death, she avoids the chance of becoming a topic of any White man's poetry. Her fear of death also connotes to her fear of being raped or harassed, especially in American culture. While fathoming the cultural toxicity, she encounters 'the fear of assault, of rape', as 'also a fear of violent death'. She mentions, "We die all the time to avoid being killed" (Solnit 68). The dilemma of American literature, for not having the capability to celebrate women's survival rather relinquishing them as dead victims, depicts the society's androcentric preferences and women-hatred. She writes, "I am a girl, a female always in danger of assault and battery" (Solnit 99). Her lifelong experiences of getting caught in difficult situations and denial of her existence are among those battles that have either changed her or reframed her in her life as an independent woman. She finds in her reflection on the mirror the signs and taints of harassment as the pieces of her 'self'. Her 'untainted' or partially 'tainted' or fearful body compels her to shed the extra pieces to live without the fear of getting raped. Being a nineteen years old White lady, she experiences living alone in the Black community with secured life, happiness and natural aesthetics. She likes the apartment, which she rents from a Black man with the help of her old mother (Solnit 12) to dismantle the stereotypes associated with Black men. She highlights the difficulty White women face while getting a house for rent in American patriarchal culture.

According to Solnit, something vital is missing in the White residence of the middle class that she finds in her Black neighbourhood, despite all the fear of getting caught as a forger of her mother's signature. Becoming an adult is like a welcoming sign to the world, which is strange for her. Her existence in America is more challenged and unwelcomed because of her female identity. The audacious task of becoming *willful*, according to Solnit, is her entrance into the new zone of adulthood where she experiences newness. Her *willful* audacity of travelling on the road that she has selected for herself might prove wrong later. However, the assurance of the different path with varied experiences satisfies her as a new experience of her life without having a faintest idea where it will lead. Meanwhile, it is not a terrifying experience, but an intoxicating one in which she feels her strength. Shifting to Mr. Young's New Strangers Home Baptist Church supports her in finding acquaintance with Mother Teresa in Hospice for AIDS near Mormon Church and Brahma Kumaris Meditation Centre. The natural



environment with all the surrounding buildings of religious significance captivates her attention. She notes the briefest details of the buildings as her new exposure to the world of peace and harmony, despite all rampant fears outside that locality.

The cultural and racial differences acquaint her with many exciting familiarities and encounters that take her to a learning phase of mannerisms as greetings and talking to strangers as a blessing. It is the experience beyond White men's cultural practices of rape. Taking care of the children and the elders, is the practice of Black culture where Solnit spends her days. While highlighting the problem of homelessness for economically unstable citizens, she criticizes the government for not arranging reparations. The manner of description in her writing, describes her exquisite style of revealing the gadgets, woodwork, building, and her living style in particular in her memoir in addition to the outside world and the experience of living alone among Black people. Through all the old things which she buys for her daily use, she gains a sense of attachment with the past beauty, attire, designs and travelling time to connect her life with the peaceful life of America.

After getting a desk for writing from a friend as a gift, Solnit experiences her writings like Virginia Woolf does in her *A Room of One's Own*. Solnit's writing as an effort of her *will* and seclusion from the outer world helps her produce many books, epistolary letters, reviews, essays, obituaries, love letters and many more to compensate lacking her own *will*. But later, her friend's victimization through sexual violence in the hand of her partner; and Solnit's own frequent exposure to harassment on street while going back home are among some lived experiences that provide the compelling force to write about it. Although victimhood is evident from the woman's murder, her dress becomes a cause of victim-blaming more than providing her justice.

In the twenty-first century, where digital feminism and especially *#MeToo*, *#BeingRapedNeverReported*, *#KillAllWhiteMen*, *#NotAllMen*, and *#YesAllWomen* are the leading trends, awareness and credibility, according to Solnit, standards have been changed or in the process of optimizing the scenario for the victims. Women have become credible to be listened to and accepted as victims. Solnit declares the change to be practically employed and the rape culture as about to end because of the efforts of the *willful* feminists who have become successful in asserting their existence as important, despite their activism's joy-killing vicissitudes.

## 4.2 Rape Culture in America as a Problem

Rape is not a commonplace problem to be dealt in writing as a phenomenon that happened previously and then vanished, and as a part of lost memory, but as a poignant experience of losing the 'self'. Notwithstanding, the tragedy of sexual violence is that relocating the victim as a survivor requires trust of other persons. Sharing the pain would not help the victim in forgetting all such memories during the healing process. The process of raising the arm as *Me Too* itself is problematic where the person daringly opens her secrets in a public place, either digitally or in a printed form, and becomes the joy-killing experience for the status quo. All these incidents are like battles for Solnit in which she faces the recurrent violent actions despite trying hard to become invisible in the physical world of men. She writes, "I won, some of which left scars I still carry, many of which so formed me that I cannot say I wish that it had all been otherwise, for then I would have been someone else entirely, and she does not exist. I do" (Solnit 2). Her revelation of the pain and the constant war with the self and the body also highlights her struggle throughout her life.

She exposes these hurdles to the young women to secure them from the struggle that she faced in the world-making process to warn them beforehand. She provides the reason of her writing on sexual violence, "I can wish that the young women who come after me might skip some of the old obstacles, and some of my writing has been toward that end, at least by naming those obstacles" (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 2). Writing as a prospect of *willful* audacity to hold the courage and raise the arm as *Me Too*, furthers the feminist agenda of strengthening the killjoy bond. Solnit's writing is a rod in the form of the 'written history' as the history of sexual violence that challenges the traditional patriarchal norms of infantilizing women and limiting their independence as the gambit of powerful authorities. Solnit's memoir is the epitomized writing on behalf of the victims and survivors of sexual violence to rationalize how the political histories of rape culture have transformed the personal lives of American women and how women have faced the blame on wearing seductive dresses as the gamut of the rape culture.

The subsiding of rape cases in America, does not entail the connotation of the end of rape culture. All those women, who have survived after tolerating the torturous incidents, have the scar for life, which irreversibly affect their socio-cultural and political lives. The toxic culture has made them change their preferences of dress size

and colour. Despite all care and obedience to patriarchal norms, they have failed to protect their dignity. The rape culture has become a constant threat, making them learn, unlearn and then re-learn the safety precautions. Even the visualization of such experience becomes traumatic. Solnit has written about all such experiences in an indirect flow of her transcendental style. According to her, change as the measure of time (Solnit 30; 32) creates a link of time with the transformed women as the visible change in their condition. Solnit's withdrawal from her past as her tactic to leave behind the painful memories, creates a transit towards her future. She needs 'transformation' of her condition (Solnit 36) to re-become a woman. It hints towards the miserable condition of the American women who face sexist and gendered crimes in their daily lives while resisting to secure their dignity. In this struggle, they transgress gender boundaries as queer personalities with stigmatized bodies.

Solnit writes, "[M]y friend was stabbed fifteen times by an ex-boyfriend to punish her for leaving him. She almost bled to death; she had emergency transfusions; she was left with long scars all over her body" (Solnit 44). The incidents she has quoted in her memoir took place in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century, which are still shared by many of the American women to raise consciousness that the oppressive system has not ended yet. Solnit's friend faced the torturous violence and abuse, which has not been trialed in the court to provide her justice because she is blamed for her wrong choice. The grey or date rape which she tolerates, makes her silent because of the reflection of the 'tainted self'. She needs support to regain her consciousness as her *will* to start the process of "becoming" all over again. Solnit writes, "She survived; she was blamed for what happened as victims often were then; there were no legal consequences for the would-be murderer; she moved far from where it happened" (Solnit 44). Her survival is the evidence of her receiving the damage. The frequency increases with time as the measure of the intensity of sexual violence in American culture.

Silencing is another such received act, performed as the willingly followed patriarchal advice. Solnit exposes the problem of unheard silences and heard voices, which are later ignored and dismissed. Solnit declares it as an "attempt to reduce a young woman to nothing" (Solnit 45). She gives the reference of Dana Lewis' rape and murder, who is "also known as Connie Sublette" (Solnit 45). One of the journalists reports it by distorting the details of real incident to present her inherently rapeable. Her

previous choices debilitate her condition by disqualifying her for the justice system of America. Lewis' biographical account, presented by Solnit, re-enacts her victim position by countering her re-presentation and victim-blaming in the news report, which blames her by calling her 'playgirl victim' for her sexually active and 'sordid' position as well as the dress she was wearing at the time of murder. Solnit clarifies the meaning of sordid in her memoir, "*sordid* [in original] seems to mean that she had sex, adventures, and sorrows, and *playgirl* means she deserved it" (Solnit 45). Solnit explains her debilitated condition and incapability to shelter her tormented body.

The reversal of blame on the basis of previous sexual activity or dress choices to pave the path for the corrective rape, is considered as a common practice among White men who consider the subjugation of women through sexual violence as their inherent right. Brownmiller, Mackinnon, Wunker, and Sara Ahmed reveal the same strategies of White men who legalize their *willful* acts whereby shifting the blame onto the women, declaring it as the punishment for the woman's *willfulness* or disobedience. "I had since childhood imagined interrogations in which lacking the right answers was punished, sometimes unto death" (Solnit 90). Her childhood fear comes to the real life in her adult life when she reads about such incidents and the process of interrogation against women. It entails American women's stigmatization all over again. The phenomenon of rape or sexual violence in any form affects the image and credibility of a woman, where she self-blames for her own decision and take the responsibility herself than focusing on the *willful* act of the rapist.

Solnit reveals the hidden agenda of the news headlines, which are designed to present the victim as the offender by reversing the blame onto her, as a part of structurally implanted misogyny. It also helps in strategizing victim-blaming. Solnit's critical remark, "as though strangling someone to death was an ordinary part of looking for love" (Solnit 45), highlights the difference of White men's desire as significant, whereas women's desire as the restricted possibility and their *willfulness*. Such discriminatory politics of White men, worsens women's position and lessens down their dignity. It may transform them into an immoral person with no right to live a dignified life. Her exploration of the cruel world, reveals the fault lines in the American culture and transforms her into a person with sympathies for all the women facing harassment and sexual assaults. Her *willfulness* to challenge the rape culture in American society makes her a killjoy. Using such capacity of writing, she tries to undermine the

patriarchal norms of blaming women for every tragedy occurring to them. Out of these shattered pieces of victimized women, Solnit tries to make her world meaningful. In this joy-killing process, she shatters many concepts and, as Wunker articulates, she herself becomes shattered.

Solnit describes the street near her house as significant because of the increasing rape cases. She mentions the rape stories of Maya Angelo and Patty Hearst (Solnit 46) to highlight their reception of silence and then the sudden outburst that transformed them into killjoys. The revolutionized nature of the digital age for those who do not know about the cruel optimism that forces them towards the threshold of losing control as a snap, has provided them space to get acknowledged. Growing up in a society where a woman cannot assert her choice or openly declares her victimization, is the oppressive characteristic of patriarchy. Solnit enunciates the importance of using the *willful ears* to provide affection and sympathy to those victims who need it. Such *willful ears* need the *willful tongue* also, to speak about the heinous crime.

it seems time to tell what it meant to me to grow up in a society in which many preferred people like me to be dead or silent and how I got a voice and how it eventually came time to use that voice—that voice that was most articulate when I was alone at the desk speaking through my fingers, silently—to try to tell the stories that had gone untold (Solnit 47).

Solnit refers to her *willful fingers*, using which she writes about her story either on paper or on digital media especially on *Facebook*. Her revelation is the source of her strength to deal with such problems. Writing a memoir about harassment and sexual violence in the rape culture, is an audacious act to practically incorporate the social ‘affect’ of violence in guerrilla tactic, which Ahmed has provided to deal with the problem (Ahmed, W 101). Solnit conceptualizes writing a memoir during the pandemic of rape as,

Memoirs at their most conventional are stories of overcoming, arcs of eventual triumph, personal problems to be taken care of by personal evolution and resolve. That a lot of men wanted and still want to harm women, especially young women, that a lot of people relished that harm, and a lot more dismissed it, impacted me in profoundly personal ways but the cure for it wasn’t personal. There was no adjustment I could make in my psyche or my life that would make

this problem acceptable or nonexistent, and there was nowhere to go to leave it behind (Solnit 47).

The process of writing about sexual violence, which she has faced in her life, is a way forward for solving it. After the verbalization of White men's hatred for women, Solnit learns to support #MeToo as her craftiness not only on the internet but also in printed and published writings. It is her "becoming" a *willful feminist killjoy* in the world. She gets her motivation with the momentum of her writing.

Solnit leaves behind any alternate to remove her scars as the assertion of her valuable existence. The only possible solution to it is *refusal* and defiance as a *willful feminist*. Her action of becoming *willful* also makes her audacious from inside because of lacking the required empathy. The cruel optimism, which gives her energy to accept the problem and ignore it as a belittling tactic to move forward in life, is juxtaposed with courage to face it with audacity. Solnit selectively becomes a feminist to kill the joy and happiness of those who become a problem for her. The problematic patriarchal pressure tries to prove her *refusal* as unreasonable and illogical. All those factors as allies of androcentric patriarchy put all their efforts to create Solnit's image as impolite, emptied of reasonable thought, her animatedness, and oppositional behavior in all circumstances. However, she manages to regain her agential power to rebut these false and baseless claims by White men in her memoir.

According to Solnit, women face surveillance and doxing (Solnit 52) not only by the known men, but also by the strangers who wait for the time to attack them. Solnit, in her philosophical style, tries to comprehend her need of poetic salvation and courage to prove her innocence through the repetitive use of 'I'. She makes sense of the patriarchal concerns regarding her safety despite all the normalized silences after rape or harassment. According to her, these concerns are themselves *willful*; however, subside them is a challenge which needs audacity to stand in front of them to show women's just *willfulness*. The system of teaching women to fear rape, as explained by Wunker, builds the problem. Girls learn from the start to remain submissive and fearful amidst rape culture. Their dresses with appropriate size and colours, walking style, and their company of friends are defined by the patriarchal norms. The persistent following of such norms as the obedience, makes their bodies vulnerable because of disowning any agency to say "No". It poses harm to their image of a "good girl". Such debilitation becomes the cause of rapist's gaining more power onto their bodies. The offender's

*willfulness* bestows him a superior position, which nobody challenges. In case of women, the power shifts towards the White men for their credible position that changes the same defiance as *women's willfulness* and their choice to be systematized as punishable. Moreover, their disobedience transforms them into rapeable entities. Solnit writes,

From childhood onward, we were instructed to not do things—not go here, not work there, not go out at this hour or talk to those people or wear this dress or drink this drink or partake of adventure, independence, solitude; refraining was the only form of safety offered from the slaughter (Solnit 48-9).

The solidarity in the form of ‘we’ provides the notion of her priorities of collective solution and not individual, after the emergence of collective problem due to patriarchal instructions. The repressive patriarchal system systematizes the cultural boundaries and restrictive gender categories for women. Solnit expounds on bridging this gap among women, “I came to understand some general principles about how cultures evolve and shift and how ideas migrate from the margins to the center” (Solnit 147-8). She rationalizes the insignificant differences among the women as compared to the “differences from a hostile mainstream” (Solnit 148). In this manner, she paves the path for the empathy among women of all colour that is more powerful than the White men’s willfulness.

The problem that arises in this discourse, is the powerless gender of women. The passive defiance in adopting all protective layers and following patriarchal boundaries as a willing subject, becomes problematic where a woman tries to leave the house to fight with the economic challenges. The open-air space immediately gets transformed into a rape-zone as a prison to limit their independence and liberty of movement, which are the main hints towards American rape culture. The phenomenon of their existence under the threat of rape highlights the problem of the offender’s existence as a constant source of threat.

Considering all advancement, technologization, doxing and surveillance, the antagonist or the rapist has also adopted advanced methods of surveillance of his prey. Men keep following women, making them uncomfortable. On compliant, they rebuff all blames through gaslighting or calling it woman’s false consciousness on the basis of passive sensory skills and pessimistic thought process. Consequently, rape

transforms into the corrective tool to make women subjugated, compliant, willing, and obedient persons. The same fear leads to the fear of surveillance by men. In many instances, that same surveillance is the reality to catch women alone to end their *will*. The sole responsibility lies with patriarchy due to which women become vulnerable. Solnit writes, “I felt hemmed in, hunted. Over and over, women and girls were attacked not for what they’d done but because they were at hand when a man wished to—to *punish* is the word that comes to mind” (Solnit 50). She also deciphers the significance of dress at that moment that is termed by the possible perpetrator as the main object of attraction. Wunker also contemplates her daughter’s learning of the same fear because of the patriarchal inculcation of rape-supportive stance and rape-apologist behavior (Solnit 50). The *willful* offender uses the same justification of law in his favour to get approval of his willfulness. He describes the woman’s joy-killing refusal as his excuse and his punishment as a corrective rape to make the defiant woman compliant and obedient. Solnit writes,

It felt ubiquitous then. It still does. You could be harmed a little—by insults and threats that reminded you were not safe and free and endowed with certain inalienable rights—or more by a rape, or more by a rape-kidnapping-torture-imprisonment-mutilation, more yet by murder, and the possibility of death always hung over the other aggressions. You could be erased a little so that there was less of you, less confidence, less freedom, or your rights could be eroded, your body invaded so that it was less and less yours, you could be rubbed out altogether, and none of those possibilities seemed particularly remote (Solnit 48).

Nevertheless, the constant surveillance limits women’s freedom. Patriarchal cultural practices remind the audacious women about their inferior and humiliated position by constantly teaching them to regulate their movement. They fear of getting harassed in the street or raped without their fault. They become sinner instead of making the world recognize their victimhood. Solnit expounds on the same problematic hurdles for women in America.



### 4.3 Victims' War of Credibility to Achieve an Agency

While linking *willfulness* with *#MeTooism*, it is an undoubted fact that *#MeToo* is the confirmation mark of rape culture in America. The former Marine David J. Morris, who himself is a White man, writes to Solnit,

[R]ape is about four times more likely to result in diagnosable PTSD than combat. Think about that for a moment—being raped is four times more psychologically disturbing than going off to a war and being shot at and blown up. And because there are currently no enduring cultural narratives that allow women to look upon their survival as somehow heroic or honorable, the potential for enduring damage is even greater (Solnit 49).

Solnit's reference of David J. Morris gives space to the assertion that not all the men are the rapists, some take the role of pacifists. However, the belief that sexual violence is a reality and PTSD is a serious medical and psychological disorder that needs critical attention, is what hints towards the need of the affective use of *#NotAllMen*, especially because of *#YesAllWomen*. It makes it clear that all the women one way or the other face sexual violence. It somehow supports Marilyn French's declaration that 'all men are rapists', as discussed previously, through the employment of 'mansplaining' aspect which Solnit has explained in *Men Explain Things to Me*. However, *#MeToo*'s *willful* body requires a support system from the powerful faction of the patriarchal society to make feminists' voice affective. The philosophers like Rousseau and Kant, have already dehumanized women by preserving their objectified existence as a bodily presence solely to make men happy. While Solnit's reference of Morris' acceptance highlights many of the White men's acknowledgement of the problem, which is an optimistic move as *#NotAllMen* after the powerful activism of *#MeTooism*, however is still practically passive and brings forward the ineffective part of the support for *#MeToo*. Pertaining to such passivity, *#NotAllMen* fails to end men's desire or rape culture. The problem of not understanding the women's humanness, aggravates the situation by putting them into the dilemma of victim-blaming. Although Solnit highlights the critical problem of sexual violence and its threatening nature for women, notwithstanding the pressures of androcentricism, women's loss of credibility is constantly essentialized in fictional works. These feminist killjoys are unheard because they are defiant.

Willingly accepting the act of rape on their bodies, unwillingly brings the blame onto women for being willingly involved in the process, which Ahmed has observed as willingly happy or willing happily. The two sides of the act ignore the third dimensional portrayal of the incident through the electronic media, which also becomes a source of portraying women as the main problem. The all-sided blame onto women creates a noose for them that tightens around their neck with time. Even, the fear of getting raped, restricts women's movement especially after the evening or at the specific time of danger without any fellow with them. Such patriarchal pressure creates further series of oppression for women. They are confined at their houses, or feel ashamed on bringing in such issues. Solnit's memoir opens myriads of debates on such problems that are still present in America. She describes her own personal experience of fearing sexual violence.

We wore those horror stories as a secret weight, a set of shackles, that dragged along everywhere we went. Their clanging forever said, "It could have been you." During this time, I gave away the only television I ever owned, my maternal grandmother's little black-and-white model from her nursing home, not long after an evening when I turned the dial and found that a young woman was being murdered on each channel. It could have been me (Solnit 50).

Women's individuality as complete human beings is challenged each time when they face sexual violence. Their existence as inferior beings, undo their belonging to the men's world. Such unbelongingness becomes unbecoming of their existence that transforms them merely into objects of gratification for men. Solnit writes, "But really for who he was, a man who had the desire and believed he had the right to harm women. To demonstrate that his power was as boundless as her powerlessness" (Solnit 50). Men's desire is considered as legitimate, whereas, women's desire of safety, protection, freedom and independence is considered as the disobedience, defiance, and *willfulness* as the exaggerated or hyper-real parochial demand. American woman's safety and powerlessness is increased by making them shifted towards the periphery of the house. Disjunctively, men continue enjoying the power of criminal *willfulness* because of the all-time available empathy among them for each other. The dualistic approach of the cultural practice, where women are suppressed and forcefully made submissive, intensifies the inability to practice refusal from the earlier age. Such powerlessness makes it impossible for them to resist the rapist by enunciating the 'No' in the right

manner at the right time. The same toxic optimism of negating personal feelings and considering others' opinion as superior, make women weak and incapable to control their body's agency.

