Postfeminism and the Representation of Acquaintance Rape in Young Adult Fiction

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Abstract

Anti-rape discourse was key to the success of the Women's Liberation Movement, which insisted on bringing rape into public focus. Western popular culture is now inundated with rape stories, and yet the feminism has largely disappeared from these narratives. This shift can be ascribed to postfeminism, which appears feminist through a use of feminist vocabulary but instead promotes anti-feminist neoliberal meaning. The last fifteen years have seen an increasing number of young adult novels about rape. My first chapter asserts that while authorial intention is doubtlessly to empower teenage girls, as evidenced in paratextual direct addresses to the reader, implicit anti-feminist neoliberal ideologies in the texts undermine that goal. Chapter Two examines how novels naturalise rape and condone surveillance frameworks through restrictive discourses on clothing and food, presenting female bodies as rape spaces. Chapter Three shifts focus to the affective regulation of mental states, arguing that the predominant 'silent victim' script stigmatises feminist anger, and makes the victim's traumatised psyche the 'problem' of the 'problem novel.' My fourth chapter shifts focus to boyhood, particularly the New Age Boyfriend type, whose construction in contrast to the essentially evil and undeveloped off-page rapist not only exonerates 'good guy' types from a potential to rape, but identifies rape as an inhuman, and therefore uninterrogable act. My final chapter argues that novels which reject dominant schemas of victims as isolated within hostile communities are better able to demonstrate feminist models of collectivity and interrogate rape culture. The success of the #MeToo movement signals a return to the second-wave tactic of by reclaiming rape narratives as a means of empowerment. This thesis participates in this reclamation by examining how young adult fiction displaces feminism in its anti-rape discourse, and how it might be restored to promote an empowering vision of girlhood.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed,

Aiyana Altrows   Date: February 1st, 2019

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Introduction

Was there always this much of (don't say the word, don't say that word ever again) *before, on TV and on the radio, and in songs and in movies and in the papers and I just never noticed? (O'Neill 252)*

Western popular culture is inundated with rape stories across film, television, music, and literature. Rape is used as a plot device with such frequency across a diversity of genres and mediums that it is almost expected, and often unnoticed. As Sarah Projansky observes in *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (2001), "The existence of rape is so naturalized in U.S. life, perhaps seemingly so natural that many people are unaware of the frequency with which they encounter these representations" (2). This ubiquity and lack of narrative diversity naturalises rape, which loses its abhorrence and becomes familiar through constant repetition. In her analysis of rape prevention rhetoric, "It Can Happen to You: Rape Prevention in the Age of Risk Management," Rachel Hall argues that "The rape script gives rise to endless reproductions of the dramatic struggle between a rapist and his victim. In its most universal and aesthetic treatments, rape is portrayed as the tragic and timeless violent dance between the sexes" (10). The repetition of rape plots in fictional narratives has the potential to position it not a shockingly common violation, but an accepted and often expected cultural backdrop. Rape culture is a cultural state in which rape is so normalised that sexual violence is an expected, predictable, and often defining element of femininity (Buchwald, et al.). By naturalising its ubiquity, the narrative repetition of rape can encourage rape culture.

Rape stories are deployed not only to add depth, darkness, and edge to fictional stories, but also add these qualities to female characters. The versatility of rape for defining female characters is evident in that it is frequently evoked as a backstory for damaged,

hypersensitive female characters, and yet is as frequently used to explain a character's tough exterior, which protects their true sensitive nature. This versatility of rape plots to define female characters highlights how intertwined conceptualisations of rape are with conceptualisations of femininity; rape can function to explain a vast range of motivations and characteristics for female characters, and too frequently, is the root of enfeebling characteristics such as fragility and sensitivity. In *Framing the Rape Victim* (2014), Carine Mardorossian observes the depth of rape's association with definitions and understandings of femininity: "The proliferating and conflicting formulations surrounding various incidents of rape in culture reveal that it is structural femininity, not the female subject, that is rape's victim" (4). Rape plots are used so ubiquitously to define female characters that they affect conceptualisations not merely of victimhood, but also conceptualisations of femininity, in which fragility and sensitivity persist in fictional representations.

It is ironic that this saturation of popular culture encourages rape culture, because it is facilitated by an assumption that speaking about rape is a subversive, feminist, and anti-rape act. This assumption finds historical validation in that anti-rape activism was vital to the successes of the Women's Liberation Movement between the late 1960s and the 1980s. Anti-rape activism has been so important within feminism that the history of feminism can be seen as largely a history of rape prevention efforts. Mardorossian argues that "[F]or second-wave feminism, being a victim did not signify a lack of agency. Identifying and rallying *as* victims was all about reappropriating the concept for women's empowerment and about exposing the arbitrariness of the supposedly fundamental dichotomy between victimization and agency that defined approaches to sexual oppression" (*Framing* 42). Within the history of the feminist movement, anti-rape activism was vital to the movement's ethos of empowerment and provided the basis of demonstrating the injustice of gender inequality. The identity of

rape victim was not one of fragility and sensitivity, as is so frequently characterised in contemporary popular fiction, but of agency and power.