The most significant problem, according to Solnit, is White men's refusal to accept the problem as it is. The phenomenological sensing of the fear brings the consciousness of sexual violence, which the feminist killjoys assert through their *willfulness*. Solnit enunciates her cruel optimistic experience of converting into a *willful* killjoy, "I was faced with either surrendering my freedom in advance or risking losing it in the worst ways imaginable" (Solnit 53), which makes Solnit fearful of corrective rape. Reluctance to give woman the demanded independence entails to the fear of rape. Similarly, in the rape culture, the augmenting effect of fear, snatches women's *will*. Such isolation from the social life disempowers women. Whereas, detesting defiance and *willfulness*, becomes stronger in case of raped women who are left by their families. The dejection and othering they face, leads to their segregation from the common society. They become alienated and lose their value in society. The rape becomes their sin despite the fact that they are more sinned against than sinning (Buss 121). Solnit has mentioned the feminist movements of 1980s, which also include, "Take Back the Night marches" (Solnit 53-4). All these marches faced backlash from different factions of feminism and subsided down. The same Radical Feminism has taken the shape of *#MeTooism* in the twenty-first century as the most crafty guerilla tactic of feminists to tackle this problem of sexual violence. Doxing and surveillance at online spaces has also emerged as the problem for which Solnit has mentioned the effective role of 'feminist cybersecurity experts' (Solnit 52).

The digitization of processes in the contemporary time period, has brought the revolution in women's lives. The victims have learned the use of digital space for their better positionality as their rebirth with virtual embodiment of agency as *#MeToo*. Solnit writes, "There's a kind of indignation I know well, when someone feels that the wrong done to them has been unrecognized, and a kind of trauma that makes the sufferer into a compulsive storyteller of an unresolved story" (Solnit 54). It brings the *#MeToo* moment in their lives. Such pessimism leads these women to either live a banished life or choose death as the impregnable option like Lucretia. However, the digital media saves their dignity by providing them a platform to testify their lived experience. Solnit writes, "I was told to move to someplace more affluent (though some of my most

malevolent harassment occurred in such places)” (Solnit 54). Her *#MeToo* moment was not the rape moment, but the moments of harassment and then the failure to register her voice as trustworthy. Even though, she considers herself the most eloquent speaker, she forgets to speak about her victimization because of the patriarchal lesson of ‘silence’. She needs such place to testify her existence that she has a problem to assert her existence as a human being. She finds it necessary to raise the voice in support of *#MeToo*. She further expounds,

It could have been me who found herself in a moment in which my fate was not my own, my body was not my own, my life was not my own, and I hovered on that brink and was haunted by it for a few years that reshaped my psyche in ways that will never be over. Which was, perhaps, the point: to remind me that I would never be entirely free. This violence mostly targets girls and young women as an initiation rite, a reminder that even after you cease to be a frequent target you’re vulnerable (Solnit 55).

Despite all her care, the looming threat of getting caught by any rapist haunts Solnit’s life. She constantly faces the fear as the debilitating experience, where her body may lose her *will*. The imagination of such instant moment of taking the place of a rape victim, shatters her peace of mind as a snap of bond. The clash between her real existence at that place and the real problematizes her movement. She thinks about devising her body to become crafty and *willful* dasein to avoid such violent acts in future. Whereby, raising the question of her existence, she contends with her choices, especially the dress choice, considering her fragile body. In this process, making the authorities aware of the threat she feels, is the only possible action to secure the future, but it needs to be testified.

Focusing on the hashtag trend of *#NotAllMen* to counter the backlash for *#MeToo*, Solnit categorizes men according to their habit of appearance in different locations, at different time periods, with different family histories. The conundrums attached to the trend also reveal the backlash and counter attack of status quo to maintain their happiness by presenting the White rapists and offenders as marginalized because of the criminal disposition. Solnit expounds on such hyperreal representation of White men’s fake marginalization and faux stoicism,

It was popular in the media and polite conversation to pretend that murderers and rapists were marginal men, them and not us, but during that time a white man who was a bank vice president strangled a teenage sex worker in my suburban hometown not quite thirty miles north of San Francisco while his wife and daughters were at Girl Scout camp. It was the era of the Night Stalker and the middle-aged white man known as the Trailside Killer (who raped and killed women hikers on the trails I hiked on) and the Pillowcase Rapist and the Beauty Queen Killer and the Green River Killer and the Ski Mask Rapist and many other men who rampaged up and down the Pacific Coast without nicknames (Solnit 55).

Wunker describes such apparently marginalized men as ‘misunderstood and persecuted youngster’ (Wunker 86), advocated by patriarchal agencies to prove women victims wrong. It leads to DARVO, as mentioned previously, to shift the blame onto women because of their dress choices or the tainted past. It exposes the strategic surveillance of women and continuous panoptic eye on them to suppress them more. The support of status quo for the White men is the step towards normalizing the rape culture. To end the cultural articulation of rape as a normalized phenomenon or incident, is the feminist killjoys’ responsibility. They have raised their voice to subvert the rape culture through culture jamming in the context of American patriarchal society to disturb the social, print, and electronic media’s pop culture and fetishistic marketing and commodification of the voyeuristic and pornographic material, which has become a problem for the authorities.

Solnit enunciates her struggle to expose the patriarchal methods of dominating the social and political life in America through disciplining the human beings. The approach of raping women is not only the symbol of White men’s superiority and power play, but also their dealing of women as objects. They taint the women *willfully*. These stigmas of rape and harassment, as tainted signs on victims’ bodies are remembered by them (Ahmed, W 140) as a cultural remembrance of the traumatic past in the American nonchalant androcentric world. Such nonchalance leads to an undeclared war for women’s survival, which Solnit describes as her survival story in the war times of the American rape culture.

Solnit’s activism in collecting all the rape stories as the biographies of the raped American women provide the solid evidence of the American society to testify it as

unlivable rape culture. Amidst all sexual violence, the rapist murders the raped woman to remove all evidences along with his crime. Many of them are serial rapists and killers who practice their *willfulness* to satisfy and gratify their desire. The serial rapes make them professional in the sense that it becomes easier for them to shift the blame onto the woman and declare her a prostitute or a sexually active woman wearing seductive dress. These double binds of the crime victimize women further. Solnit's references of those teen-aged rape victims with their forearms chopped off as an attempt to murder, incite the victims to raise their voice to survive and testify. The justice system provides more leverage to the men to make their voice credible. The acquittal of the accused leads to normalization of such serial rape and murder cases, which reveals the place of women in American society as the ignored objects of gratification only. Solnit mentions the moment of feminist snap to elucidate the perils of sexual violence,

Feminists of an earlier era insisted that rape is about power, not erotic pleasure, though there are men for whom their own power or a woman's powerlessness is the most erotic thing imaginable. For some women too, so we learn that our helplessness and peril is erotic, and accept or reject or struggle with the sense of self and stories that come with them. Jacqueline Rose wrote in 2018, "Sexual harassment is the great male performative, the act through which a man aims to convince his target not only that he is the one with the power—which is true—but also that his power and his sexuality are one and the same thing" (Solnit 52).

The eroticism as the desire of men complicates and threatens women's existence. Taking women as objects of gratification for men, not only limits their agency and power, but also registers their ephemeral existence that is easily replaceable. There is no equality at power position. Either one is powerful or not, which destabilizes women's autonomy. Women's position is debilitated and compromised due to their womanness. Whereas, Solnit's reference towards the unity of men's sexuality and power, supports Marilyn French's essentialist approach of blaming all men for rape. The gendered and sexualized manhood creates the snare of credibility, which empowers the White offenders more than the victim.

The credibility, as the matter of power, gauges the power with the increase in credibility. Rape is the criminal matter, where credibility matters in legislative processes and the person with more credible character is given the priority and even relaxation in the justice system. Pertaining to this peer support, the making and re-

making of victims' weaker position creates fear of rape, either corrective or revenge-based. It paves the path for victim-blaming and then stigmatization as the multiple binds of oppression. Such raped women due to the loss of their credibility, fear to be humiliated in front of public. They do not raise their voice because of their incapability of explaining the rape as "rape". Solnit also mentions the same hypocritical stance of men who pressurize women to remain silent and then pretend not to understand the problem,

Talking about it made people uncomfortable, and mostly they responded by telling me what I was doing wrong. Some men told me they wished someone would sexually harass them, because they seemed to be unable to imagine it as anything but pleasant invitations from attractive people. No one was offering the help of recognizing what I was experiencing, or agreeing that I had the right to be safe and free. It was a kind of collective gaslighting (Solnit 53).

Solnit's rationalization of mansplaining and silencing tactic highlights the systemic violence that the rape victims face. The argument hinges on the fact that the consideration of women's litigation weighs less than men's defense. Their complaint becomes the source of their character's judgement and their problem is categorized as nymphomania or womanism, rather than the violation of their body's integrity.

Solnit has criticized the people who consider rape as normal and normalize it by making rape jokes about it. The unbearable suffering is incomprehensible for those who are not women or womanly men. The anxiety attached to the word "rape" connotes to the act's heinous nature. Solnit has comprehensively explained her condition while thinking about the problem,

To live in a war that no one around me would acknowledge as a war—I am tempted to say that it made me crazy, but women are so often accused of being crazy, as a way of undermining their capacity to bear witness and the reality of what they testify to. Besides, in these cases, crazy is often a euphemism for unbearable suffering. So it didn't make me crazy; it made me unbearably anxious, preoccupied, indignant, and exhausted (Solnit 53).

Solnit has categorized those who are raped on the basis of age, colour, race, dress, and bodily strength. Among all those victims and survivors, the *willful* women consider it the matter of their honour. They indignantly equate the sexual violence to their death

and take the courage to speak about it. Whereas, those who are not *willful* or defiant enough to raise their arm, they select compliance to rape culture.

The victims who deliberately fail to comply, *willfully* become a part of *#MeToo*. Their joining *#MeToo* is the active sympathy role and the collective spirit of their individual voices. It becomes a problem for the androcentric world because the digital space testify women. Conjunctive to these feminists' efforts, their globalized stand of revealing the perpetrator, enhances their chance of being heard, and supported globally. Their digital activism makes them *feminist killjoys*. Whereas, those passive sufferers, who do not join *#MeToo* movement despite experiencing the moment themselves, they cause the passivity to prevail that brings the backlash for *#MeToo* from the compliant subjects.

the problems are all in their head, and that if they are distressed it is a sign of their failure, when success would be to shut up or to cease to know what they know. Out of this unbearable predicament come the rebels who choose failure and risk and the prisoners who choose compliance (Solnit 53).

The history of violence, which also narrated by Shakespeare in his *Titus Andronicus* in the form of Lavinia's, or Philomela's rape and then cutting her tongue out along with her *willful* hand to hamper her from revealing the name of the rapist (Solnit 55-6) against the patriarchal top-tier misogyny, is referred by Solnit to expose the oppressive culture. The problematic consent or the complex understanding of 'Yes' and 'No' provide the margins and leverage to the rapists and offenders to resist the blame easily. Solnit writes about her personal experiences of street harassment by adult men,

There are absences so profound that even knowledge of their absence is absent; there are things missing even from our lists of the missing. So it was with the voice with which I could have said *No, I'm not interested, leave me alone* [in original], I realized only recently (Solnit 57).

The nonexistence of the concept of dignity for women in America is problematic because of the imposition of civic virtues. The credibility and audacity of a woman's voice matters more than her willingness or her seductive dress. The rapist *willfully* violates the victim's integrity of her body without considering her a human being. In response to such animality shown by the offender, if a woman resists and shows



hostility, her anger is termed as hysteria and otherness. Solnit enunciates, “it didn’t occur to me that I had the authority to assert myself thus or that they had any obligation or inclination to respect my assertions, or that my words would do anything but make things worse” (Solnit 58). She is termed as a problematic and hysteric person who loses her credibility and rational position because of her anger and ultimately remains as a body only without proper thinking skills. Whereas, the information of rape assault and associated violence hidden behind the anger, is undermined and ignored, which increased her plight.

#### **4.4 Solnit’s Thin Body’s *Willful* Nonexistence and Joy-killing #MeTooism**

Solnit’s tactics to resist and preferably avoid any encounter with the possible rapists and harassers, force her to shrink her space occupied by her body. She becomes thinner with the passage of time to transform her existence into nonexistence. Her *willfulness* emerges in the form of not following the patriarchal culture of attaining the thin body as the emblem of beauty, but her strategy to avert rape assault. Her thin body provides her the least space to shrink at the time of contact. She writes,

I became expert at fading and slipping and sneaking away, backing off, squirming out of tight situations, dodging unwanted hugs and kisses and hands, at taking up less and less space on the bus as yet another man spread into my seat, at gradually disengaging, or suddenly absenting myself. At the art of nonexistence, since existence was so perilous. It was a strategy hard to unlearn on those occasions (Solnit 58).

Her survival tactic of becoming thin, is her body’s resistance to accept unjust tyranny against women. She lacks the trust on men outside her home with the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. The pervasiveness of the White men’s audacity to touch her, or harass her becomes an ignored norm, which distorts her concept of civilization. The embodiment of fear in the form of offender and then the rescuing tactic of becoming invisibly thin, and fading inside her dress, distorts the consciousness of her reality. Instead of relying on her brain as her intellectual faculty, she reduces into a body with materialistic value without any supportive force.

Wunker’s theorization of the problematic non-availability of the *willful* ears of female friends with same audacity and killing joy resolve, empower the patriarchy to

present the option of hetero-sexual friendship which levels the way for sexual violence. The power dynamics, which come to force in case of becoming friend to a White man, create the snare for women. It provides a readily available opportunity to the offenders to belittle women's existence by assigning them the inferior position. The problems of gaslighting, and mansplaining also emerge from the same systemic approach of androcentric culture, where "everyone pretended nothing was happening" (Solnit 59), to avoid any attack onto them. Their proactive approach to avoid any confrontation for their personal safety, provides strength to the *willful* offender. The woman's fear and debilitated body proves her vulnerability, whereas, her body either thin or fat or her dress choice and not her credible assertion of possible threat is taken as a problem. Solnit enunciates her need of a friend to calm her down in constant fear, which pushes her to design her personal tactics to avert the danger. She writes, "Usually I'd look down, say nothing, avoid eye contact, do my best to be as absent, unobtrusive, insignificant as possible—invisible as well as inaudible" (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 59). Her strategies to counter rape attack is her 'craftiness' (Ahmed, W 133) and guerilla tactic to avoid the intervention with any man as her carefulness in protecting her body inside her clothes. She considers herself stuck in the war-like situation. Solnit's dilemma becomes more poignant when her vocal resistance is countered by the death threats given by possible sex-offenders (Solnit 59-60) after constant surveillance.

The panoptic eye gazing at the woman and waiting for her weak resolve to take the chance of attacking her, is the hint towards the hunting strategy of White men in America. Solnit describes if a woman refuses after sensing the danger, the White men's fury presents the woman saying 'No' as a criminal or offender who *willfully* ignores or rejects their proposition of fulfilling their desire. The reason behind such attacks is woman's revealing clothes taken by the offenders as the excuse to rape or harass them. My argument that these tactics provide leverage to offenders in America to reverse the blame as DARVO, is proven at this point. They attain the credible and affective position because of their power in controlling the discourse. After such oppressive and vulnerable position, the victim faces more criticism on quitting wearing the feminine dresses. Solnit exposes the same gambit of traditional culture where women's independence is limited the moment men declare their right to attack such women to correct their manners. At that moment of *#MeToo*, a woman who shouts audaciously,

becomes a *killjoy* for *willfully* rejecting White men's proposition of happiness. Kelly contends for the White men's enthusiasm for women's virgin bodies, as "'gifts" or exchange commodities" cultivating the "expectation that women be sexually available to men, even without consent" (Kelly 98). Solnit ascribes it men's desire that transforms into 'resentment or fury' at the moment their dissatisfaction is actualized by women's 'refusal' in response to their 'obscene, scornful propositions' (Solnit 60).

The recurrent gaslighting and the wariness wreathed upon women in the form of civilized or uncivilized language, proffers women's helplessness. Solnit's enunciation of White men's rage as a consequence of women's disobedience dispels the notion of strangeness. Men's rage is not termed as their animatedness or otherness whereas feminists' snap after such prejudice and sexualized violence is termed as lack of empathy and happiness. Solnit discredits it by writing, "as though any woman belonged to any man, as though everyone, anyone, owned me except me. The words: they had an overabundance, and I had none (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 60). While conceptualizing the poignant thought forwarded by Solnit about the patronizing and condescending tone of the authority, I admit that such mindset accepts that the dress or the clothing, whether culturally acceptable or not, provides the least space of breathing as well as the hiding place to the sufferers. The patriarchal authority closes all possibilities for the victim woman to assert her right to prove her existence as valuable through her words. Disjunctive to this situation, when the same victim woman seeks agency to validate her credibility, the White men's happiness shatters, owing to the *willful feminist killjoys'* counter-attack in the same language that they use (Solnit; Ahmed; Wunker) These feminist killjoys audaciously undress their arm as stronger than the perpetrators' to expose his sadism and their power.

Solnit recalls her past experience of harassment where despite her 'No' as the strong refusal, men constantly tried to harass her. Solnit's refusal is not taken as credible or acceptable for the rapists because their desire is superior and credible. She writes, "surrounded by tall young men, one of whom pinned my arms down while I shouted at passing cars that did not stop, and while I imagined that all my worst fears were about to come to pass" (Solnit 60). Pinning arms leads to tracing fear of men getting caught by women. Their preference is to first hold the arms that are defiant and aid women in their survival and security. The way Lucretia's arm is targeted, Ahmed describes the similar defiant arm as *willfully* tugged in by the mother in the grave with

the help of the rod. Solnit's arms are caught to make her helpless and limit all her efforts to overcome the outer force in the form of andro- *will*. The boss and even her teacher disbelieve her account of the loss of photography works because of the attack. Her valueless words become a simple excuse that is ignored by her superiors. Even her 'Elderly Child Psychiatrist' "erotically excited by the attack" (Solnit 61), which describes her vulnerability in exposing the crime and defenselessness as the passivity of her *will* and the active peer support for the offender. In this manner, she rationalizes her struggle as 'I will then I am'. Her autobiographical sketching of the rape culture predicts the poignancy of the situation.

The cruelty associated with the phenomenon of misinterpreting the expressions of the fear of sexual violence, gives way to women's belittling and degradation. Rape fear is taken as the hyper-real enunciation of women's anger for that imaginary ghost, whose existence is connived by men as the temporal and spatial illusion. Such fear declared as women's hysteria by the White men, is enough to weaken women's *will* to move independently. Solnit describes the same problem of being wrongly understood or blamed for wrongly understanding the normal phenomenon because of the prevalent negative thoughts or pessimism. Her struggling with the fear of getting harassed or raped is taken as her proactive approach towards the unrealistic forthcoming fear. Termed as irrational by White men, the discredited fear leads to unwarranted criticism on her exaggerated explanation of sexual attack as her excuse for not fulfilling her duties, belittling her existence as the untrustworthy person. Her carefulness becomes the cause of losing the credibility in the rape culture. Solnit enunciates her frenzy in such times when she assesses the real danger, "When no one else seems to trust you, it's hard to trust yourself, and if you do, you pit yourself against them all; either of those options can make you feel crazy and get called crazy" (Solnit 61) that declares her moment of feminist snap.

Lacking credibility and trust, owning the imagination as unbelievable, and the erosion of the space for the protection of the self (Solnit 61) are not assimilated by the authorities. The unavailability of a proper space to assert one's choice of existing according to the *free will* becomes a problematic dream for those who, by declaring the fear as unreal, want to take advantage. Solnit mentions that the pedagogical practices at the educational institutes make women submissive and obedient from the start, which leaves no space for the audacious 'No'. She writes, "I was young and trained not to

make a fuss” (Solnit 62). Such inculcation of compliance and reticence dispels the notion of independent thinking and highlights the problematic existence of the offender, especially when the *willful* offender is a White man. It ultimately leads to self-doubt and self-effacement (Solnit 62) under the pressure of civility. The loss of others’ trust for becoming audacious and *willful*, leads to her becoming a killjoy for men. Solnit writes, “[A]n accelerated course of gaslighting designed to undermine my ability to assess the situation and make decisions” (Solnit 62) that subvert the efforts done by a woman to protect her body. She writes,

Though I was followed and yelled at and mugged and grabbed and more than once strangers threatened to kill me and men I knew menaced me a few times and others pursued me uncomfortably long after I’d tried to discourage them, I was not raped, though many friends of mine were, and all of us spent our youths navigating the threat, as do most women in most places. It gets you even if it doesn’t get you (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 63).

The androcentric public admits the problem only at the moment when the media presents multiple rape cases in a single bulletin with mass murdering of women as compared to isolated cases. Solnit describes the factual effect of such news on the public. Women’s problem becomes the public problem and the authorities consider it as the epidemic of sexual violence and take action only after the reasonable increment in crime incidents, which authenticates the plight of American women. Nevertheless, the individual women affected and raped in the rape culture are neglected because of their tainted past or their non-credibility amidst the prevalent pornographic, voyeuristic literature and media broadcasts that target women’s seductive dress as the main reason behind rape culture. It rationalizes the efforts put by the *willful* feminists to subvert such systemic connivance and ‘women-hatred’. Women themselves take action to survive by navigating the danger of sexual violence, whereas, men prefer to change the context and the situation by navigating the attention towards less important details. Solnit writes, “The threat of violence takes up residence in your mind. The fear and tension inhabit your body” (Solnit 65). Solnit makes sense of the multiple assailants’ complaints and the impression of such assault cases on the mental health of the sensitive women who fear coming out of the houses. The constant reminders that American rape culture is unsafe for women, limits women’s affectability. In the meantime, the femicidal incidents increase that hamper women from any progress in the development.

Women's integration is lessened and their autonomy on their own bodies and lives becomes limited, which ultimately lessen their credibility and agency.

#### 4.5 Digital Subversion of Rape Culture

The feminist killjoy's existence in the male-centric society, destabilizes White man's centrality and core position. He constantly navigates the attention to denominate him to attain maximum domination. Solnit enunciates such joy-killing moments when the White man takes the support of sexual violence in his narration as a force to capture women's *will* and kill their happiness. The purpose of pushing women to recall their debilitated body by sharing any rape incident, becomes another tactic of men to enforce their superiority. It also becomes a source of backlash for *#MeToo*. Solnit believes in countering such attacks through jokes to rationalize the toxicity attached with sexist remarks by writing, "I joked later that not getting raped was the most avid hobby of my youth (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 65). Wunker's signification of laughter at such moments as the resisting force with counter-joy-killing affect (Wunker 260) is also adopted by Strain et. al., who have examined the affect of the similar rape jokes on the social set up, which Solnit has affirmed as positive and workable in dismantling White men's power and subverting rape culture.

Solnit's audacity starts at the moment, she learns how to counter the surveillance strategy of White men. Her extra-vigilance after realizing the looming threat outside her home, forces her to dismantle the happiness of authorities. She writes, "My flesh had turned to something brittle with tension" (Solnit 66). Though, she makes sense of her writing as the purpose of registering her vulnerability as a young girl, and then as a weak woman in American rape culture, she also presents her agential power in transferring her story of sexual violence as an evidence for the later time. Her story, not as exceptional but ordinary and the common story of American women, is her strength, which she enhances after writing it, "half the earth is paved over with women's fear and pain, or rather with the denial of them, and until the stories that lie underneath see sunlight, this will not change" (Solnit 66). Her exercise of enduring is not a straightforward pursuit, rather a fracturing hopefulness as the cruel optimism and a belief system that pushes her to continue her struggle. According to Wunker, one person's lived reality is significant and vital as another's (Wunker 38). It leads to *#MeToo* movement, after the transitory *Me Too*, on social media where each individual's

suffering is taken as significant and testified and remains on the global platform as the constant empathy for victim; and a reminder and a memory for the offender of his crime.

The terrible situation of “sex so readily became violence” (Solnit 67) portrays the violent sexuality and normalized sexual violence, which increases women’s plight for belonging to the inferior gender. It also highlights the silencing strategy as violent and criminal. She writes, “Danger wrecked my thought” (Solnit 67). After sensing acute danger, she devises her tactics to protect her thin body. The argument that clothing is the main problem, due to which women get raped, is countered by Solnit. She transforms her clothing choice and adopts the protective clothing (Solnit 67). The reasonable clothing to protect her dignity is not better than a steel armor for her body i.e. “clothing sufficient to stop harm” (Solnit 67). This transformation is the process of weaponization with the *will* in the form of metaphoric dress. She engages her body within the armour that is itself an imprisonment of the body’s weak stature to protect it from others’ *willfulness*. The subtle nuance of keeping the cage with you is a paradox of her life that has created a joke of her existence. Solnit mentions it sarcastically,

What is armor after all but a cage that moves with you? But maybe being in that cage would have freed me in some way. Or maybe I was in it and both freed and stifled by it: when I think of who I was then and often am now, the hard reflective, defensive surface of armor seems like a good image for it (Solnit 68).

The armour around her body, is the burden of her life, which she keeps with her as a sign of rape epidemic in America, especially to counter the blame of sexist dress as the main cause of sexual violence. She presents it in the form of a joy-killing experience to survive. Her *will* is captured that she has liberated by breaking the invisible patriarchal and gender-binary bridge between her body and the offender. She has taken the armour to become proactive towards any forthcoming attack as her tactic to appear as an unconquerable fortress, unlike Cahill who criticizes such weaponization for its passivity in ending rape culture. After reinvigorating her *will*, she feels like a soldier in a warzone with vigor and power to trample over all danger and perpetrators.

There’s a way you can throw all your consciousness into that surface, into being witty, vigilant, prepared for attack, or just so stressed out your muscles lock up and your mind locks down. You can forget your own tender depths and how

much of life that matters takes place there beneath the surface and the surfaces. It's still easy to be the armor (Solnit 68).

The reclamation of becoming a man, is the process of unbecoming a woman to understand the problem from a new neo-existent position. Her fear, as a thin woman who is under the threat of rape, blurs the gender boundaries to hide the vulnerability like wearing a cloak and armor. Solnit proposes her tactic to claim the apparent power as regaining the agency. She writes, "I didn't imagine myself as a man" (Solnit 74). She feels not like a woman but safer and powerful in men's cloak. She has learnt it from the patriarchal mindset prevalent in American society. She relates to other women with the same problem of threat to 'unclaimed', but already-existed dignity and the threat to life. The strong male body is not her ideal, but her protection on becoming a fortress with the armor. She feels safe inside it, "I wanted to be rugged, invincible, unstoppable, and I didn't have examples of women who were those things" (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 74). She experiences wearing the armor as the dress to regain her confidence, conviction, faith, and then *willfulness*. The faith she builds on her 'self *will*' is synonymous to "Faith that you matter" (Solnit 77), not succumbing to men's desire. It makes her realize that she is not a territory to be occupied through 'rape', but a human being with the right to practice sovereignty over her body (Solnit 77-8).

Through her philosophy of existence as a living human being, Solnit dismantles men's occupation of her body by declaring her body not a state on which White men constantly try to enforce their power to colonize her, but an organic living body. Through her writing and the use of powerful pronoun 'I', she affirms the realization how the power-relations inside the systematized and disciplined institutions dismantle all boundaries against "an unnoticeable nation, a shrinking nation, a stealth nation" (Solnit 77-8), whereby comparing herself with the same weak state without any *will*.

Solnit rationalizes *#MeToo* to be the equal participatory movement for women belonging to any race and class. *#MeToo* is the digital space where the authority and territorialization concepts become archival or spatially out of the boundaries of the virtual world. She writes, "[A] conversation is a joy and a collaborative construction, building an idea, an insight, sharing experiences" (Solnit 78). Whereas, women are denied their equal participation in the real space and time, they have successfully owned their virtual space to share their personal experiences of rape assaults to counter men's conversational tactics. *#MeToo* is one such conversational and communicational tactic,



with all its craftiness, to show sympathy and strength towards the rape victims and survivors. Solnit becomes a *#MeTooist* to fulfil her desire of flying above the head of the offender or become invisible at the time of danger. The virtual space of *#MeToo* provides her the ability to disappear physically yet appear as the survivor of sexual violence.

Her *willfulness* opens her mind to admit her body as the strong *willful* body against the common patriarchal notion of woman's failed body. Solnit's experience of becoming a thin body is contrary to Roxane Gay's *willfulness* in becoming a fat body, the reference that she gives in her memoir. In the struggle of surviving as a taintless woman, she becomes a physically conformist woman to the traditional patriarchal norms of thinness, whereas, her own perspective of her body's caged liberty, transforms her into a "catalogue of wrongnesses and failures and confirmed and potential shame" (Solnit 79). In this manner, she transgresses the zones of desire and avoids the punishment zones fixed for *willful* women by avoiding the undesirable men. Instead of rejecting her own desires that she has learnt as the pedagogical practice of becoming desirable for the desiring men (Solnit 81), she rejects desirability and selects *willfulness* as the joy-killing experience for men.

While describing her torso, her own body and the dress she has worn in the title cover of the memoir, Solnit writes, "I'm trying to take shelter in my shadow" (Solnit 82), reclaiming the thin self to acknowledge that her thin body may become an excuse to assault her. To protect her body, she becomes a savage spirited woman (Solnit 83) known as a killjoy. Solnit writes, "We die all the time to avoid being killed" (Solnit 68). She faces the criticism based on her body's frailty, compared with a camp and famine victim, which she counters by hoping against the hope as an austerity hidden behind her thinness. Her brittle thinness, covered with the armour like black dress, is totally against the soft feminine body, which she has designed to injure the *willful* offender.

Solnit relates to Roxane Gay's *Hunger*, "we are supposed to disappear, but it's something that needs to be said, loudly, over and over again, so that we can resist surrendering to what is expected of us" (Solnit 84). As an intertextual reference to Gay's body and *willfulness* after facing rape assault, Solnit stands with Gay with the alacrity of *#MeToo* to start the much-needed revolutionary process. She supports Maya Angelo, Andrea Dworkin, Gay and all the victimized and vulnerable women to claim the change amidst the racist and sexist American society. She experiences violence and raises

slogan for a change that is radical in nature because the women, whose 'No' is not taken as credible, have transformed it into a defiant 'Yes' in the form of *#MeToo*. Admitting their joy-killing feminism, Solnit reinforces such defiance as women's courage and willing to *will* against the rape culture. Now, the similar willingness that was once manipulated by rapists in their favour, has been transformed into willfully *willing*. This willingness or *willfulness* either 'Yes' or 'No' is defiant that paradoxically supports *#MeToo* movement to stand with victims as a subverting agency of women against all rapists and perpetrators. Their digital presence with *#MeToo* has become an eternal emblem of shame for the offender.

To transform victims' silence into *willful* shouting, *will* is required. Solnit writes, "Femininity at its most brutally conventional is a perpetual disappearing act, an erasure and a silencing to make more room for men, one in which your existence is considered an aggression and your nonexistence a form of gracious compliance" (Solnit 85), because women absorb silencing more frequently and easily than men. The tactic of erasing the feminist killjoys is the main cause of consistent rape culture in America. Although feminist killjoys' efforts are not wasted, erasing women is easier as Solnit writes, "the dread that nothing will change that somehow coexists with the dread that something terrible is going to happen, that what is joyous cannot be trusted, and what is feared is lying in wait for you" (Solnit 89). Compliance to men's instructions "puts you in the safe and rewarding spot of being right" (Solnit 90). It becomes impossible to take the risk of being wrong or defiant like the *willful arm* without owning the powerful *will*, which also problematizes the toxicity of androcentric norms and the deep-rooted hatred for women, and then itself becomes a problem.

*#MeToo* provides a place for the like-minded killjoys who believe in subverting rape culture without any exclusionary politics. Solnit also considers it necessary to join the people who are in harmony with her *willful* thoughts. She writes, "You should be with people who are like you, who are facing what you're facing, who dream your dreams and fight your battles, who recognize you" (Solnit 110). However, becoming a problem in a system where sexual violence is deeply entrenched and embedded, distinguishing it as a severe violence is considered as the defiance and disobedience. The systemic violence creates layers and nexus of structural paranoia for women. Caught within these snares, they cannot understand the reality of their *will*. They either become thin like Solnit or fat like Gay to demand their space as the authority or

inclusion in the productive space as their integration. In both the cases, these feminist killjoys become a problem.

Sometimes the women devoured to the bone are praised; often those insistent on their own desires and needs are reviled or rebuked for taking up space, for making noise. You are punished unless you punish yourself into nonexistence in this system. The system is punishment (Solnit 112).

Solnit describes such woman-hating White men as “obsessed over bodies” (Solnit, RMNE 81) who undermine women’s cognitive intelligence and fetishize their bodies. Solnit is not robust because of her thin body. However, she describes her physical weakness as “my flesh was frail but my spirit was savage” (Solnit 83). She becomes a feminist killjoy by feeling the pain of women in parallel to her own. Writing as her practice of relating to others with the similar pain, is her craftiness to lessen the pain after announcing #MeToo as a *willful feminist killjoy*. Her literature books help her subsiding the feeling of ephemeral existence. She seeks escape from the brutal realities within the books, where she finds the similar characters looking for empathy and support, “[A] simile builds a bridge. They let me listen to conversations and thoughts that went deeper and expressed more than most people could face-to-face” (Solnit 115). The friendship becomes a healing process from all the traditional patriarchal norms and rules of speech, values, interests, priorities, the pitch and even the tone of a woman while saying something in front of a man to avoid any hint of desire. Conjunctively, according to Solnit, after becoming *willful*, the moment of #MeToo arises, “when you had nothing left to lose you were free” (Solnit 140).

Solnit’s *willfulness* as writing about history, and culture, is termed as an act of disobedience and dishonesty that paradoxically becomes her muscular power. She describes an incident in which one of the Peer reviewers of her manuscript indignantly remarked on her work as “intellectual dishonesty” with some “hidden agenda” (Solnit 171). Rejecting the notion of working on any ‘hidden agenda’, she argues and dismantles the requirement of credibility for women only. For professional work “Credibility is a basic survival tool” (Solnit 171) and courage is needed to face others’ *willfulness* merely for negotiation or to gain more power to counter others’ *will* by asserting our own *willfulness*. That *willfulness* in comprehending her existential reality, is the one step forward from the threshold of independence due to which she loses all her close relations. She uses her writing skills to get the agency to attain the credibility

for bringing the change. In this manner, she reverts Kant's re-presentation of women as only beautiful and not rational. She writes, "[W]hen a woman says that bad things happened to her or to women and the perpetrators were men, she's accused of hating men" (Solnit 175). She is a killjoy "whether she's still pleasing to others" (175). The statement transforms her into a killjoy, which to some extent is the consequence of failure in building sympathetic relations. According to Ahmed and Erin Wunker, because of the peace-sabotaging nature of the killjoy's practices, dining table also becomes a battle-zone. She sacrifices her personal happiness for the noble cause of ending rape culture. Solnit writes,

My own life metamorphosed by degrees I would only perceive in retrospect. I was almost friendless, and the friends I had made as a teenager and in my early twenties were mostly bad fits; perhaps it was because I didn't know who I was or wanted to be someone else and so I didn't know who was like me or who liked me. Or because kindness was not a criterion (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 205).

Her lived experiences of sexual violence change her priorities. She no longer supports patriarchal hetero-normative standards of friendship with opposite gender. Whereas, homo-friendship goals also subside down because of her joy-killing personality and the toxic empathies which she faces. Wunker quotes Foucault's analysis of such female friendship, "intimacies between women have been and are sanctioned and regulated in very different ways than they are and have been for men" (Solnit 143), which describe the politically objectified and materialistic existence of women to fulfill men's desire. However, Solnit's transformation gives her the opportunity to become a sympathetic fellow for the victims and survivors, after realizing their pain on their bruised and transgressed bodies hidden behind the dresses.

Solnit writes about her achieving temporary pleasure by buying a bike and then working out with weights and weight machines to transform her petrified body through violent exertion (Solnit 205-6) as a "macho pleasure" (Solnit 205). Her tactics to reverse victimhood and rape assault include becoming equivalent to powerful men by learning how to drive a bike, learning 'Shotokan karate', which are her striking acts to usurp the power of the attacker in the twenty-first century where, "Things were changing" (Solnit 206). Such safety measures and self-security techniques also hint towards the working of the third wave of feminism that has made women learn how to become strong and a

‘manly’ or ‘macho’ woman. She declares herself a feminist after passing through the process, “Feminism chose me or was something I couldn’t stay away from” (Solnit 213).

Due to the emergence of Feminist killjoys, the milestone of earning a better position for women led to the inclusion of more men in feminism. The inclusivity, acceptance and acknowledgement of women in public places as the individual human beings resolved many of the issues that Solnit faced throughout her life.

I am a woman who during my youth thought it likely I would be raped and maybe also murdered and all my life have lived in a world where women were raped and murdered by strangers for being women and by men they knew for asserting their rights or just being women and where those rapes and murders were lasciviously lingered on in art. I am a woman who has been told at crucial times that I was not believable and that I was confused and that I was not competent to deal in facts (Solnit 218).

The inability to communicate the problem because of associated shame or disgust, proves it to be the victim’s fabricated accuse or her incapability to be trustworthy that brings her predicament. Such willful and debilitating attack to increase their pain and vulnerability subsided after the publication of Solnit’s essay *Men Explain Things to Me*, in which she has termed such androcentric tactics as *gaslighting* and mansplaining to ignore women’s stance on inequality basis.

The parochialism ordained by Liberalists, especially liberal feminists, in allowing all types of consensual sexual relationships without any bounds, brought the concept of sophistication in rape assaults. The concept of consent or willingness has become an archival practice. The current practices of digital and on-road surveillance by men make American women observant of their presence in the public places. Consent-taking practice is abandoned by the assaulting White men, who attack women by taking the excuse of their clothes as their consent. Solnit, through her memoir, provides women a space to experience their freedom and credibility by creating an image of the alarming situation as a warning sign. She writes, “I have been thrilled and moved by the young women who came up to me to say that something I’ve written helped them locate their power and their value and reject their subjugation” (Solnit 220), especially when the digital life has become common.

Her reference to the “Buddhist phrase about the work of bodhisattvas” provides the roots and severity of the violence in American culture. The phrase is “the liberation of all beings” (Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence* 220), which rejects the binary of men and women. Solnit’s contention regarding declaring feminism as the subset of this equality is challenged in American racist environment. Despite the fact that she tries to present her neutral views, the cases of rape all over the world have not taken the shape of epidemic the way sexual violence has become common in America. She writes, “Racial justice movements questioned the centrality of whiteness, gay and lesbian liberation movements question” (Solnit 222).

Solnit’s description of rape epidemic attracts the attention of the authority, which previously was diverted towards other problems of accuser’s dress, purpose of coming out and the time of coming out. Wunker also gives the reference of an interview in which Foucault is asked a question about gay people. Wunker distinctively highlights Foucault’s assertion related to organize the desire, ‘attention and intentions’ of White men “to subvert the hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality” (Wunker 143). Solnit declares the rape culture as galvanized because of not understanding its commonality and the lack of control on men’s desire that leads to rape culture,

[A]s isolated anomalous incidents that didn’t raise questions about how common such violence is and how it affects women in general. When the long tolerated is suddenly seen as intolerable, someone has become audible and someone else has begun listening for the first time (Solnit 224).

Her support for *#MeTooism* as a feminist is itself the proof of the presence of the problem, where instead of solving the problem, women have been declared as problematic. The curtailing of dialogues on such a matter of women’s body integrity and honour, they have occupied the space on the internet.

In response to the 2017 revelations about sexual abuse first in the film industry and then in every industry from the restaurant business to the agricultural fields and the tech industry in the upheaval called *#MeToo*, and then beyond the USA, from Iceland to South Korea. In response to the 2018 Supreme Court hearing at which a woman told her story of being assaulted at age fifteen, and the residual trauma, and received death threats as a result of speaking up (Solnit 224).

Using digital space is advantageous for those victims and survivors whose voice is controlled by the patriarchal powers. Solnit criticizes the same agencies who despite being the disciplining forces try to discipline women more than men. The onus of speaking comes on the speaker as the reversal of the offense onto the victim or the death threats. The situation becomes worse because of the joy-killing feminism that targets the status quo.

The brutality of what we examined and the exhilaration at being able to tell and at the power of telling made an odd mix, and the storytellers were both liberated and returned to their suffering as they spoke. Through each rupture poured so many stories that it seemed as though everything hidden had come out into the open, and then another rupture happened, and thousands or hundreds of thousands more women told their stories for the first time (Solnit 224-5).

The sudden outburst of the lived experiences of victims, pressurized the debate on *#MeToo*. The increased use of hashtag disturbs the peace and stability of the normalized rape culture by creating ripples and swirls of forced questioning. Feminists' tactic of resisting and surviving in rape culture by asking difficult questions about rape culture, is rationalized after facing the death threats as "violence against voices" (Solnit 225). In the similar manner as Gaskin highlights that American rape culture's development with power, money and politics, Solnit also exposes the under currents of the male-dominant politics. White men's capacity and ability to utilize their power to harm American women is the existing order. Solnit writes, the authorities consider men's voice as authentic and right,

rested on the right and capacity of men to be in charge—of meaning and of truth, of which stories mattered and whose got told, as well as of more tangible phenomena (money, law, government, media) that maintained the arrangement. And it rested on the silence or silencing of those whose experiences demonstrated the illegitimacies of the status quo and those atop it. But something essential had changed. The change was often seen as a beginning but I saw it as a culmination of the long, slow business of making feminist perspectives more widespread and putting more women (and men who regarded women as equal and credible) in positions of power as editors, producers, directors, journalists, judges, heads of organizations, senators (Solnit 225).

When women are not heard and not considered credible, they explore the digital and social media sites to register their case without any demand of testifying evidences. These are the online spaces that provide women uncontested space, where they can share their experience without the fear of being watched or threatened.