Not only did rape function as a catalysing issue around which women rallied for change during the second-wave, but it was also an issue which allowed feminists to recruit other women to their cause. As Ann Cahill explains in *Rethinking Rape* (2001), "Where feminism and feminist theory have approached the problem of rape, it has almost always been described as paradigmatic of women's larger oppression. That is, the crime of rape has been understood not primarily as a specific, singular crime, but rather as the most blatant example of systematic misogyny and masculine dominance" (14). Rape functioned as a broader symbolic issue which encapsulated all manifestations of the injustice of gender inequality; while it was more difficult to inspire people to rally for equal pay or reproductive rights, ending rape was an issue which found consensus, inspired popular ire, and brought new feminists to the movement. Speaking about rape within the context of the Women's Liberation Movement was therefore a powerfully subversive act which insisted upon women's agency and empowered women by rallying others to the feminist cause.

The feminist conceptualisation of victimhood as potentially empowering was compromised by the increasing influence of neoliberal ideology in the 1980s. Many of the fundamental tenets of neoliberalism were antithetical to the principles of the Women's Liberation Movement; while individualism and self-determination are of paramount importance within neoliberalism, these principles are fundamentally at odds with the feminist movement's attempts to act collectively in order to demand political change. Neoliberal feminist theorists such as Naomi Wolf argued that feminism's excessive preoccupation with rape perpetuated female victimisation by continually repeating images of women as victims, a phenomenon she denounced as "victim-feminism" (135). While speaking out against rape had served as an effective rallying cry, such neoliberal rhetoric and ideology compromised its

political impact and efficacy. Recognising the destructive impact to empowering rape prevention discourses, Mardorossian laments that "In this discursive space, victimhood no longer functions as a political category that can be successfully deployed to support the adoption of policy and law reforms but rather as one that the neoconservative media has successfully reframed as a sign of moral weakness and self-generated failure" (*Framing* 29). While anti-rape discourse had served to unite and empower communities of women through their shared experience of injustice, neoliberalism encouraged victimisation to be reconceptualised as a state of isolation and weakness. Neoliberal ideology thus came to displace the feminism from rape stories, so that which the Women's Liberation Movement had previously established as a feminist act is now infused with neoliberal victim-blaming ideology.

The assumed inherent feminism of rape stories, despite their frequently victim-blaming ideologies, can be explained by the hegemony of a postfeminist sensibility. Postfeminism can be understood as gendered neoliberalism, and is characterised by an often contradictory mix of feminist vocabulary and neoliberal ideology which is preoccupied with consumption, power, and the body. In "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," Rosalind Gill stresses the importance of understanding postfeminism as a "sensibility," as opposed to a theoretical frame or organised movement, as was the Women's Liberation Movement (163). Its characteristic ambivalence is derived from combining feminist rhetoric with neoliberal ideology, which is often contradictory to feminist goals: "Drawing on a vocabulary that includes words like 'empowerment' and 'choice', these elements are then converted into a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in this new guise, particularly in media and popular culture, but also by agencies of the state, as a kind of substitute for feminism" (McRobbie, *Aftermath* 1). The use of feminist vocabulary implies a meaning which is in line with the goals of feminism, and yet these

words mask the dissemination of neoliberal and frequently anti-feminist ideas. Postfeminism largely displaces feminist philosophy in popular consciousness. It compromises the political potential of rape narratives by functioning as a spectre for feminism for politically quietist ends; masked by the use of feminist rhetoric, postfeminism promulgates meaning that suppresses political critique and resistance to hegemonic ideologies.

Despite the influence of neoliberalism and postfeminism on popular culture, we seem to be in a moment of rapid change in which cultural literacy, encouraged by social media, is encouraging an interrogation of cultural attitudes towards rape, harassment, and female sexuality. Rape is resurfacing as an empowering and catalysing issue, as evidenced in the #MeToo movement, which has reinvigorated popular feminist anti-rape activism, and become a source of empowerment for girls and women. The #MeToo movement reverberates with the second-wave deployment of rape stories as a political tactic: a movement against rape and sexual harassment extends to encompass broader issues with patriarchy, particularly workplace inequalities such as equal pay and opportunity. The #MeToo movement attempts to rectify popular discourses about rape by reclaiming rape narratives and to thus foster empowerment through solidarity. This thesis aims to participate in this reclaiming by examining how young adult fiction frequently displaces feminism in its anti-rape discourse, and how it might be restored to promote an empowering vision of girlhood.