The rise of social media and the plethora of new online forums created space for many more voices, and these amplified individual stories brought their own testimony to the conversation, and fortified the diagnosis and the need for change. This chorus created a broad river whose current carried individual voices such as mine; to the extent that the world has been changed, it was a collective project carried out by many millions (Solnit 225).

Solnit's assertion also provides women's activism a grid to experience the freedom as acclamation of their services. All those victims who share their stories of rape assaults and harassment, also provide ears to other victims as the sisterhood sympathy project. Its consequence is experienced by Solnit herself when she writes, "Street harassment largely ceased to be a problem" (Solnit 206). She also compares her position as an aged woman with other young girls and realizes that the age factor also works in such assaults, especially because of the lived experiences helping them in navigating the danger more than the young girls.

The young women, who take the challenge of countering the rape culture that has become an epidemic, become killjoys. To make *#MeToo* normalized, they use it with hashtag to spread all over the social media sites. Their guerilla tactics also involve the counter surveillance of such offenders along with Dataveillance as an effective tactic to highlight the communication history of sexual offenders. After committing such synoptic use of the internet where the whole digital audience would look into the data of the few offenders as also theorized by Thomas Mathiesen. Many of the data feminists have shifted their focus onto this technique, which has targeted the status quo.

The angry resolve of *#Metoists* to undermine rape culture, has taken the shape of activism. However, in majority of the cases, anger is not the source of attaining agency or the *will*. Solnit gives the logic of love and sympathy for the purpose of solidarity to do something "for and with others, something to change the circumstances under which you were harmed, (Solnit 225). The constant telecasting of such cases on electronic media paradoxically brings pessimism. Experiencing the problem in the real



life while coming out of the house with the fear of “stalking, harassment, assault, rape, domestic violence, and femicide as different manifestations of the same misogyny” (Solnit 226) develop the resistance among women by overwhelming the horror with the help of sympathy among them.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The conversation about sexual abuse as an event, its happening, reporting, the truths and lies associated with it, penalize the victim and provides the space to perpetrator. The non-conviction of offenders, shifts the blame onto the victims as a part of DARVO as also discussed previously. The other multiple factors including race, class, ethnicity, and physical condition, especially when the victim is not injured, increase the chances of culpability and debilitation of the real victim, hence creating no-win dilemmas. All these problems may not be discussed previously in the fictional works but in the films and plays where the characters, like Dawn O’ Keefe in *Teeth*, are presented as the threat for the offenders. Such revengeful and counter attacking characters are not present in real life that complicates the process of justice for the victims.

The notion of gender equality as the slogan of feminists is busted when the rape culture comes to the front. Solnit writes, “The very definition of women under patriarchy is designed to justify inequality, including inequality of credibility” (Solnit 228). Solnit exposes the gender inequality in America through the problematic sexual violence. Her memoir is an explanation how women become feminist killjoys when they are categorized as “categorically unqualified to speak, emotional rather than rational, vindictive, incoherent, delusional, manipulative, unfit to be heeded” (Solnit 229). According to her, women “speak up and it is no different than remaining silent; they have told their stories and nothing happens, because their rights and their capacity to bear witness don’t matter, so their voices are just sounds that blow away on the wind” (Solnit 230-1). These women’s speeches remain unheard, ignored, and pacified as compared to the supremacists’ language of civility. Women’s activism is taken as mere noise, incendiary rhetoric, shallow, and provocative to kill the joy of the authorities. These words echo in Solnit’s ears which force her to be *willful* to counter all such androcentric attacks. She uses her arms, her ears, the rods, online space, and even becomes a stone herself to subvert rape culture. Despite living in the twenty-first century, the White supremacist men are unable to accept the freedom of women. They

declare feminists as the problem for the calm society for owning the audacious *will*. In response to such discriminatory politicking, Solnit chooses to become a *#MeTooist* and finds online space to connect with other victims and survivors to speak out and speak with them.

Solnit gains access to other feminists and victims to retell, discuss, and share the stories with *#MeToo* that helps in soothing the pain after experiencing the irreversible damage. However, the experience of rape or harassment can be subsided by creating a better environment for the women. The carceral method of punishing the offenders is the apparent solution to the problem that re-emerges after the release of the rapist. His desire is problematic, with the potentiality to harm women for not following the pledge. Digital media, especially *#MeToo*, assures the change by spreading the information about the possible rapist that cautions all other women and girls through Dataveillance. Solnit's work suggests that 'hope' is the only strategy to end the fear in the contemporary time period. Solnit writes, "If I'm both feminist and hopeful it's because I know how profoundly women's rights and status have changed" (Solnit 234-5). The only fear left is of looking at the tainted self after rape that changes the whole perception of a woman's existence. The difference of before and after leads to self-blaming for putting the body into danger or more dress consciousness and change in sartorial preferences. It leads to confinement either mental or physical as a step to recline towards nonexistence. To avoid the death by rape, Solnit becomes thinner and more protective. Her tactic of wearing armour on her body, as the protective dress, reveals her insecurity. She considers male garb as more secure than women's dresses.

Hence, the critical examination of *Recollections of My Nonexistence* brings forth the concept of Solnit's difficulty in acknowledging *#MeToo* in public. Her use of philosophical and transcendental relations to the rape and harassment, as the multiple layers of ideas connected to it, require the reader to dig deeper to understand her painful existence. With the continuity of her writing, she acknowledges the problem and then moves towards the possible solution and the tactics. The fear of getting raped or harassed is still prevalent because of the racist American culture, which is under the process of decolonization. It also brings the concept of hope for women to ease their concern regarding their survival. With the same hope, Solnit stands with women of colour as the *feminist killjoy* and asserts *#MeToo*. All those who passively or actively support *#MeToo* or bring backlash for it, indirectly acknowledge its significance in

subsiding the rape culture. The rape epidemic has been lessened down if it has not been ended yet. However, the acknowledgment of the problem is the realization of the authority to look back at their system.

When Linda Martin Alcoff, Marcus, and Tracey Nicolls (7) criticize Foucauldian notion of genderless bodies as the productive ones, and evaluate maintaining biopower, they also highlight the panoptical male connoissance (Bartky 139-40; Cahill). They critically evaluate the objectified women who have no voice and are dealt like the material product whose rape can be equated with monetary payment. Being watched and never reported depicts women's reticence. Moderated through the death threats along with silence of the victim, surveillance has become a normalized threat for women. However, Ahmed's and Wunker's Feminist killjoys have manipulated the same strategy as counter surveillance and Dataveillance to make women realize their *will's* agential power.

The fairytales, though written to make sense of the world, articulate the patriarchal culture in the garb of moralistic stories that need to be rewritten to reshape the society by bringing culture jamming. The thinking of "women are for men" (Nicolls 8; Cahill), creates the problem of sexual violence, which becomes 'a feminist problem' (Ahmed; Brownmiller 9; Wunker). Feminist killjoys are neither the female monsters who dramatically subvert the shadows of rape culture, nor the cyborgs to take the rape assault as harmless unless get physically injured. Conceptualizing the possible solution to end rape culture is a vague idea, which brings to light the paradoxes associated with individual cases. According to Brownmiller, the concept of "being a male means access to . . . a woman's body" (Brownmiller 391) threatens women and lessens down their agency onto their bodies. It causes not only a glass-ceiling effect, but also an irreversible mental and psychological devastation, indignity and humiliation. Living in the rape culture, is the audacious act for women who secure their modesty through their strong and *willful* arms to stop the offenders.

In my study of *#MeToo*, I have tried to incorporate Ahmed's and Wunker's declaration of women's friendship and sisterhood as *sticky*, "The dark body of friendship might also indicate the heaviness of our trying and failing and trying again to care for each other" (Wunker 141-2). Such constant trial and failure and retrial methods as craftiness support *#MeToo* during any backlash and provide strength to Solnit. Her take on the problem by thinning her body to escape and vanishing from the

rape-site by hiding within her dress and the armour, along with learning biking, karate, undressing her powerful arm as a sign to show her *willfulness*, and other skills as guerilla tactics are the possible solutions for the immediate problem. Solnit's joy-killing *#Metoicism* also highlights the irrationality of associating the inappropriate or revealing dress choice with the sexual act of rape. Reversing the blame by putting responsibility onto women's free will in selecting the seductive dress, not only brings DARVO, but also becomes a rape apology as a corrective rape measure on moral grounds. It becomes the cause of furthering the oppressive force onto women. Considering the reality of such hidden peer-support for the sexual offenders, Solnit counters it as her proactive approach by designing an armour for her body to protect her dignity, and wearing black leather motorcycle jacket as a uniform to rationalize the critical role of White men's desire behind sexual violence. Her *#Metoicism* is also a protective armour, using which she guides the younger girls about their agential power in the form of internet and social media. Despite failure in ending rape culture, these methods provide Solnit a temporary source of satisfactory protection, whereby, men have become careful in their public dealing with women. Therefore, Solnit's memoir is significant in its presentation of the problematic patriarchal culture, to testify along with other women of colour, and gendered identities as a backlash for the rapists in the process of subverting rape culture.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS

#### SUBVERTING RAPE CULTURE THROUGH #METOOISM IN *HUNGER: A MEMOIR OF (MY) BODY*

The process of subverting the rape culture in America is nearly equal to challenging the status quo that kills the happiness of the powerful White men. Those women who audaciously take the stand and prove their worth as valuable human beings challenge not only the peaceful life of men, but also destroy their own personal happiness while subverting the problematic norms. Roxane Gay, as an audacious Haitian- American Black woman, has taken such killing-joy steps to register her voice to be acknowledged and listened by the authorities for women's safety. Many of the researchers have declared her existence as a traumatic experience, or her failed or bad feminist identity to deteriorate her image as anti-healthism. According to these researchers, she destroys her health and becomes a burden on the patriarchal society. However, her feminist activism against injustice, gendered and sexist discrimination in public sphere, and her support of #MeToo has brought her into the queue of feminist killjoys. I have argued that Gay, as neither White nor the Black woman, supports #MeToo as a feminist killjoy to subvert rape culture in America. She compromises and transforms her body's "primitive misery of being a body" [as enunciated by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (354)<sup>viii</sup>] after her rape, and stands as a *willful* woman to dispel the common notion of her passivity by becoming digitally active.

#### 5.1 Critical Summary of the Memoir

Roxane Gay's memoir *Hunger* is the recollection of her childhood traumatic memories of rape and sexual abuse as the urge for poetic salvation. Her abnormal eating behavior and endurance of pain as a memory of her past experience of rape assault, transform her into a woman who explores her hidden capacities inside and outside her body to experience her *willfulness* in a distinct manner. She disobeys the norms of patriarchal society by increasing her weight, exposing herself to all threats to see into the eyes of men. Her increased body weight provides her a space to breathe in the rape culture where being Black is another oppressed and marginalized identity. After facing

misogynoir, and criticism from all the factions of the society in the zeitgeist of the weltgeists' epoch, she experiences the transition from a willing and naïve feminine self to an audacious *feminist killjoy*.

Gay's articulation of fulfilling her wish to write a book about being at peace and loving her body completely, "at any size" (Gay 4) comes to reality in the form of *Hunger*. She experiences her body's worst and the best moments. The main cause behind her body's deterioration is her childhood rape that changes her adult sexuality. She indirectly accuses her rapist in her memoir. The reason behind her shyness and reluctance to accuse the offender openly, is the problematic androcentric patriarchy that bounds her to comply. She meets a White man Jon and then they become friends. Her PhD ends and she gets job in Eastern Illinois University. She leaves him despite all the genuine yearning between them because of her self-restricted happiness and the eternal pain of childhood gang rape. She writes, "I fell back into the familiar embrace of self-loathing. I blamed myself. I blamed my body" (Gay 111). Finding safety within her body; living with the same weight and then losing it is the story of courage that she has narrated. According to her, through writing she has achieved the recognition of her own body by looking onto it. She writes, "I was not only writing a memoir of my body; I was forcing myself to look at what my body has endured, the weight I gained, and how hard it has been to both live with and lose that weight" (Gay 4-5).

Her self-punishment and the guilt become unsurmountable like her body, which she narrates by using 'I' more frequently in the poetic form. She mentions, "I've been forced to look at my guiltiest secrets" (Gay 5). When the patriarchy kills her joy, she decides to turn into a *willful* person as a problem for the same society. "That is not comfortable. That is not easy" (Gay 5). Her horrific obesity and her shaving off her body weight as getting rid of her past (Gay 13), is observed by her parents. She gets the recognition of a feminist killjoy in her struggle against the conjunctive functioning of oppressive factors embedded in the framework of patriarchy. Nonetheless, her journey in countering the pedagogical practices of making girls learn the fear of getting raped or harassed, brings her own unhappiness. However, she remains resilient and refuses the problematic patriarchy as a *willful* feminist not only by changing her willing body into the *willful killjoy* but also by changing her dress choices to cover her fat body.

## 5.2 Analysis of *Hunger- A Memoir of (My) Body*

*Hunger* is the auto/biographical story of a woman who is an affective alien in her dealing with her rape trauma by eating unconventionally. Her hunger for food is reflective of her hunger for self-esteem, dignity and justice that solidifies her resistance. Where on one hand, Cynthia Hamilton describes the “victimization” of the raped woman as her own attempt to self-punish her body by selecting the option of self-blaming, and giving way to anger, frustration and trauma, it also leads to self-harm, self-hate, and isolation from the dominant community, and rationalizes victimhood to be at a safer place. Self-punishment is the defiance towards the beauty standard by becoming genderless in the world occupied by gender roles (Hamilton 384). Gay’s *willful* act of defying the norms of the society to transform her body is her *willfulness* against the patriarchy, where despite occupying hyperspace, she achieves prominence by the least occupied space.

The fear of getting exposed in front of those who have developed her image as ‘a good girl’ depicts her fear of becoming naked. It rationalizes her choice of molding her style of life as an affect to get adjusted in the problematic rape culture with the fear of wearing the wrong or revealing dress. Her eccentric choices to create empathy for her bruised ‘self’, become her worst nightmares. Her constant shifting and reconfiguring her body, replenish the sense of guilt, shame, disrespect, loneliness, and self-blame that collectively limit her independence. She constantly tries to hide her body and in this struggle, she, paradoxically, makes it more visible. Becoming a feminist is a systematized, pressurized, and *willful* decision of unbecoming a ‘good girl’.

I did the kinds of things that the good girl I had long pretended to be would never dream of doing. There was no more pretending I was a straight-A student or a girl who cared about grades or a good daughter or a good anything. Completely unmoored from my previous life, I could be a blank slate. I could reinvent myself. I could take the kinds of risks that would have, not long before, been unthinkable (Gay 94).

Her becoming a killjoy amplifies her voice from the self-reflective ‘I’ to *willful #MeToo* to undermine the cultural normalization of sexual violence. Gay’s condition is not simply a victimhood, but her traumatic development, due to which she loses contact

with her real self. She loses her self-esteem without having any rational and logical comprehension of putting herself at such an inferior position, consequentially making her existence shameful and more exposed to danger. She writes, “I had no reason to have such low self-esteem at twelve years old. I had no reason to allow myself to be treated terribly” (Gay 41).

Gay’s rapist Christopher puts her life into danger by using his *willfulness* in the patriarchal society by killing her happiness for the purpose of his amusement (Gay 42). Whereas, his *willfulness* is unnoticed, while Gay’s vulnerability and exposure to the rape culture makes her lose trust on every human being. She even loses her faith in God, considering the patriarchal hierarchies as the designs of god. Her significant cautious behaviour in the public space, entails her disturbed social life as the common adage in the West. Consequently, the fear she feels as a woman, limits her choices and affirms her femininity as a weaker position in the patriarchal culture. The killing joy moment in her life leaves her baffled about the systemic, natural, and divine selection of male’s superiority and women’s inferiority. Her constant shift from agnostic to theistic to atheistic beliefs is the aftermath of her rape that dismantles her belief system. Despite being a ‘good girl, a good daughter, and a good student’, she gets raped in the woods. She writes, “I no longer believed in God because I had sinned. I had sinned in a way I hadn’t even known was possible until I learned what was possible” (Gay 48).

The difference of understanding and the understanding of difference is the threshold as the thin line to spare the person from the danger and the real happening of the act of rape. Gay’s naivety in not understanding the difference of race, sex, gender, and other differences, is what brings her tragedy. She wants to be like a man, dress like a man to protect her body and own her *will*. Her *willfulness* from inside and the apparent image of a ‘Good girl’ have countering effect on each other.

Dworkin’s revelation of the reality of the fabricated fairy tales also provide the stark reality where the fictional idealism gets shattered. Seemingly, Gay’s story of rape shatters the concepts of ‘a Good boy’ (Dworkin 43), which has been presented for more than a century in the American literature. Wunker describes the image of a rapist as a sadist lone wolf who tries hard to trap his prey. The fairy tales’ myth of protection by an unknown man or a prince, are demystified by Gay’s revelation of her secret in a wearingly repetitive manner. Her experiences of the moments of humiliation, introspection, and non-triumphalism, expose her fragility. Her obese body makes others



acknowledge the difference and the gender gap. Christopher is not presented as the rapist in Gay's own story of her body, but as the boy who committed something strange.

Her story is the rejection of unmediated truth and artifice. She narrates her story of rejection, punishment, and connivance to construct the background of the problem. Her misunderstanding of Christopher's coerciveness paves the path for feminists' solution of refusal for such friendships. She realizes the punishment she receives from the offenders and her self-harm, which belittle her. She writes, "he punished me for what I wasn't and couldn't. He punished me for being too young and too naïve, too adoring and too accommodating" (Gay 50). Gay's compliance and pliability for wrong interpretation of Christopher's intentions become her tragedy. "He wanted to try things and I was extraordinarily pliable. I didn't know how to say no. It never crosses my mind to say no" (Gay 51). The androcentric machination of bringing forward the heteronormative relations for the solitary girls in the patriarchal culture becomes a source of coercion. Christopher takes advantage of her alienated presence due to prevalent racism and sexism, and rapes her. She further acknowledges her mistake of not giving herself the respect which she deserves as a human being.

It's too much, too humiliating. But with each new transgression we committed, I lost more of my body. I fell further from the possibility of the word "no." I became less and less the good girl I had been. I stopped looking at my reflection in the mirror because I felt nothing but guilt and shame when I did. And then there was that terrible day in the woods. And I finally did say no. And it did not matter. That's what has scarred me the most. My no did not matter (Gay 51).

Ahmed enunciates such retaliatory effort in the form of *willfulness*, after recognizing the danger. She writes, "to disobey is the effort not only to say no but to say it publicly, to say it loudly, or to perform it through one's own bodily action or inaction" (Ahmed, W 141). Gay's inability to assert her 'No' and her fragile *will* limits her power. That experience as her memory keeps haunting her in her later life and makes her devoid of any self-confidence.

Her debilitation and secret of rape, changes her status from a good girl into a public space. Her fear of not uttering the right kind of 'No' to stop the offenders declares her devastating body in the rape culture. Registering the resistance seeks authenticity

as the credibility of the complainant, which incapacitates her. The childhood rape leaves a sign as a taint on her body that she tries to hide by wearing men's dress.

I was marked after that. Men could smell it on me, that I had lost my body, that they could avail themselves of my body, that I wouldn't say no because I knew my no did not matter. They smelled it on me and took advantage, every chance they got (Gay 52).

Her self-declaration of the 'tainted self' is her proclamation of her vulnerability in the rape culture where her weak 'No' as non-assertive refusal mistakenly taken as 'Yes' has transformed her into a rapeable woman. Her use of painful 'I' is the acknowledgement of her *#MeToo* moment that makes her *willful* after her gang-rape. She tries to make her humanness acknowledged. 'I am a human being too' becomes the contextual reference towards her *#MeToo*. Wunker's enunciation regarding the production of compliant subjects in the rape culture, is solely the functioning of patriarchy and the process of making submissive subjects for the amusement of White men. *Hunger* is Gay's story of changing her raped body from the transient body of *#MeToo* moment and tainted self to *willful* killjoy with the stamp of a *#MeTooist* as a tattoo on her body. This tattoo also reveals her scars for life as the hyper-semiotic symbol on her tormented body as a visual source to show sympathy with the victims.

Gay's helplessness in taking her revenge to pacify her anger, makes it convenient and therapeutic for her to select the available option of redefining her own actions to obey the patriarchy by reducing her exposure and presence. Such absented presence as non-existence in public places and disappearance in a bulky body, provides her a source to forget her painful past. However, paradoxically, the same acts also pave the path for her becoming a defiant and a *willful* woman. Her constant struggle to remain 'untainted' in front of her parents by presenting her as a good girl, creates a dilemma for her. Her body obeys her mind, designed optimally to obey patriarchal norms without resisting any of the cultural settings. She constantly tries to reduce her space by becoming a reserved person. Her act of obedience is inherently an act of harm for her body, which in the process of hiding her pain reveals her obesity to her parents. She writes, "I didn't know there were better ways to deal with my suffering" (Gay 15). Her ignorance makes her more of a patriarchal obedient subject after her rape. She designs her actions parallel to the willing submission because of her self- image in the society.

The act in ignorance is not a crime done by her, but on her. She hides her rape secret from her family members to hide her childhood scars on her body. Her silence becomes a problematic nuisance assimilated in her body. Gay writes in *Hunger*, “I could talk to my parents and get help” (Gay 15). After her rape, Gay shrinks to the periphery as the ‘other’. She writes, “And then I was raped and I had to pretend to be someone I wasn’t and I wanted nothing more than to run away” (Gay 59). Her action becomes an enigmatic problem when she tries to avert the danger by becoming silent about it. She learns the silence from her cultural practices, which becomes compliance to pave the path for the rapists as willingness to continue their actions. Her silent body becomes obese because of the mental pressure and resistance she faces from her inner self. She writes, “I feel guilt not only for what happened, but for how I handled the after, for my silence, for my eating and what became of my body” (Gay 39). The guilt and shame she feels after becoming obese, weaken her *will* more. Gay’s inconvenience in revealing her secret in front of her parents, highlights the pressure she faces because of being a girl and becoming a woman who is physically weak and trapped in the patriarchal cultural practices that pressurizes her to keep the secret of becoming a victim woman to preserve her morally good character. Later, the same willing happily kind of act is also categorized as a *willful* act by the androcentric patriarchy.

Gay’s body becomes an emblem of American rape culture. At first, the Haitian Christian world’s traditional patriarchy limits a Black woman’s *will* to defy in any way. She reminds herself of her roots and her family to make her body stronger other than the fat she has taken onto her as her covering and shelter. She writes, “The only way I know of moving through the world is as a Haitian American, a Haitian daughter” (Gay 55). Her fear of losing the good image of a ‘Haitian daughter’ as “respectful, studious, hardworking” (Gay 55), who remains intact with her heritage, shifts her concern more towards her presentation than her real *will* to assert her ‘self’. “No matter how far we have fallen, when it matters most, we rise” (Gay 55). Following the norms turns out to be excruciating for her body. She is forced to defy for not being defiant in the rape culture. Despite her father’s love and care, she hides the truth; and gradually, she gains consciousness of her body’s torment and seeks her own *will* by increasing her weight to counter the problematic rape culture.

The absence of the perpetrators’ or the offenders’ voice in her memoir depicts her resistance and tactic to remove the androcentric patriarchy from her work. Whereas,

the absence is not an absence, rather the ignored presence that constantly tries to halt her assertive 'I'. She has become a 'feminist killjoy' by joining #MeToo and taking the responsibility of writing about American and specifically Black women's multiple problems originated because of the sexist, gendered, and racist discrimination as absented presence. She uses the problematic 'I' as reflective of her position as a medium of poetic salvation. While looking for sympathy and affiliation with other women, she learns to speak through her writing to speak with her characters. Her writing turns out to be the source of proving her mental intellect that is hidden behind her fat body because of her tormented self-image after her rape.

The body-shaming Gay experiences, adds to her already traumatized existence because of her *willfulness*. Her desire to come out of her house and join the company of an unknown boy is her intentional act. However, her naivety in determining the inevitable complexity of consent, espouses her ignorance of the consequences of gang rape at the age of twelve. It approves her childhood sexual encounter as the child rape and exposes the fault line of the American society where women are not safe. Ahmed expounds *willfulness* as punishable by law for defiance against the set norms; and also the justification of the punishment given to women to make them compliant as a corrective rape. Gay's rape becomes her punishment for crossing the threshold of 'being a good girl' and trusting an unknown boy. Whereas, in the androcentric patriarchal society, the same boy's *willful* act of punishing Gay by raping her, becomes his heroic act. His willful act of rape is celebrated and patronized by his friends as a process of endorsing his masculinity, sexuality, and desire, which in Gay's case is unacceptable because of her bodily identification of a woman and then its transgression.

Although Christopher's *willfulness* is the normalized act in the rape culture that makes Gay guilty of trusting him, she also acknowledges her own willing reticence towards heteropatriarchal amicability towards him, "I was a thing, flesh and girl bones with which they could amuse themselves" (Gay 42). Nevertheless, their criminality is deterred by putting the responsibility onto Gay on the basis of her clothes, sexual choices, and her *willfulness* in revealing her sexuality to an unknown boy. Disjunctive to such victim-blaming, Christopher humiliates Gay without exposing his own body to pose his body as sacred to commit the corrective rape. Gay writes, "he didn't take off his clothes" (Gay 42). He constantly reminds Gay of her inferior status without any regard for her, as compared to other girls. Gay's fear of disrespect and shame for her

parents, alleviates her power to resist or report her rape to the authorities. She considers it her punishment for her transgression, which becomes her lifelong guilt to pave the path for her self-blaming.

Gay's parochialism in not understanding her body's stigmatization, proves her naivety. She defies the set gender norms by transgressing the resistive boundaries and learns to transform her body into a compliant person in her own *willful* manner. She starts healing from self-blaming, but the juxtaposed problem of obesity grows with her. Rape becomes a seal on her body as a permanent tattoo. In her later years after adolescence, she realizes that the body needs recognition not ignorance. Then, she learns to raise her arm in support of the sexually assaulted victims' community. The trust deficit highlights the dilemma of the patriarchy where despite suffering and pain, women are the ones who are blamed for sexual assaults. Gay writes, "[T]oo much weight was undesirable. If I was undesirable, I could keep more hurt away" (Gay 15). That 'too-muchness' also hints towards Black women's unwanted aggression, mimicked by White men as their animatedness or hysteria. #MeToo and its critical undesirability in American culture, provides Gay a source for feminist snap, a platform to assert her existence as meaningful.

Gay herself declares her misunderstanding of the problematic choices that she makes, because of which she lost her agency in the past. Though the journey of being and becoming hopeful is tragic and traumatic for her, she endures her despite its painful presence, and complicated nature because of the non-availability of any support, sister, or any feminist. She writes, "I knew too much about hurt, but I didn't know how much more a girl could suffer until I did" (Gay 15). The act of rape has tormented her self-image, distanced her from her friends, and other women; and makes her devoid of self-confidence to trust her normal body's *will*. The conglomeration of self-punishment, self-blaming and the desire to become resistant or *willful*, forces her to select the option of eating more to become obese. "The fat created a new body, one that shamed me but one that made me feel safe... I needed to feel like a fortress, impermeable" (Gay 16). Here her fatness acts as her covering and veil as the new body-dress. However, she takes the responsibility of her disobedience and stands again as a survivor to fight back.

Gay's *willful* transformation into a fortress, is the phenomenon against the patriarchal norms of an active and productive body, as also examined by Cat Pause and Hoggs to reveal American fat-phobia. Her defiance from Haitian tradition and

transgression from obedient behavior to perverse behavior, rationalizes her concern for her security. Her strange *willfulness* is taken as her transformation into passivity and unproductivity. However, it provides her a sense of superficial agency of her body to provide passive protective fat-shield. She tries to enhance her usability and productivity by developing her *will* to counter her fear. Her transgression is her craftiness to counter and resist sexual violence, which becomes a severe problem in the androcentric world. Her concealed fear is sighted as the disobedience and defiance, which makes her parents concerned. She writes, “I am trapped in a cage” (Gay 17;19) of the body, which is fat enough to be observed through constant surveillance and make her vulnerable.

Gay’s ignorance of the power of ‘No’ and the refusal at the right time, brings her predicament. Her incapability to learn and extreme compliance, becomes a source of torture for her. She is constantly reminded “*DON’T SWING YOUR ARMS, ROXANE*” (Gay 250; Italics in original) as a patriarchal call that makes her angry. In response, the process of transformation metamorphoses her from a body comprising of guilt, shame and remorse into a powerful *willful feminist* to become a killjoy to normalize her endurance as her power. She crosses the threshold set by patriarchy to achieve self-awareness. Obviating the possibility of getting raped again, she enjoys her power lying in her fat body. Gay’s defiant arm is symbolic of her freedom and liberty from the rape culture. Her arm symbolizes her courage and dare to stand again after surviving rape. She experiences the power by raising her arm to become a part of *#MeToo*. She writes, “Sometimes, I catch myself trying not to swing my arms even now and I get so angry. I get so fucking angry and I want to swing my arms like a windmill. These are my arms. This is how I walk” (Gay 250).

Reclaiming the *will* and the integrity of the self, is the stage through which Gay passes on and learns how to reinforce her existence. It also provides the reader a panoramic view of the intersectional approach towards the critical racial discrimination. At first, as Simone De Beauvoir, and then Patricia Hill Collins design “the images of the mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, and Jezebel [that] demonstrate the “four prevailing interpretations of Black womanhood [that] form a nexus of elite white male interpretations of Black female sexuality and fertility” (Fernandez 64-5). Wunker expounds on the same maternal fears for the daughters in the rape culture. Gay finds it easier to comply with all the traditional norms while hiding in her fat body. Defiance and assertion of her *will* in the form of crossing the threshold of her house and entering

into the wild forest, is her disobedience and her experiencing of her free *will*, as Rousseau points out (Ahmed, PC), to experience her right will. But, the boys' *willfulness* counters her weaker *will*. As a result, she is raped and tortured. Her willingness and compliance, either to follow the traditions or to assert her naïve choice, damages her body. Where Rousseau declares it women's inability to comprehend the danger for not having the intellectual capability, Ahmed and Wunker assign women a higher position in mental functioning by explaining their body as the zone of conflict and the battle field that makes them more concerned for their security. It decreases the attention towards the intellectual work by diverting it towards the most immediate problem of self-security and one's dignity.

Concentrating on the phenomenological explanation of the problem, Husserl's contention that body is an organ of the *will* (Ahmed, W 35) justifies Gay's *will to will* against rape and sexual violence after experiencing the anger as feminist snap. It is the phenomenon of becoming a part of *#MeToo*, temporally, spatially, and horizontally where she understands her self's different roles while thinking, interacting with other people, and speaking for her rights, and at the moment of coming out of her house. Memoir writing is a medium through which she materializes her struggles on paper and then on digital media with *#MeToo*. She raises her voice and supports the other victims and survivors to counter the hetero-normative inception of hatred for women among women. She has only remembered the suffering that has transformed herself into a powerful woman who owns her body and changes it with her own consent. Her transformation is because of the Black women's sisterhood and the intersectional support of White women on the digital platform of *#MeToo* after which the strict societal norms are undermined and many are in the process of accepting the space for women. Wunker describes it as the female friends' cooperation (Wunker 130) and stringent coalition as a radical step that is maneuvered by the males' political dynamics to systematize women-hatred. However, Gay secures her *will* by countering the patriarchal attacks.

Gay's stance to live her life, is first distorted by the male's desire with all his ferocity and jocularly, and then by herself, which hints towards American culture's structural and moral leprosy. Becoming a victim of rape and then understanding the nature of the phenomenon of perpetration and violation of her body's integrity, makes her to pursue silence and hide the crime committed on her body to avoid victim-

blaming. Her problematic silence and reticence indulge her in the *willful* habit of dismantling her body's natural shape. She prefers to be fat than to be thin, robust and attractive. Her choice of deformed body becomes her *willfulness* and later defines her becoming a *feminist killjoy*. She becomes an embodied resistance to cater her intentional act.

The inevitable complexity associated with consent, creates space for the rapist's audacity to rape her by using his arms to limit her power. Her weaker *will* provides strength to the offender's *will*. Gay herself admits that, "I was so very young and sheltered" (Gay 15). The difference of before and after terrorizes her life. She writes, "I didn't know I could suffer or the breadth and scope of what suffering could be. I didn't know that I could give voice to my suffering when I did suffer" (Gay 15). Gay enunciates her bifurcated life in a subtle manner to register the difference of two lives she experiences after rape. While desiring to go back in time to change her mistake, she gets failed to ensure herself that her rape is not her mistake or *willfulness*. Rather, it hinges on the moment she decides to trust an unknown White boy that brings her misery. The same point is the fault line in American cultural practices as her predicament. She writes, "What you need to know is that my life is split in two, cleaved not so neatly. There is the before and the after. Before I gained weight. After I gained weight. Before I was raped. After I was raped" (Gay 14). The victimhood has changed her life where she silently bears to remain at the safe side. Her strategy to avoid DARVO or victim-blaming leads towards her trauma. She becomes trapped in the snare of self-blaming and self-punishment that is the spectre of rape, according to Wunker, making the act of rape strange (Wunker 66) because of the unidentifiable existence of the rapists.

After her rape, the coercive and restrictive gender performances, expected from her, force Gay to change her outlook. Her rapist's willful act and then his shifting the blame onto her by calling her a "slut" (Gay 32) in the school befuddles her. Gay's reluctance in speaking openly about rape, describes its problematic nature even in the twenty-first century's digital age. While describing her personal experience, she preferably and conveniently repeats the phrase, "Something terrible happened" (Gay 38). The phenomenon is not called 'rape' because of her ignorance at the age of twelve. The use of 'I' while describing the personal experience of sexual violence, becomes a *willful* act in the androcentric culture. In the meanwhile, the fear of becoming 'tainted'



after admitting rape onto her body makes her silent. The apparent silence is her unnoticed resistance hidden inside her obese body. Gay writes, “I don’t want to be silent. I can’t be silent” now (Gay 38). She is unable to become audacious in the exploitative culture where she has no evidence of proving her rape. She prefers to remain silent and tolerate slut-shaming as the social, political and cultural form of circulation of affect after her rape. Side by side, she also regrets being submissive and silent. Gay writes, “The longer I stayed silent, the more that fear grew until it dwarfed everything else” (Gay 47). Her becomingness, according to Wunker, is her strategy to counter and launder the external negative effects. She puts her efforts to reverse her becoming a slut to becoming fatter and unattractive as her act to avert the male surveillance and assert her anger in the form of physical affect. Her compliance is the aftermath of the patriarchal infusion of pedagogical practices to make all subjects disciplined and obedient. Gay writes,

The good thing about school is that students have been trained, from an early age, to follow the rules. They come to class and generally sit and behave in an orderly fashion. When you tell them to do things, they do those things (Gay 107).

Nonetheless, the strict disciplinary culture of the dorm room is another round of torture for her that results in her worsened health condition and poses her as a philistine character among the sophisticated practices. Her obesity is taken as her normlessness to depict her inferior position in seeking moral character. However, she keeps on collecting cruel optimism for her survival. Mackinnon’s criticism on the patriarchy, Marilyn French’s assertion of liability of rape on all White men and Wunker’s declaration of rape culture as the cause of patriarchy’s infused subjugation of women, as discussed previously, is what reveals the hidden truth of the structural exploitation of women by White men in the American system.

Furthermore, Gay’s emblematic *willfulness* in the form of her unjustifiable body size highlights her resistance and radical step of countering her trauma by taking immediate step of ruling out all possibilities of getting raped or trapped by men again. Gay’s experience of being-in-the-world is the realization and acceptance of her existence and her process of “becoming” a feminist in the patriarchal culture where masculinity is privileged by all means. Her victimhood is not revealed to her parents in her childhood. She is considered as an “untainted” body who gathers her courage by

facing the cruel treatment in her school and the hostel; and later her body retaliates by defying the norms and traditions. She experiences another round of hatred from the same gender when the nurses blame her for transgression, and illegal relations. They consider all stomach aches as a connotation of her defiance. Gay reconsiders her parental honour and her silence as a rod of patriarchy to beat her back to the normal body. She has to will either to *will* strongly or to become weaker and reveal her secret. Her misinterpretation of her parents' love lets her take the wrong decisions.

Most of the choices I made during my lost year were ill advised. I was reckless. I did not care about my body because my body was nothing. I let men, mostly, do terrible things to my body. I let them hurt me because I had already been hurt and so, really, I was looking for someone to finish what had already been started (Gay 95).

Her medical report makes them acknowledge that the stomach disorder has been intensified. The racist climate of the America also creates a pressure for her and proves her an inherently rapeable person. Side by side, she also knows that the exposition of the crime is the onus only on her as an abhorrent offense, which has the power to transmogrify her position from untainted to stigmatized and ostracized self. However, she has lost her agency, and now she wants an outer agency to provide her the courage and transform her reality into a better phenomenon. The condition of misogynoir which Gay highlights, evinces her suppressed life after which she becomes *willful*.

Gay is an example of such fat people who, like the sisters of Cinderella, are ignored in the research fields. Gay has tried to highlight the fact that considering her body for-granted, rapeable or marginalized, kills her joy. She writes, "When people try to shame me for being fat, I feel rage. I get stubborn. I want to make myself fatter to spite the shamers, even though the only person I would really be spiting is myself" (Gay 189). Her fatness as unacceptable in the 'thinspired world', has sabotaged her human relationships. Her defiance has shrunken a place for her and counters her own defense mechanism, which no longer is workable because of the uncontrollable obesity. She writes, "The story of my body is not a story of triumph. This is not a weight-loss memoir" (Gay 4). This is not her invisibility from the feminists' location but her visibility in the patriarchal world to face the critical panopticon audaciously to counter patriarchal willfulness and become a problem for them. She has not lost her truer self in the nothingness of her fat body. She writes, "There will be no picture of thin version

of me” (Gay 4). Instead, she has made the world realize the significance of her fat body as a defiance against thinness and beauty roles as her *refusal*.

Gay’s life’s positivity and happiness vanishes because of her rape at the age of twelve, which she wants to reclaim to end her conversion into merely a body. She has devised her own definition of nothingness and existence by dismantling the beauty roles. “I want to go unnoticed. I want to hide. I want to hide. I want to disappear until I gain control of my body” (Gay 13). Her reticent discretion pushes her to become insignificant and unnoticed in public spaces for which she changes her outer appearance and dress choices. She desires to experience her productivity, captured by the discriminatory behaviours and toxic empathy. In her personal space, she writes about her problem to regain her mental power. According to her, “I hope that by sharing my story, by joining the chorus of women and men who share their stories too, many people can become appropriately horrified by how much suffering is born of sexual violence, how far-reaching the repercussions can be” (Gay 39). She reveals her feminist activism against rape culture to make a significant advancement in subverting it. The zeitgeist of the digital times, *#MeToo*, provides her the required space where her problematic ‘I’ becomes *Me Too*. “I am stronger than I am broken” (Gay 40). She writes, “I share parts of my story, and this sharing becomes part of something bigger, a collective testimony of people, who have painful stories too. I make that choice” (Gay 40). Her resolve is the resounding of Ahmed’s existentialist call for the change ‘I will then I am’. Wunker describes it as re-weaponization against the systems and not against the bodies (70) by giving space to the sense of rage against the collective patriarchal wrongs.

### 5.2.1 Gay’s Problematic *#MeTooism*

Through *#MeToo*, Gay strengthens her resolve to become a voice for all the survivors and make the community of the defiant arms as a complete body to subvert rape culture. Her resolve to transform the individual or specific *will* into a complete body of *willful* women, provides strength to *#MeToo* whose arms collectively form a huge *will* to resist and stop the offenders’ arms. Her *willful* act is at first taken as the disobedience to patriarchy. Nonetheless, the radicalism she brings into her movement against the American oppressive culture through writing and sharing her experiences, is the step forward towards toppling and defenestrating the problematic culture through ‘culture jamming’ (Nicholls 17-8). Such *#MeTooism* is the killjoy for the perpetrators to stop them from their perverted actions. She dismantles the cultural apparatuses of

oppression and victimization by challenging the violators through her strong and bulky body. Subsequently, her memoir becomes the voice of many weak victims and survivors, who are compelled to become a part of the *willful* body to give it more strength. Such body becomes the body of *#MeToo* in radical defiance against the problematic prevalent rape culture to subvert it.

Gay has become *#MeTooist* by sharing her experience of sexual violence through writing short stories and novels. Her powerful voice, her arm, and her whole body is the trope of defiance and resistance as a radical change. It is not abrupt, rather systematic and everlasting. Nevertheless, the change has taken her life's crucial years. This change, triggered by rape culture, has been acknowledged worldwide and listened globally because of digitization of feminism. The digital space availability for her presence as virtual, has nullified the hypothesis of Gay's disability and passivity on the basis of fatism. Gay has used online resources to experience her *Willfulness* in a virtual manner by asserting, "Mine is not a success story. Mine is, simply, a true story" (Gay 4). Her true story is enough to alleviate the backlash faced by *#MeToo*. How society rejects her existence because of her fat body, her behavior, blackness and all other habits, she has explained in her memoir. Countering all challenges faced by a common woman in America, she overcomes her shame, guilt, and self-blaming through confidence, and practice. She declares her memoir and other stories as "a confession. These are the ugliest, weakest, barest parts of me" (Gay 5).

*Hunger* is the description of Gay's pain and hunger to reinstate her dignity to be acknowledged in the male-centered world at equal grounds. She writes, "This is a memoir of (my) body because, more often than not, stories of bodies like mine are ignored or dismissed or derided" (Gay 5). After listening to criticism and hurtful comments, she struggles with her hope to gather the cruel optimism. She chooses the struggle and the fight against patriarchy by presenting her body as the sight of resistance in the form of physical economy of body. Gay writes, "[H]olding my breath awaiting your judgement" (Gay 6) that has been described by Wunker as the "feeling of not-quite-living up, of not-quite-fitting, can be isolated, alienating, and disempowering" (45).

Gay's self-loathing is her revenge from herself because of having a history of sexual violence and her body weight. The need of affection from a person other than her parents is her *willfulness* in the backdrop of cultural prospects, is also problematic.

Sleepiness as a proposition by the doctor to operate her by numbing her body is what she describes as the civility of language as also addressed by Ahmed (W 32), which is patronizing in the sense that the victim herself rejects the chances of deception. She writes, “What those doctors offered was so tempting, so seductive” (Gay 8), as if “our bodies were our biggest problems” (Gay 8). She is medically treated to be made willing, which may be taken as the phenomenon of ‘first seduced and then abandoned’. Different bariatric surgeries are performed on her oversized body. She mentions BMI as a process to bring “a sense of discipline to undisciplined bodies” (Gay 11).

The gang rape brings an uninterrupted and irreversible trauma for her because of her rapists’ sadism, which complicates her life’s normal tasks. She writes, “Losing control of my body was a matter of accretion. I began eating to change my body. I was willful in this. Some boys had destroyed me, and I barely survived it” (Gay 13). The generational problem which emerges because of the inculcation of the idea of getting raped by men, creates an irreversible fear. Wunker has theorized the same problem of young girls who are forcefully made to learn submissiveness. Gay writes, “This is what most girls are taught--- that we should be slender and small. We should not take up space. We should not take up space. We should be seen and not heard, and if we are seen, we should be pleasing to men, acceptable to society” (Gay 13). It shows Gay’s deference and endearing acceptance of empathetic relations-building according to the societal norms, which are nonchalantly ignored by others. Wunker describes it as a systematization of patriarchal thought in the social interactions (19) and the system. The constant declaration of men’s superiority and women’s inferior status in American culture, results into women’s defiance. In the digital age. This defiance takes the shape of opting the alternates to spread the message powerfully through *#MeToo* among the global audiences. She needs to pierce the ideological obfuscation of her problem to attain the critical approach in devising the solution.

### **5.3 Gay as a *Willful Feminist Killjoy* and a Problem for Patriarchy**

Seeking control of your body and defy the norms, is a stage that needs a healthier *will* to assert the *willfulness* without the fear of the rod. While in the process of adopting the same *willfulness*, she attains the agential power. Gay writes about her existence, “I am not small. I will never be small. For one, I am tall. That is both a curse and a saving grace. I have presence, I am told. I take up space. I intimidate” (Gay 13). She tries to make her *will* stronger to counter the nonchalance and toxic empathy of the onlookers.

Those spectators who are ignorant of her traumatic past and declare her fatness as intimidating, try to take advantage of their compliance towards oppressive system by increasing the course of oppression for Gay.

The increase in her problems because of her sensitiveness towards the public shame, incapacitates her. She is clueless regarding the consequences of her choices in the coming future because of her too much compliance. This ‘too-ness’ damages her body and leads towards the hysteric aggression. Her anger as the feminist snap exteriorizes her *will*. Wunker writes, “Anger is loaded with information and energy. Anger is the response to injustice, as a vision and version of future, as a translation of pain into knowledge not a response to the past but an opening up to her future” (70). Gay’s intoxicated body is her slow suicide where despite all her education, her development in the patriarchal society affects her optimistic approach. She irrevocably adopts the ‘fat victim’ position because of the guilt that kills her slowly from inside. The sudden shift in her life has deteriorated her body.

I don’t want to diminish the gravity of what happened. I don’t want to pretend I’m on some triumphant, uplifting journey. I don’t want to pretend that everything is okay. I’m living with what happened, moving forward without forgetting, moving forward without pretending I am unscarred (Gay 21).

She tries to normalize her fearful existence to relieve her stress. However, with the increased understanding of the phenomenon of the ‘rape’ and her innocence, she advances and tries to come out of her shame and guilt. Her unintentionality in becoming a problem and then her courage to put off the cover of shame and guilt as her intentional battle against the apparent victimhood, exposes her to the cruelties of life. She adamantly builds her *will*. Whereas, the decades of fat-armouring makes her hesitant to accept her new self. In the meantime, all her exhaustive practice reverses to the same optimized position that Gay has set after rape for her body because of her extreme insecurity and fear. She feels herself devoid of self-protective and defensive craftiness. It portrays the fragility of *her will* in the garb of composure that later becomes the cause of the development of feminist anger. Gay’s *willful* resolve, amidst her failures and achievements as the reverberating cycles with different wavelengths, constantly changes her position. At one time, she develops her *will*, and the next moment her *will* exposes her to the patriarchal anger. At that moment, she faces the snap and loses her courage. However, the constant struggle makes her stronger to build her *will* slowly.

The acknowledgment of her tragedy, is the way forward in her life to organize her disorganized life and show her *will* for the condemnation and subversion of the rape culture. She finds her escape in eating food to counter her victimhood. She confesses, “I knew I wouldn’t be able to endure another such violation, and so I ate because I thought that if my body became repulsive, I could keep men away. Even at that young age, I understood that to be fat was to be undesirable to men, to be beneath their contempt” (Gay 13). The transition becomes more visible. In the process of disappearing from the men’s world, she disappears from her own happy life. The only fat person she leaves behind is her *willful* existence. The double image of the same body forces her to shrink. She gets separated from her loved ones. Her secret makes her weak. She writes, “There was no room in my life for truth” (Gay 47). She enunciates her pain, “I ate because I understood that I could take up more space. I could become more solid, stronger, safer” (Gay 15). Her comprehension of attaining the obese body as a fortress against White supremacist men, is her passive defense mechanism that limits her activity.

Gay admits her weak resolve as a dilemma of her life by writing, “food is a constant reminder of my body, my lack of willpower, my biggest flaws” (Gay 226). Where on one hand, Wunker and Ahmed describe the feminist killjoys’ existence on the dining table as problematic because of their disobedience and audacious nature to discuss problematic things, Gay’s family accommodates her because of her apparent veil of a ‘good girl’. Gay’s experience is different in the context of her own personal withdrawal and not her mother’s pressure to withdraw from the rape accuse. She has not even accused her rapist.

Even as I became more and more withdrawn, my family remained strong, connected in these intimate, indelible ways. I have no doubt that my parents noticed the change in me. They would continue to notice, to worry over me, for the next twenty years and longer. But they didn’t know how to talk to me and I didn’t let them in. When they tried, I deflected, refusing to take the lifelines they offered me. The longer I kept my secret, the more attached I became to keeping my truth to myself, the more I nurtured my silence (Gay 54).

Gay’s stand to reinvigorate her dignity, is her resolve to become a *killjoy* to protect others. She is baffled about how to deal with her body and her secret. She writes, “I was swallowing my secrets and making my body expand and explode” (Gay 61). In

this process, she tries to make her body ‘safer’ (Gay 61). Her anomalous existence as a Black woman among White Americans, baffled her position. She writes, “the white students didn’t quite know what to do with me. I was an anomaly, and I didn’t fit their assumed narrative about blackness” (Gay 62), which has been described as misogynoir by Moya Bailey to present Gay’s problem as the complex mixture of fatness, racism, genderism, and sexism of White men. Her unfriendliness towards girls and her loneliness as her choice, are her killing-joy experiences that develop her into a killjoy.

She becomes an insecure girl by putting her efforts in beautifying herself, and bringing her body’s transition into a feminist killjoy against the oppressive culture. IN this process, she limits her desirability by becoming undesirable. Gay writes, “I’m a feminist and I believe in doing away with the rigid beauty standards that force women to conform to unrealistic ideals” (Gay 17). “Unrealistic” refers to her audacity, which is not normal for a common American Black woman. She dismisses the common and collective standards of the society by describing patriarchal norms as not based on real ground because of the androcentric world’s ignorance about women’s problems. Although the patriarchal institutions are happy in their centric notions of power and superior position, they are indifferent towards the real life rape culture, which has become a killjoy for women and their existence. She writes, “I know, having grown up in a culture that is generally toxic to women and constantly trying to discipline women’s bodies, that it is important to resist unreasonable standards for how my body or any body should look” (Gay 17). Keeping an insight about the outer appearance of women, Gay criticizes the hollow standards of the society whereby acclaiming that the problem lies within women’s body and ‘not’ within their apparent choices of seductive dresses. Understanding the problem and then adopting the guerilla tactics to counter it, is the strategy to resolve the problem. She dismantles the “slippery and hazy vagaries” (Wunker 60) by disclosing her understanding and lived experience of rape in the rape culture.

As soon as Gay starts becoming a feminist killjoy, the level of comfort for Gay lessens down with each pound’s weight on her body. The seasonal changes and their effects on her body, also make her uncomfortable. She writes, “I feel like people are judging me for having an unruly body that perspires so wantonly, that dares to reveal the costs of exertion” (Gay 18). Her exposition of patriarchal problem, as the ex-compliant subject who become more understanding of others’ problem, also reveals the



necessary ignorance of one's own self before becoming *willful*. Her individuality and her humanness is challenged in the rape culture. The place where all others practice their rights, her rights are sacrificed for the collective goodness of the maximum thin people. She considers it as her punishment. She writes, "maybe I should study this flesh, the abundance of it, as a crime scene. I should examine this corporeal effect to determine the cause" (Gay 20). Her learning and writing practice is her *willful* act to convey her resistance through her memoir that paradoxically highlights her survival not as her victimhood rather the willing act of accepting her fragility and vulnerability that ultimately leads her to become a feminist.

She becomes more victimized after her survival as she writes,

I have learned the importance of survival and claiming the label of "survivor." But I don't mind the label of "victim." I also don't think there's any shame in saying that when I was raped, I became a victim, and to this day, while I am also many other things. I am still a victim. It took me a long time, but I prefer "victim" to "survivor" now (Gay 20-1).

Her defiant hope comes in the form of food. She confesses, "I ate and ate and ate in the hopes that if I made myself big, my body would be safe" (Gay 21). Her increased weight as the assertion of her existence is not acceptable for the White men. They imitate her as a derogatory performance to build the affect of her anger as her paranoia, hysteria or otherness. For them, Gay is more in her animated form than a living and breathing human being. Her pent-up anger is taken as illogical and unreasonable when she writes, "Intellectually, I recognize that I am not the problem. This world and its unwillingness to accept and accommodate me are the problem" (Gay 22). She *wills* to regain the happiness that she owned before her rape. Her hopefulness is also a painful journey that she depicts in her memoir, "I could make so many things possible that I did not dare imagine for myself" (Gay 33-4). Her failure to reconnect with her present and imagine the future creates an uncertain situation for her. She prefers the normal role to avoid the public gaze. The same gaze as the constant surveillance makes her uncomfortable by reminding her of her shame and guilt despite wearing the proper dress. She writes, "I would give almost everything to be that free again" (Gay 34) the way she was before her rape. Her resistance towards the patriarchal surveillance of women and her disconnectedness with happiness is evident in this assertion.

Her killing joy experience opens new avenues of her safety and security. “I write around what happened because I don’t want to have to defend myself. I don’t want to have to deal with the horror of such exposure. I guess that makes me a coward, afraid, weak, human” (Gay 39). Other than this option of using online spaces to share her fictional stories, she also gains courage to write about her personal experience of assault. The deception and betrayal, which she endures, comes from her White supremacist friend Christopher whom she falsely considers trustworthy. Her painful experience makes her realize the nature of violence,

We don’t necessarily know how to hear stories about any kind of violence, because it is hard to accept that violence is as simple as it is complicated, that you can love someone who hurts you, that you can stay with someone who hurts you, that you can be hurt by someone who loves you, that you can be hurt by a complete stranger, that you can be hurt in so many terrible, intimate ways (Gay 40).

Gay’s emotional breakdown reveals the sadism of her rapist hidden behind the action of rape that exposes her rapist as the wolf in the woods who despite knowing her and being conscious of the act he is committing, portrays his unknowingness. His animatedness is covered up in the veil of civility and superiority. The alarmist condition of American culture is also exposed by Marcus who expounds on the significance of the language for rape and rape culture. Discussing such matters in public is termed by the patriarchal forces as the *willfulness* of these women who pretend to be victims and try to cover their uncovered or undressed beings. Whereas, sharing the same stories on internet provide the same *willful ears*, which are the safer places, especially for fat *willful* people. Wunker describes the digital space to be a “habitually colloquial and testimonial space” (Wunker 92) that alerts others of potential harm in future with rapid-fire pace and speed. According to her, #MeToo and writing about rape culture in America reveals the chronicles of such crimes, which brings to the fore, “the importance of sharing histories of violence” (Gay 40). The collective efforts as #MeToo create a source of hopeful possibility of a safer zone for women in the coming future as the garb of protection.

Gay has devised her guerilla tactic of learning refusal to assert *willfulness* against offender’s maliciousness. Whereas, Gay’s guerilla tactic is taking as much food as she can to become physically powerful and resistive. “Left to my own devices at

boarding school, I lost any semblance of control over what I put into my body” (Gay 60). The absence of friends created a void in her life that is filled by food as, “an immediate satisfaction” (Gay 53). Though Gay’s existence is challenged and negated by her rapist, she mentions it to be her non-existence, “It did not matter what I wanted” (Gay 43). The immediacy of the situation, and the willfulness of boys are untimely timed for Gay to assert her *willfulness* or her *No*. She writes, “I have a history of violence, but the public record of it will always be incomplete” (Gay 44). Her fear of not getting the justice becomes more tormenting for her. However, she exposes the criminality in the garb of justice system, designed against the victims. She writes,

[A] version of the story” told by the boys “made my name “Slut” for the rest of the school year. I immediately understood that my version of the story would never matter, so I kept the truth of what happened a secret and tried to live with this new name” (Gay 45).

She ignorantly and silently tolerates the rape culture by becoming and unbecoming the previous self. She compromises her body for her reputation. She writes, “Those boys treated me like nothing so I became nothing” (Gay 45). She knows that her credibility has no value in the patriarchal culture where boys are considered as right because of the inherent power and hierarchically superior position.

He said/ she said is why so many victims (or survivors, if you prefer that terminology) don’t come forward. All too often, what “he said” matters more, so we just swallow the truth. We swallow it, and more often than not, that truth runs rancid. It spreads through the body like an infection. It becomes depression or addiction or obsession or some other physical manifestation of the silence of what she would have said, needed to say, couldn’t say (Gay 45).

The first step of recognizing the problem is presented by her in the form of self-blaming. Her resistive apprehension due to the patriarchal culture, makes her retaliate from her courageous and audacious stage. “I was disgusting because I had allowed disgusting things to be done to me. I was not a girl. I was less than human. I was no longer a good girl and I was going to hell” (Gay 46). The image of good and bad shatters her personal image. The double life she lives by becoming a good and compliant girl at home (Gay 47) and defiant and *willful* girl outside her home, pressurizes her to cross the threshold of normal life and transgress her body’s thin figure. She faces a war-like situation with

her body as, “Loneliness remained a constant companion. I didn’t have many friends. I was awkward and maladjusted around the friends I did have, and most of the time, I was certain they only tolerated me out of pity” (Gay 67; 46). Wunker dismantles the notion of homophobia in the form of women’s hatred for other women (Wunker 130), and annihilates the patriarchal justification of suppressing women by providing an alternate of male friend against female friend for a lonely woman. Christopher appears to be a trap for Gay in the rape culture and distorts the notion of hetero-normativity.

Gay acknowledges all her wrong choices and confesses about her ‘double life’ (Gay 66) of pretension of compliance and *willfulness* in case of increased body weight. The ignorance of her parents about her gang rape (Gay 63), is the apotheosis, etiolated in Gay’s expression by means of her platitudinous evasions. She distrusts her father and mother, considering them the agents of patriarchy due to the pedagogical learnings and patriarchal pressures. Ahmed describes it as the *willful* child’s hiding the truth due to the fear of the rod used by her mother to correct her *willful* act. She writes, “I know, now, that I was wrong, that my parents would have supported me, helped me, and sought justice for me. They would have shown me that the shame was not mine to bear. Unfortunately, my fearful silence cannot be undone” (Gay 47). She acknowledges her mistake for not being able to save her past. Now, she wants to devise the tactic for girls to protect their bodily integrity and dignity by creating a systematic digital speaking group.

Healing through writing and reading book *The Courage to Heal*, given by her female counselor (Gay 70), provides her the needed support and empathy. She starts writing the dark and violent stories about her unspeakable trauma. “I wrote the same story a thousand different ways. It was soothing to give voice to what I could not say out loud. I lost my voice but I had words” (Gay 65). Writing acts as her tactic of counselling, helps her in coming out of her imaginary bubble of self-punishment and move towards the feminist bubble for her identification. She writes, “I learned that being raped wasn’t my fault, and though I didn’t believe everything I learned, it was important to know such ideas, such truths, were out there” (Gay 71). She uses her writing, not as the declaration of her vulnerability or victimhood, rather as a part of *#MeToo* after seeking the *willful* agency to spread awareness about the unavoidable problem for the vulnerable girls. Another healing and crafty tactic was her participation in backstage work of Theatre. The co-curricular activities as her indulgence in the ideal

world, is her escape from the rape culture. In the same time, these short term escape mechanisms also provide her the sources to develop her *will*. In this manner, Gay designs a world for her where her shyness, and her body become invisible under the robe of fatness. She writes, “High school was terrible, but in the theater, we created, for one another, a place where we could fit in for a few hours at a time” (Gay 74).

Her escape in hiding behind the fat body is her wrong estimation of Christopher’s crime. Her *willfulness* in her ignorance, is not a crime itself, for which she punishes her body. She admits “surrounded by abandoned cigarette butts and beer cans and who knows what else, I felt like a rebel. I loved that feeling, that I was interesting enough to break rules, to believe rules did not apply to me” (Gay 77). She exposes her *willfulness* as an unintentional, but necessary crime, “I racked up incredible bills using my Lion Card, the school currency system, buying so much food at The Grill, buying random crap at the school bookstore because there was a rush of solace when I ate or spent money” (Gay 84). The extravagant expenses which are the *willful* acts for a good girl like Gay become a shocking exposition for her parents. She articulates her *willful* principles of her unruly body in an antifeminist world as the bursting of the bubble.

My parents would confront me about the bills, furious at the waste of money, wanting answers for every expenditure but really wanting answers for who I had become, so different from the daughter they thought they knew. I had no answers for them. I was all self-loathing, for what had happened to me, for what I was doing to my body by gaining so much weight, for my inability to function like a normal person, for the ways I was plainly disappointing my parents (Gay 84).

Her disappointed parents become more shocked after the revelation of her traumatic experience of gang-rape. Confiding her secrets to her parents, is the joy-killing moment for them, for which she selects the theatre play as the suitable moment (Gay 84-5). She has “some sense of self-preservation” (Gay 88), using which she preserves her body by taking her obesity seriously and revealing her secret to her parents. Whereas, her *willfulness* to play with her career, her body and her relations becomes important when she conspicuously becomes a defiant killjoy as *a willful* body. She changes her “major three times in two years, from premed and biology to architecture to English” (Gay 89)

to soothe her inner commotion and anxiety. She tries to assert her existence as a hopeful *#MeTooist*.

Her constant search for a platform to expose the problematic American rape culture starts from her parochial exercise of story-writing. *#MeToo* provides her the courage and the *will* to assert her existence as significant. She gives voice to her characters to alleviate her pain.

Thanks to books and therapy and my new friends online, I knew ever more clearly that there was a thing called rape. I knew that when a woman said no, men were supposed to listen and stop what they were doing. I knew that it wasn't my fault that I had been raped (Gay 92).

With the constant searching, she comes across numerous such sites on which she reads the real stories of American women facing sexual violence. She writes, "there was something of a map I could follow to get to a place where healing felt possible. I needed that solidarity and hope, even if I couldn't imagine a time when I would become whole again" (Gay 71). She seeks empathy on internet by finding a group to create a feminist bubble comprising of the speaking victims to speak with them about their and her trauma. Her first adventure starts after receiving a computer and internet facility from her father, as her "lost years...with the internet" (Gay 90) to share the stories with 'thousands of lonely people' (Gay 90). When she proffers her space on internet as the most acceptable feminist bubble, it becomes easier for her to escape the real life. She writes, "I spent most of my waking hours online, talking to strangers" (Gay 90). Her propensity towards sharing her painful past increases and the proclivity of determining her position as a real human being creates a virtual space for her. She writes, "I became immersed in the anonymity, and in the ability to present myself to others as I saw fit. I lost myself in feeling connected to other people for the first time in seven years" (Gay 90-1). The online space provides her a hyperspace in the digital world that becomes a "very particular and desperately needed thrill" (Gay 91) for her. She shares her experience of reaching to *#MeToo* that includes her squarely into the chamber of *#MeTooists*,

I discovered forums for rape and sexual abuse survivors, where, as with when I read *The Courage to Heal*, I saw that I was not alone. In those online forums, I

saw that horrible things happened to so many girls and sometimes boys. I saw that however bad my secret was, many people had far worse secrets (Gay 91).

*#MeToo* enunciates her becoming a human being again with the invigorated self, as locally a secret, yet with global fraternity. She experiences *#MeToo* as a testification of her innocence, giving her respect and credibility of her voice.

Despite scared of rape culture and White men's masculinity, Gay keeps her experimentation continued. She meets many male physicians and friends and tries to subside her past. She writes, "I took Mr. McGuinn very seriously, as if he were offering me sacred counsel" (Gay 65). Her male doctor saves her from her inevitable death because of her obesity. She writes, "The medical community is not particularly interested in taking the pain of women seriously" (Gay 68). However, her male doctor somehow counters Mackinnon and Brownmiller's assertions regarding patriarchy and White supremacist men to be responsible for sexual violence, with the passive role in controlling or undermining rape culture. After her surgery to remove gall stones, she loses body weight, which makes her insecure again. She declares her insecurity, "so once again, I had work to do to make my body bigger and bigger and bigger and safer" (Gay 69). Her *willfulness* to continue increasing her body weight is the sign of her fear of vulnerability and the consequential *willfulness*, due to which she rejects the thin body.

Gay's happiness in killing others' joy, is the visible mark of her transformation into a feminist killjoy. In this process, despite learning guerilla tactics to secure her body against the rape culture, she still feels insecure. After learning how "to shoot a gun with wax bullets" (Gay 95), she feels determined to protect herself by using an external force. The crisis of her constant shift from self-punishment to *willfulness* makes her recognize "the power of pulling the trigger" (Gay 95). She writes, "I thought about turning the gun on the boys who had hurt me. I thought about turning the gun on myself" (Gay 95). Her instincts to kill the boy pulverize her femininity and highlight the American women's urge to promote the hashtag trend *#KillAllWhiteMen*. Gay enunciates with her prudent style, "men on social media would say, "Not all men," to derail discussions about misogyny" (Gay 295). Ahmed has also discussed the same trend in her *Killjoy Manifesto* where she dismisses the idea of killing White men in real and rationalizes the idea of ending the problematic system and institutes that support White Men's supremacy. Wunker also propagates the idea of ending the surveillance

of women by subverting the sexist and gender-based crime system. In this process, Gay becomes ‘bottomless, fearless’ (Gay 95). She writes to give herself the realization of her fat body’s significance.

Internet as a safe place provides Gay an excuse to avoid the homophobic and fat-phobic world. She leaves her parents and stay in her digital world to fantasize her existence as acceptable after rape and becoming obese. The digital life becomes her happiness as “a pattern—meeting lovers online” (Gay 97). Her experimentation as the adult’s disturbed sexuality and her baffled life portray her body as the sight of resistance and the oxymoronic subjugation at the same time. She experiences her freedom by writing about the victim women and their victimization. She unburdens her anger, hatred, her past and her problematic existence ‘to strangers on the internet’ (Gay 101-2). She writes,

It was easier to lose myself in the virtual world than to try and put my life back together or face these people who thought they knew me. I was still broken and I liked how it felt to simply accept that everything was wrong and couldn’t be set right. It felt good to not try and pretend (Gay 97-8).

When I argue that the collective activism of White and Black women is the feminists’ *willfulness* as their bond of friendship, I base my argument on Wunker’s assertions who herself is a White woman and the intersectional feminist. The argument in no way lessens the chances of online harassment or White women’s credential and prompt actions to ameliorate the coloured or Black women’s sufferings. Gay also faces harassment (Gay 108) at online spaces as a constant surge of misogynoir. When she meets people physically, she hears the common utterance, “You didn’t sound like a colored girl on the phone” (105), which reminds her that she is not White. Nonetheless, her blogs on “*HTMLGiant* and *The Rumpus* [italics in original]” helps her in ‘social networking’ (Gay 110) and changing the passivity into online activity by befriending the White feminists.

I was a lightning rod for indifference, disdain, and outright aggression, and I tolerated all of this because I knew I didn’t deserve any better, not after how I had been ruined and not after how I continued to ruin my body (Gay 115).

Her anger increases with each passing day and makes her a stone, as enunciated by Ahmed, to destabilize the status quo. “I became resentful that the only thing anyone



ever wanted to focus on was my body, always unruly and disappointing” (Gay 119). The resistance and cruel treatment she receives from the world is not segregated into Whiteness or Blackness. Despite her discipline, she is considered as unruly and undisciplined among all races and genders. She prefers to use virtual world as her vocal world instead of listening to hateful comments in the real world.

I learned how to live in my head, where I could ignore the world that refused to accept me, where I could block out the memories of the boys I couldn't forget, no matter how much time and distance yawned between me and them (Gay 119).

She becomes habitual to the world's reluctance in meeting her. The normalization of discrimination is useless in halting her from her feminist killjoy activism. She reveals the reality of the articles based on 'obesity epidemic' (Gay 122). The authors of these articles deliberately ignore writing about the rape epidemic, spreading as a contagion to contaminate the American women. The manner fat people are the “drain on resources” (Gay 124), the raped women are also presented as useless, immoral, non-productive, and the 'burden' on the patriarchal culture. These women are deliberately dejected and rejected because of their too much willingness. The obesity that Gay opts for securing her body from rape, becomes a problem for her survival among thin people. She writes, “I think, *I ate that thin woman and she was delicious but unsatisfying*” [in original] (Gay 139), which reveals her resentment against patriarchy in pushing her to make wrong decisions in her life. She gives the references of many American women who discipline their bodies to become acceptable (Gay 128-9). She writes, “Women continue to try to bend themselves to societal will” (Gay 135-6). By creating an intersection of rape culture, blackness, womanhood, obesity, and her *willfulness*, Gay has tried to convey the message in a subtle manner by presenting American society as having set patterns for womanhood, which cannot be denied. She gives the example of Oprah Winfrey,

It is startling to realize that even Oprah, a woman in her early sixties, a billionaire and one of the most famous women in the world, isn't happy with herself, her body. That is how pervasive damaging cultural messages about unruly bodies are—that even as we age, no matter what material successes we achieve, we cannot be satisfied or happy unless we are also thin (Gay 139).

These fat bodies, according to the most common and propagated idea, have hidden thin bodies inside them that are “imposters, usurpers, illegitimates” (Gay 139). She rejects ‘*Thinspiration*’ (Gay 141). She makes her new feminist resolves, “*Today, I will make good choices*” (Gay 158). Her optimism after living the cruel optimized life, provides her the strength and wisdom of a killjoy feminist. Her suffering from ‘inertia’ (Gay 162) is her self-consciousness and her inner fear towards transformation. But, paradoxically, she also wants “to be part of the active world” (Gay 170). Her homophobia and heterophobia are conjoined to develop her anger.

The sexual violence narrows down her clothing choices. Transformation from a pretty girl to a man-like tom boy, is the consequence of her self-blame. “When I am twelve, I stop wearing skirts or most jewelry or doing anything with my hair, instead wearing it back in a tight bun or ponytail” (Gay 37). She considers an alternative option by materializing the transition of her dress choice into a male attire that in her view, would protect her from sexual violence. The appearance of her rapist is a powerful position for her. She, because of her self-blaming and apologist mindset, prefers men’s clothing to attain the same attire and demeanor with the help of her sartorial proclivities. Her quest for her safety leads towards her denial of her gender role. She writes, “I will cut most of my hair and start wearing oversized men’s clothing” (Gay 37). She imitates her rapist to lessen down her shame and to fulfill her desire to attain authority and agency. She suppresses her desires and her femininity to become a killjoy for the society as her survival tactic.

Her collections of colourful clothes that she reluctantly wears, describe her previous self before her rape who loved to dress up like a girl. Her new attire is the reflection of her raped and obese body, which she hides by adopting cross-dressing, considering her feminine dress as responsible for her rape. Gay writes, “The story of my life is wanting, hungering, for what I cannot have or, perhaps, wanting I dare not allow myself to have” (Gay 176). The level of fear, visible in this statement, is the proof of her desire to look beautiful, which she has suppressed because of her ‘tainted’ body. To get adjusted in rape culture, she has to accommodate her problematic and *willful* body. She writes, “It’s always surprising to see myself out of my usual clothes. To see how my body looks shrouded in color or something other than denim and cotton” (Gay 176). Her rape is the story of subverting the misconception of patriarchal norms about clothes as the defensive power and the shield of protection. These women who have

changed and deteriorated their bodies to become “a good girl” again or to wash off the taint and tattoo of sin from their bodies, look for an appropriate space to breathe in the center of patriarchy. Those victims, who change their whole attire considering it their problematic and seductive looks and dresses as the main cause of their rape and sexual violence, become the cause of shielding the rapists as rape apologists. Gay rationalizes that it is the *will* that matters. White men have the choice to assert their boyhood and manliness, whereas, women cannot become *willful*. She starts wearing men’s clothes to hide in the armour of manliness despite her strangling inside these armours. She writes,

I have two wardrobes. One, the clothes I wear every day, is made up mostly of dark denim jeans, black T-shirts, and, for special occasions, dress shirts. These clothes shroud my cowardice. These are the clothes I feel safe in. This is the armor I wear to face the world, and I assure you, armor is needed. I tell myself this armor is all I need. When I wear my typical uniform, it feels like safety, like I can hide in plain sight. I become less of a target. I am taking up space, but I am doing so in an unassuming manner so I am less of a problem, less of a disturbance. This is what I tell myself. My other wardrobe, the one that dominates most of my closet, is full of the clothes I don’t have the courage to wear. I am nowhere near as brave as people believe me to be. As a writer, armed with words, I can do anything, but when I have to take my body out into the world, courage fails me (Gay 175).

Gay describes her existence as a burden because of the unwelcoming experience of her presence for others, not because of her fatness, but because of her invisible tainted past. She hints towards the passivity of the agential powers to limit and control the *willful* offenders. According to Wunker, “we feel that ours is the hardest path, or “theirs” is not “our” problem. How wrong. How narrow. How cowardly. But also, how normal, or at least, how normalized” (Wunker 39). The passivity of other women because of their conformity to the patriarchy becomes a problem for Gay. Wunker describes it as the kaleidoscope of passive patriarchal agents’ myopia, whereas, Gay’s victimization multiplies, “I have less of a right to be in the world than anyone else” (Gay 172). Her fearful existence in the fat-phobic rape culture, becomes a violence against her, where she gives way to the violence by remaining silent. She writes, “I am terrified of other people. I am terrified of the way they are likely to look at me, stare, talk about me or say cruel things to me” (Gay 173). She becomes a killjoy by having a

tattoo on her body. Tattoos as “a mark of criminality” for her parents (Gay 183) becomes a visible mark of rape and Gay’s stigmatization. Gay writes, “I love the pain, which isn’t excruciating but is incredibly, infuriatingly persistent, accompanied by the endless whine of the tattoo gun, marking me forever” (Gay 185). Like Hester, she gets a tattoo on her body as the scarlet letter to make herself calm down and get rid of her self-blaming guilt. The feminist existence of Gay which is called by Brownlow as the bad feminist identity, is the presence of Gay’s protected feminist bubble to dispel the shame she feels by raising her *willful arm*. She feels the shame for her inconvenience and failure in changing her but the same tardiness is her step forward towards her liberation.

I see myself in the mirror, narrower, more angular. I recognize the me I could have, should have, would have been and want to be. That version of myself is terrifying and maybe even beautiful, so I panic, and within days or weeks, I undo all the progress I’ve made. I stop going to the gym. I stop eating right. I do this until I feel safe again (Gay 187).

In the process of sharing her stories online, she also face criticism because “People prefer the stories of the too-skinny girls who starve themselves and exercise too much and are gray and gaunt and disappearing in plain sight” (Gay 191). While Gay writes about her hunger for self-acknowledgement and public recognition of the problems she has faced in the fat-phobic androcentric world, which are still oblivion. “I know that hunger is in the mind and the body and the heart and the soul” (Gay 193). In the process of recognition, her body as a *willful* subject in patriarchal society, becomes a problem. She writes, “Chairs with arms are generally unbearable” (Gay 202). These arms are for the support to support her and not let her fall. Gay’s powerful arms provide her the strength to resist the patriarchal rod. She refers to the digital space, “I must defy space and time and gravity” (Gay 207).

Her journey of transformation from a feminine and willing body to a *willful* and disobedient feminist is full of hurdles. She faces difficulty in making others care for her existence and her body.

[T]here is how strangers treat my body. I am shoved in public spaces, as if my fat inures me from pain and/or as if I deserve pain, punishment for being fat. People step on my feet. They brush and bump against me. They run straight into

me. I am highly visible, but I am regularly treated like I am invisible. My body receives no respect or consideration or care in public spaces. My body is treated like a public space (Gay 208).

She collects her shattered pieces to develop her feminist world. Her fatness taken as the emotionless, dignity-less open space for public, makes her concerned for her existence as the human being at equal grounds with other human beings. She shatters the concepts of compromising her personal space for others, rejecting the passive empathy that brings more harm than any support.

Gay also expounds on the dilemma she faces on airports. Fat bodied women need to have two seats and two boarding passes to travel by air for thin people's convenience. It saves the thin people's body from touching any fat person. The step marginalizes her position as an 'other'. Her problematic fatness makes others angry because she takes others' space also. Among all these problems which originate in the rape culture, where rape and sexual violence and disrespect for fat people for transgressing others' space is normalized, "The bigger you are, the smaller your world becomes" (Gay 210). The discrepancy and unresolvable mystery, which White men create especially at the sight of two reserved seats for one Black woman, is the feminist-snap spot of declaring the joy-killing aggression. The thinspired men and women imitate the Black woman's anger as intimidated *willfulness* on taking her personal space. Contrastingly, the same fat-phobic people do not seem ready to compromise their space, which describes the phenomenon as based on prejudice and discriminatory behaviour. Non-escapability in the Androcentric world, creates multiple snares for Gay's existence in the real world, whereas, she spares herself from all such encounters by taking digital space to reflect her existence that matters. She writes, "[T]he paranoia I develop. I feel like everything I do is being watched, scrutinized, judged" (Gay 230). Surveillance and observation make her realize the failure of empathy, which she expects from the people around her. Reid explains such cruelty as 'ethical dilemma' (T. Reid 393) that forces Gay to remain silent. While Gay mentions, "Silence hasn't worked out that well" (Gay 233). In response to such failure of silence, she takes her gayness as her excuse to protect her from men.

I was terrified of men. The truth is always messy. I wanted to do everything in my power to remove the possibility of being with men from my life. I failed at

that, but I told myself I could be gay and I wouldn't be hurt ever again. I needed to never be hurt again (Gay 236-7).

Her pretense is her anger especially in the suppressive system where the androcentric norms negate women's existence. Her gayness is her excuse to change her vulnerability into her false strength to register her *willfulness*. She defies the natural binaries as an angry Black woman who crosses the threshold to become hysteric as a problematic character.

Saying I was gay wasn't true, but it wasn't a lie. I was and am attracted to women. I find them rather intriguing. At the time, I didn't know I could be attracted to both women and men and be part of this world (Gay 236).

Her escape from the gender binary and taking shelter in the gay identity, is her feminist resolve to change patriarchal happiness into unhappiness as her revenge and her *willfulness*. She defies the natural rules to assert her existence as 'I will then I am'. She jams the cultural practice of wearing feminine clothing to avoid blaming and body-shaming.

#### **5.4 Subverting Rape Culture as a #MeTooist Stone, and a Willful Rod**

Gay's transformation into a stone as a necessary part of her *willfulness* to counter all such cyber-bullying and hatred, which she faces, is a part of her healing process. She writes, "I told myself I was stone...I was stone. I could not bleed" (Gay 239). She justifies her anger, "I was treated so badly or indifferently for so long that I forgot what being treated well felt like" (Gay 242). Her defiance, cruelty, non-conformist approach, and patriarchal rejection of her logics as non-credible, debilitate her position. It is the recognition of inherent prejudice against women, prevalent in America. The doubt and backlash associated with #MeToo persistently undermine the victims' testimony because of their survival and not death by rape, which is the most feared outcome of living in rape culture. MSNBC, CNN, PBC and many other such news channels represent Gay as "Typical Feminist" or "The Ugliest Woman in the World" (Gay 262). According to Gay, in their personal hatred, people play a key role in transforming her anger into a joy-killing feminism. She unhears the heard hateful comments, "I'm supposed to let it go. I'm supposed to shrug it off. I'm supposed to remember that the kind of people who would do such cruel things are beneath my regard

(Gay 262). Healing is declared as her dare to survive with hope in the rape culture. She writes, “Healing is not that simple. It never is” (Gay 283).

As a factual ‘affect’ of online space (Wunker 89), Gay hopes to build a safer place for her niece (Gay 286), subverting all patriarchal pedagogical and suppressive practices. Surveillance of her rapist on internet (Gay 288-9) as her guerilla tactic after learning gunshots, increasing weight, and writing her stories, is her main task to ensure his suffering.

My body and the experience of moving through the world in this body has informed my feminism in unexpected ways. Living in my body has expanded my empathy for other people and the truths of their bodies. Certainly, it has shown me the importance of inclusivity and acceptance (not merely tolerance) for diverse body types (Gay 297).

Her feminine self requires a normal cultural practice which is distorted by her rape and then by the cruel treatment of the community, which she subsides by becoming empathetic. Moreover, Wunker’s conceptualization of no-win dilemmas for the feminist killjoys’ rationalizes the backlash for *#MeTooism* as the problem for the misogynic world. Gay describes the feminist’s body’s resilience (Gay 297) having arms to counter such backlashes by constantly supporting the victims and survivors and enduring such attacks of status quo and reversing them to kill their joy. Wunker argues in support of the enduring survivors by highlighting the passivism of anti-*MeTooists*, “all of us have to be more considerate of the realities of the bodies of others” (Wunker 299). She reveals the confiscating endeavours of the passive forces within feminism and the external patriarchal agents, “we see from the myopia of our own experience (Wunker 39) to gauge the suffering of the other woman. Gay expounds the same backlash faced by the feminist activism as the parochial step of making women submissive to oppressive patriarchy.

I am increasingly committed to challenging the toxic cultural norms that dictate far too much of how women live their lives and treat their bodies. I am using my voice, not just for myself but for people whose lives demand being seen and heard (Gay 303).

The digital harassment, rape threats, inappropriate messages on social media are surveillanced and Dataveillanced. Panopticism and synopticism are also the crafty

tactics, which are the major steps taken by the current data feminists to counter the cyberattacks on feminists. They have become a problem for the state for their political activism to undermine rape culture and renounce White men's superiority. Gay adopts this *#MeToo* willfully to register her agency in subverting rape culture through cultural jamming.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Gay's situation is quite similar to Dawn's as presented in *Teeth* where after frequent nightmares she repeats "purity, purity, purity" (Kelly 97) as her abstinence slogan to endorse her morally good character. Gay, on the other hand, despite being raped, is not a sinner. Rather, she becomes a symbol of naivety and then *willfulness* to register her existence after her rape. Her rapist, whom she names as Christopher, neither gives her any respect, nor considers her a human being. He uses her body to make his fellows acknowledge his masculinity and power to control women to attain appreciation from his peer group without any guilt or shame. Whereas, Gay emerges as the strong woman who not only learns how to increase her weight as her abstinence ritual to avert all kinds of male gaze, but also self-care and self-respect in the form of putting the dress of *willfulness*. Kelly contends by mentioning Valenti's remarks regarding sexual purity and sexuality as the moral markers and the expected and accepted violence against women as the augmentative force to continue the rape culture (98). Wunker ascribes it as considering sexuality as violent, whereas women as the desire of men. Focusing on Gay's *#MeTooism* as the 'politics and performatives of visibility', in my views, it is more an 'economy of visibility' as also contended by Sarah Benet Weiser (Parsons 3) and 'economy of friendship' as expounded by Erin Wunker (Wunker 139). Because of her physical invisibility to cater her emotional and mental harmony, online space of *#MeToo* provides Gay the opportunity of discursive activism and freedom of speech as a killjoy to raise her voice from behind the curtain of her computer screen to challenge the status quo. She uses her mind than her body to become visible globally. Gay's online stories, articles and community discourses transform her memoir into a performative activism through the digitally long-lasting *#MeTooism*, which brings an optimistic change not only for the obese people but also for the physically debilitated victims and survivors. Through her memoir, she busts the myths associated with the victim's clothes, sexuality, and silence. Her shield of protein food to achieve the fortress like fat-armoured body as her protected garb, fails her patriarchal conformism.



After facing the cruel optimism of continuing the struggle and killing her own happiness, Gay learns to make the right decisions by initiating her digital activism to bring the change in the system. She undermines White men's blame that brings into question her own happiness and ability as a feminist killjoy. Those who blame Gay for her misery, plight, and her wrong decisions of killing her happiness, they ignore her suffering by calling her a killjoy. She happily takes the title and the challenge to support *#MeToo* by operating digitized communities to build resistance against the oppressive patriarchal culture in America. Her physical activism, based on her high-risk obesity, is taken as an 'absolute insurgency' (Wunker 139) by the status quo, especially her shunning women clothing and practicing wearing men's dresses. Her memoir, as the story of her digitized ability endorses Ahmed's notion that "Silence about violence is violence" (LFL 259). Gay also highlights that violence in the form of corrective rape begets violence by women in the form of their *willfulness*.

Gay's *#MeTooism* is not toxic, rather it subverts the toxicity of the society by becoming a *willful arm* and a weapon of defense against sexual violence. Her *willfulness* also subverts the argument that the body-revealing dresses become the cause of rape, as Gay gets gang-raped at the age of twelve. That trauma changes her dress choice and she tries her best to wear dull coloured, either grey or black, men's dress. As a cross-dresser, she has become a source of solidifying the feminist stance that men are sexually obsessed with women's bodies. Therefore, concluding the whole discussion, I have interpreted Gay's memoir as the representative work of victims who change their body size, their dress choice, and even their social activities to conform to the patriarchal and cultural will. However, the American culture has been failed for decades to provide security to their vulnerable bodies. The study has highlighted the effective role of *#MeToo* in providing the fat women like Gay, an agency of their own to assert their existence as meaningful and productive. To prove it, Gay has endeavoured to write the memoir of her body to make the world acknowledge her mental intellect, which is not connected to her sexuality.

I have studied *Hunger* as the phenomenon of Gay's temporal, spatial and moral suffering because of her reluctance towards attaining her *will*. *#MeToo* as an unacceptable trend for the status quo, has problematized its fame. However, despite all backlash, Gay as a Haitian Black woman has connected to thousands of the victims and survivors of sexual violence through this platform. *Hunger* has played a pivotal role in

transforming a digital hashtag trend *#MeToo* from a moment to a feminist killjoys' social movement against sexual violence and injustices, prevalent in American society from centuries.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The revelation of American rape culture in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, is the appalling fact that cannot be denied. The study of *#MeToo* has emerged as the insistent need of the time to rationalize the rhetorical force with the palpable design, not only in digital space, but also in the American non-fictional memoirs. Roxane Gay's and Rebecca Solnit's stories of rape and sexual violence, despite their different racial identities, provide the basis of the argument that the American rape culture is threatening for women's existence, and becoming a source of femicidal tendencies among American men, especially after rape. I have examined that both Gay and Solnit are the reflections of each other in the process of subverting rape culture through phenomenological resentment. They are "each other's indexes at a cellular level" (Wunker 8). Gay's assertion, regarding eating a thin woman inside her to protect her from rape, provides the hidden account of Solnit's thin body that needs an armour of a fat body to reclaim her existence in American patriarchal culture as the dress to cover and hide their bodies. In this manner, Gay as a Black or a coloured woman provides a protective layer to a White women. Both Gay and Solnit find the body as the main problematic existence in the androcentric world, where becoming the desire of unwanted White men without women's own desire or authority onto their bodies, is the critical problem in the rape culture. It captures not only their agency and credibility but also their choice and free will to wear the feminine dresses and eat according to their wish. I must mention here Sara Suleri's oft-quoted assertion, "Men live in homes, women live in bodies" (Goodyear 143). Women's weak resolve and physical debilitation provide men the excuse to occupy them and colonize their bodies like the territories. Solnit dismantles and deterritorializes women's bodies through writing and giving reference of Gay's struggle, to support the Black women as a part of collective *willful* body of *#MeTooists* against sexual violence. I have argued that *#MeToo* has become a powerful and *willful* agency as the protective garb for the victims and survivors to subvert rape culture that has developed the activism of feminists against the authoritative institutes and the androcentric system by making them the threat for their powerful peer support for the rapists. The significant aspect is naming the problem along with the offender and the possible rapist in these memoirs that have

been highlighted by using *#MeToo* hashtag on digital space to spread awareness among other women.

### **6.1 Willfulness as *#MeToo***

Solnit's and Gay's writings provide their personal accounts of becoming *willful* when they raise their arm against sexual violence, especially through the use of digital space. While analyzing Solnit's and Gay's *willfulness*, it has been understood that the queerness of gender as the transgression of resistive patriarchal boundaries, is the consequence of rape culture that has feminized their bodies. Their audacious stand against the exploitative system and patriarchal criticism about their bodies, make them resistant. They use 'I' in their memoirs to assert their position as significant to counter androcentric world. The transformation of 'I' into 'Me Too' provides them the agency to bring change through their sympathetic writings. They rationalize the need of the time to end rape fear by systematizing women's education on the basis of owning the *will*. They speak out to start the process of speaking with the victims on digital space with *#MeToo* to present their own personal voice as the voice of the survivor. Their memoirs reveal the hetero-normative patriarchal politics against women as an agenda to alienate them by spreading women-hatred among women. Solnit and Gay write about sharing stories with other women and queer womanly men as a sympathy project on digital media as the backlash for the patriarchal aesthetics and standards of judgement.

Women's humanness and their credibility to be acknowledged and practiced, is the much-debated and the most critical problem in America, addressed in the selected works. The end of rape fear would end the rape culture as also suggested by Roxane Gay. Women are neither public spaces to dwell upon without consent nor are the public property to be bought or sold or targeted on the basis of their dresses that is the main thesis, presented by Solnit and Gay in their memoirs. Just because of lacking credibility in public, they prefer the digital space to spread the message of feminist killjoys. Solnit targets White young and elderly men as terrorists by continuing on Erin Wunker's depiction of the sex offenders. While Gay forwards the conceptualization of offender through the idea of her wrong choices as a kind of Stockholm syndrome, to register the multiple folds of oppressions for coloured women as an intersectional approach and not as a rape apologist, which apparently looks like her self-blaming because of her self-torturing practice. Their activism has been transformed from *#MeToo* moment to a *willful* joy-killing feminism. Their sympathy for all those who have been raped,

tortured, and forced to live with the tainted body because of patriarchy's assisted reticence, is the journey of self- recognition and acclamation to end self-punishment and self-blaming. Both of them quit wearing feminine clothes and change their attire to look more masculine. Their cautious avoidance of women's dresses brings forth the nexus of blame-game associated with women's seductive dresses, which they debunk through their *willful* choice of wearing men's dresses as their resistance and defiance. In the COVID-19 pandemic days, wearing masks has also become a source of hiding women's beauty and even the gender. It also provides American women an invisibility cloak to avert any sexual violence on the basis of the logic of dresses as the cause of rape. Contrary to this, even the masks and other invisibility cloaks have been failed in providing any protection to women or subverting the rape culture completely.

While focusing on the backlash faced by *#MeToo*, I have come across the instants mentioned by Solnit that even the false claims of rape have the proportion of violence involved that is ignored in American literature. The recognition of such multiple layers of oppression destroys the victim's hope. To subvert the backlash faced by *#MeToo*, the feminists practice their *willfulness* in the killjoy capacity. Considering women physically not equivalent to men, provide White men the authority and supremacy to control women's sexuality, confining them not only physically but also mentally. It also causes irreversible harm that cannot be compensated by monetary payment, which undermines Foucauldian materialistic and rape apologetic proposition. Men's *willfulness* and their surveillance of women is not noticed by the patriarchal authorities, hence, providing them the peer support. Solnit and Gay have exposed the same politicking of men's agency of re-presenting women as 'slut' or 'inherently rapeable', which has problematized their *willfulness*. They have put their efforts as *#MeTooist* to undermine the normalized sexual violence to problematize it as sexual perversion and White men's illogical and illegal desire. Their lived experiences have transformed their assertive 'I' into 'we' after sharing their stories digitally with other victims, and ultimately made them a part of the stony *#MeToo* activism. In their struggle, they have experienced their transition from submissive girls to stony *willful* women and learnt the craftiness to swell the feminist bubble.

## 6.2 Subverting Rape Culture through *#MeTooism* in the Selected Memoirs

Ahmed's and Wunker's conceptualization of *willfulness* and *feminist killjoys* have brought forward the debate on the disobedience against the powerful system of the state. They start *Dataveillance* through an organized digital system that challenges the status quo as a defamation project. In all the cases, precisely mentioned by Gay and Solnit to support the larger debate on *#MeToo*, many of the victims take silence as their shield. Whereas, Solnit and Gay annihilate the concept of silence as not the protective shield, rather passivity as a peer support for rape culture to increase the violence. Breaking the silence by sharing their problems, is the craftiness to subvert rape culture. They end silence to speak against the systemic violence with the hashtag *#MeToo*. This *willfulness* challenges the writ of the state by highlighting the fissure in the cultural practices to bring forth the sticky and supportive stance for women against rape and harassment.

According to my study, Solnit's, Gay's and other feminist killjoys' exposition of the problem of voyeuristic, immoral literature and pornography problematizes their existence for the authorities who control and promote such literature. Re-presentation of women as 'slut', thinspired, or made-for-men thinking, are the main stereotypical and monolithic tactics to undermine women's agencies onto their bodies. After tracing the exact causes of rape culture, Solnit and Gay present the concept of 'hope' as the audacity of feminist killjoys to *willfully* treat their self-harming culpability. Instead of strengthening the offenders' arms, women join *#MeToo* to strengthen their *will*. The study has brought forward the enlightening phenomenon of *#MeToo* as an optimistic hashtag activism for the oppressed, raped, tortured, and ignored women who have been silenced by the status quo by denying them justice.

While the subverting force of *#MeToo* is rationalized within the concept of postpanopticism as in Deleuzian theorization, it describes the overflow of surveillance as previously enunciated by Foucault. The main purpose of bringing forth the concept of panopticism in the rape debate is not to over emphasize on the surveillance of women but on *Dataveillance* to focus the panoptical eye on the rapist as does Gay to check rapist's current position that has been done through the use of *#MeToo*. It comes forward as her tactic to undermine the rapist's "inhouse resolution to avoid exposure

on digital media” (Wunker 259). Wunker theorizes the same surveillance as terrorism of men against women, which they counter by employing the same doxing and refusal tactic.

I have found that territorializing women’s body means challenging the Feminist killjoys by controlling them not through confinement, but by backlashing *#MeToo*. Postpanopticism in favour of feminist killjoys would work in the sense of synopticism whereby all the feminist killjoys on digital space use surveillance and Dataveillance to know the rapist and the perpetrator not outside the legislative bound but under the law. Using *willfulness* to address the problem in the society is not an intentional crime but a countering strategy to punish the offender for his *willfulness*. The equality and women empowerment debates refer to such independence of American women not in the definition of *willfulness* as disobedience to the governmentality but within the bubble of willingness. Feminist Killjoys burst the bubble of gaslighting by breaking the glass-ceiling effect as their defiance to rape culture and street harassment.

Subverting rape culture, comprises of the collection of *#Metooistic* tactics devised to secure women’s capabilities to move. When Foucault in his 1988 Interview *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* describes the significance of the self as the care of the self and brings to light the transformation of taking care of self into knowing yourself as also philosophized by Alcibiades and Nietzsche (Martin, Gutman and Hutton 32-5), it indirectly provides freedom to women as the human beings, which needs to be addressed. Solnit and Gay have provided the agential power to women through their memoirs by devising decolonizing and deterritorializing tactics to secure women’s bodies.

The technological measures inclusive of all hackathon software and data feminist activism to ensure women’s safety outside the houses are the strategies employed to undermine rape culture as the embodiment of *#MeToo*. These steps would ensure women’s guerilla tactics to provide security to themselves where the legislation gets failed in controlling the White men’s superiority and uncontrollable desire. For the normalization of *#MeToo* as a counter protective strategy, panoptic eye, Dataveillance, sharing stories, learning Karate and bike riding, all these posed as the passive tactics in Cahill’s view, need to be highlighted to undermine rape culture. These tactics show women’s power as the development of powerful *will* of feminist killjoys, which has challenged the status quo and has become a problem for the American patriarchal

society. Through the digital occupation of *#MeToo*, feminists' *willful* activism has subverted the power relations and make men realize their limited choices and desire because of the counter-surveillance.

### 6.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

I have examined in my study of *#MeToo* that Michel Foucault's Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* and Thomas Mathiesen's synopticon in *The Viewer Society*, despite their misogynist basis, provide the possibility of subverting the problematic rape culture as feminists' counter tactic using the digital space. Solnit and Gay have written their real and common stories as the stories of majority of American women to create space for the solution of the problem. They have highlighted the significance of digital sympathy projects like *#MeToo*, *#BeenRapedNeverReported*, and *#TimesUp* by writing memoirs about them, which have appeared as the phenomenological substantiating agency for countering the backlash. Both Solnit and Gay intend to undermine rape culture by using digital space to reterritorialize women's position as agential and authoritative through the use of digital space especially *#MeToo* by putting synoptic gaze onto the rapists and offenders. Despite Foucault's hate against women as examined by many feminist thinkers, the surveillance strategy as the powerful tool and a *willful* rod redesigned by Mathiesen as surveillance of a few by many in the form of synoptic surveillance is adopted by feminists on internet as Dataveillance and anti-doxing to make the rapist accountable for his actions. The rebecoming on digital space with *#MeToo* after the unbecoming due to rape and self-blaming, has become a willful phenomenon for feminists and a problem for the authorities.

My study of *#MeToo* reveals it to be the guerilla tactics in the digital age to control the rape culture for all the categories of women. Feminist killjoys have become the watchdogs of rapists and perpetrators on internet, whereby bringing to light the offender and not the victim. Using their communications with other victims, these *#MeTooists* help determining the offender's criminal activities, which men use against women. Countering them on the same grounds by using their tactics as suggested by Erin Wunker, is not acceptable for the androcentric patriarchy. Ahmed and Wunker suggest the revolution of pedagogical techniques by making women aware of the approaching threat and ready to counter the attack using the passive tactics of pepper spray, karate, keeping gun or dagger, wearing armour, or increasing body fat, etc., also



proposed by Cahill (201), until the authorities devise a better solution to acknowledge American women's humanness, dignity, and the dire need of secured life.

I have highlighted Solnit's and Gay's suggestion that the systemic violence flamed through the pedagogical practices of inculcating rape fear among women, needs to be ended. Solnit and Gay believe in learning *willfulness*. Solnit presents her strategies of using karate, or the armour to protect the body and believes in making the women acquainted with all the digital power to share it as *willful* subjects' *#MeTooism*. While Gay presents her own body as fortress, alongside learning how to shoot a bullet and becoming proactive after making wrong decisions. Erin Wunker also suggests teaching boys not to use sexual violence as the tactic to oppress women (Wunker, *Feminist Killjoy* 95, 99). Christine de Pizan, who imagined *a City of Ladies* in 15<sup>th</sup> century that would serve as a refuge from the harassment of men as the utopian concept, is taken as the role model for the twenty-first century women. But the real life American land, which has much improved from the dystopian land towards the digitally equipped neo-liberal space, has made women *willful* enough to use social media platform of *#MeToo* to register their voice. *#MeToo* has become a women's specific space. Solnit has narrated many such possibilities of commemorating women's names as the protagonists of their respective cities or heroes in *City of Women*. The need of the twenty-first century is to incorporate these guerilla tactics in American literature to give agency to women on equity and equality grounds.

I have investigated the possible causes behind the backlash which *#MeToo* is facing. I have analysed Solnit's and Gay's reterritorialization strategy, through which they have countered the androcentric cultural problem by reversing the offender's terrorism. It is also the audacity of feminists to provide the support to the seduced and abandoned women. While studying *#MeToo*, *#NotAllMen* is found to be a common trend on social media as a parallel force along with *#YesAllWomen*. Owing to its significance among men, the demand of authentication about those men who support women in rape charges or become the source of backlash, becomes more significant and crucial in nature. The identification of perpetrators and rapists becomes problematic because of the peer support. In such situations, difference of loyalty and pretension provides another layer of problem. The baffling phenomenon of consent in rape cases is undermined by Dworkin. Whereas, rape remains rape whether with consent or without, due to the phenomenological change in preference. It signifies the temporal,

spatial, and conscious choices. In that case, *#MeToo* is an authentic platform to gain support by sharing the stories with the name or identification of the rapist. I have examined the sympathy associated with the hashtag activism in spreading offender's details, which would aid other possible victims to remain cautious of the approaching threat, through his communication with other women. In the meantime, the same *#MeToo* empathy becomes toxic and joy-killing for the authorities, who problematize the existence of willful feminists.

Theorizing rape on the basis of revenge or any psychological disorder, however, is the offshoot of any public or private dishonesty, deception, or defrauding, which I have found through the research as men's strategy to impose their power through sexual means. I have argued in the study that instead of abandoning, or killing the raped women, and backlashing *#MeToo*, such accusations need to be probed through employment of technical faculties. The multitudes of solutions can be devised to attain the possible subverting agency and incorporated in the fictional and non-fictional works. In the digital age, *#MeToo* provides the umbrella of such tactics including feminist data analytics as the possible methodology to keep check on the problematic norms of patriarchy. American literature and the voyeuristic material can also be examined using the feminist data analytics under the hashtag of *#MeToo*, especially at the time when the authorities are failed to protect the women.

Vistas of research fields emerge to investigate the selected sample of Solnit's and Gay's works. These memoirs can be evaluated using the lens of trauma studies to comprehend the rape trauma as four times more adverse as war trauma is (Solnit 49). Fear can also be traced in the selected works along with the significance of literature and books in creating a mature and sympathetic stance towards understanding women's oppression. Gynocritical analysis of the memoirs would bring forward the influence of men's style on Gay's and Solnit's writings and their independent feminist style. Gay's works also provide the insight of her passivity due to fat-phobic world, which may lead to the negative interpretation of spreading anti-nationalistic voice in critical race theory under the paradigm of postcolonialism. Countering the argument of the current research may be a problematic topic that can be dealt with postmodern lens. Gay's artistic writing style and recurrent linguistic themes and repetition can also be analysed. Whereas, Solnit's transcendental style of writing also rationalizes her literary and artistic style of inculcating subverting tone for the rape culture. Psychoanalytical lens

of Lacan or Eric Erickson's developmental stages to interpret Solnit's and Gay's personality in the phallogocentric world, is another such aspect for further research along with children's human rights as rape victims. Similarly, the disability studies for fatism and terrorism associated with Black queer women would also be a novel aspect for research, keeping in mind the exploitative capitalistic system that demands women inclusion on the basis of their able bodies' productive capacity in connection with the hashtag trends *#BlackLivesMatter* and *#SayHerName*.

*Not that Bad, Bad Feminists* and other such non-fictional works can be examined using Erin Wunker's and Sara Ahmed's cultural and intersectional lens in the paradigm of phenomenology. Other fictional and non-fictional works with the same theme of *#MeToo* including Chanel Miller's *Know My Name: A Memoir*, Rose McGowen's *Brave*, Ronan Farow's *Catch and Kill*, and Kantor and Twohey's *She Said*, can be examined using the same lens. Opening all these horizons of research along with the thin versus fat versions of victimized and vulnerable women and their traumatic stories, provide the Janus-faced single woman's image who is a rape victim, whether thin or fat, autonomous or dependent, White, Black, or coloured. Her *refusal* is her *willfulness* to register her resistance and unwillingness towards any kind of sexual violence. Solnit's and Gay's individual voices, in supporting each other along with Sara Ahmed and Erin Wunker, are the combined call of *#MeToo* not only as the individual activism, but also as the part of collective fight against the sexual violence.

Hence, summarizing the whole discussion, the journey of rape culture from women's inherently rapeable position of being a public property or public space towards *#MeToo* to assert their feminist killjoys' power of subverting rape culture and even the status quo, has brought forward the impact of digitization of feminism in the twenty-first century America. *Refusal* for all the problematic patriarchal norms, is the practical tactic. Saying *No* either happily, patronizingly, condescendingly, with any other tone or manner, always entails *No* in case of seeking sexual consent, which is necessary to undermine rape culture and in providing justice to the real victims. Shifting the blame onto women on the basis of previous sexual act or the dress choice entails to men's disposition towards increasing women's plight or women's passive and toxic empathy or victim-blaming. The White men's systemic approach of belittling women has been subverted by the feminist killjoys that has indirectly brought the backlash for the women for trying to be or replacing men, while trying to be transformed into *willful*

feminists. In this manner, all those questions designed for the research have been addressed through this study of *#MeToo*. The hashtag trend is found to be the effective agency in controlling and subverting rape culture amidst all blames of warped and fabricated cases to dismantle status quo. However, paradoxically, it has also brought the feminists into the queue of the unwanted defiant women who are against the status quo. *#MeToo* is the audacious stand for one's dignity after facing vulnerability, violence, silence, and the long-term oppression. It's the stand to protect one's body and then the brain to assert the existence as productive and meaningful to work on equality basis among all genders and races. Therefore, it provides the necessary power to resist the oppressive force and subside White men's superiority.

## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Patricia Hill Collins' and Sirma Bilge's *Intersectionality* provides the in-depth analysis of racism and discriminatory politics against different races. Their works provide the intersections of race, class, sexism, and genderism to understand the complexity of the problem for the marginalized coloured people.

<sup>ii</sup> The book provides the detailed account of #MeToo and different cases which can be read for further descriptive knowledge.

<sup>iii</sup> *The Personal is Political* is an essay by Carol Hanisch, written by her in 1969. It is available at <https://webhome.cs.uvic.ca/~mserra/AttachedFiles/PersonalPolitical.pdf>. Hanisch describes the personal as the therapy which women need to get adjusted in the problematic society. Therapy, according to her is a misnomer (3). According to her, the group proceedings and planning would bring a political change as a movement. The details can be checked from her essay.

<sup>iv</sup> Details can be availed from the book. The handbook is a detailed account on digital feminist movements and activism to understand the multidisciplinary nature of the Feminist Movement #MeToo. It incorporates the thematic and theoretical discussions for researchers, scholars and policy makers in the fields of Political Science, Women studies, Gender studies, Literature, Anthropology and others (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir).

<sup>v</sup> Catharine A. MacKinnon has presented her well-articulated critique on Rape Laws and intersectionality in her article titled as *Intersectionality as Method: A Note* in which she has explained Crenshaw's assertions on the topic. The detail is available in the article on page number 1022 and onwards in which she criticizes the problems in legislation and the struggle of Ms. Dafro Jefferies (MacKinnon).

<sup>vi</sup> Sara Ahmed has described reluctance on page numbers 140-1 in her book *Willful Subjects* which can be read in detail from there (Ahmed, W 140-1).

<sup>vii</sup> See Sara Ahmed's Book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* for further details (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 174-178).

<sup>viii</sup> Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* examines in detail the patriarchal system and the institutionalization of male supremacy. She expounds on the role of the mothers and daughters as willing victims of the oppression and androcentric systemic oppression.

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