My contention is that in a majority of young adult rape fiction, the discordance between vocabulary and ideology in postfeminism explains the discordance between the authorial intention to empower female readers, and the way this intent is undermined by the ideological content of the novels they produce. Literature both reflects and affects cultural traditions and human behaviour, and close textual analysis can expose ideologies implicit in fiction as these are practised and offered to readers as modes of practise. Literature's capacity to affect human behaviour is especially pertinent to analyses of children's fiction, a genre

which differs from adult fiction in its socialising and enculturating agenda. As John Stephens explains in *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (1992), "children's fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience" (8). The imperative to teach children the ideological mores of their society often results in the promotion of distilled versions of its most conservative ideologies, particularly in relation to sex. This phenomenon can expose disturbing beliefs, as, I argue, is the case with young adult rape fiction, which has seen a substantial increase in rates of publication in recent decades.

The number of young adult rape novels seems to be rapidly increasing with the surge of popular feminism which has been occurring in recent years. The most popular novel of this subgenre is Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999), which appears across high school curricula internationally, and the popularity of which inspired the naming of Penguin's Speak imprint, which offers "cutting edge fiction" for "older readers" (*Penguin Books*). Rape, however, has always been a popular topic in young adult literature, and is thematised in some of its earliest and most canonical texts. In J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Holden Caulfield not only engages with stories of implied sexual assaults of several girls he meets, the novel can be read as the story of his struggle to overcome the trauma of his childhood molestation. In Beatrice Sparks' novel *Go Ask Alice* (1971), Alice's drug addiction and running away from home culminate in the ultimate sign of her degradation and downfall: she is raped. While the recent proliferation of young adult rape fiction might suggest a positive resurgence of feminist ideology, the content of these novels is overwhelmingly informed by a confused ambivalence of messages about femininity, which are largely informed by the discourses of postfeminism.

My primary corpus includes twenty young adult novels about acquaintance rape published since 2005. Because the overwhelming majority of young adult rape fiction is

ideologically conservative and often formulaic, I have selected certain novels as typical representations of the subgenre. Others have been selected to serve as counter-examples because they are atypical and offer ways of representing rape which I argue may be more politically effective. It is important to note that my corpus is not a balanced reflection of the prevalence of each of these categories, but rather allows me the opportunity to discuss representations which I argue are potentially empowering or disempowering. I have excluded novels about incest and intergenerational rape because the family links and age differences within these texts create distinct power dynamics which are different from those in acquaintance rape, and therefore would require a different theorisation. However, there is a large corpus of such novels begging for such analysis in the future.

It is also important to note that this thesis is an analysis of constructions of girlhood, and not of victimhood, and therefore I have excluded novels with male victims. Furthermore, my vocabulary and gendered linguistic choices presume that rape victims are predominantly female and rapists predominantly male. While acknowledging arguments that this may further reinforce or naturalise female rape by men, to not acknowledge the scale of the gendered imbalance of rape victimisation is to obfuscate the gendered nature of rape. As Cahill argues, "[T]o claim that men were victimized by rape as women are reveals a disturbing lack of understanding concerning the prevalence of sexual violence inflicted on women, not to mention the surrounding implications of that violence" (124). Cahill further asserts that an insistence on equal inclusions of male victims in analyses of rape betrays a masculinist privilege which disallows: "any sexually specific analysis of rape that would result in an emphasis on justice *for women specifically*" (125). The insistence on including boys and men in discussions of rape is not only non-reflective of its proportional incidence, but can also contribute to obscuring the extremity of that gender disparity.

The most glaring problem in 'how' rape stories are told is their lack of diversity and overreliance on scripts and schemas, which hampers their potential for female empowerment. Employing David Herman's conceptualisation of scripts as "dynamic repertoires," Roberta Seelinger Trites explains that "Dynamic repertoires are one of the brain's many forms of shorthand: rather than remembering the details of every set of behaviours we've ever experienced (such as going to the dentist or the events of every school day), we remember standard procedures conceptually and in generalised terms" (89, "Growth in Adolescent Literature" 68). Scripts and schemas evoke a sequence of events without digression and are necessary tools for both creating narratives and understanding the world. However, the extent to which they are relied upon in rape narratives is problematic precisely because it creates "standard procedure."

By neglecting individual difference through the recitation of familiar patterns, scripts not only naturalise rape, but they shrink its definition, invalidating a diversity of experiences. In 2011, Kathryn M. Ryan conducted a study which found that the rape story most commonly recited by both men and women is what sociologists call a "real rape script." The real rape script, she explains, "involved a stranger who was a crazed male, who attacked a woman outdoors, at night, in a sudden and physically violent attack" (Ryan 775). Statistics indicate that the majority of reported rapes do not conform to the real rape script; most rapists are known to the victim and assaults usually occur in domestic spaces (Planty, et al.). Ryan's study found that victims are less likely to recognise their own assaults as rape, and rapists are less likely to recognise their own actions as rape if they do not conform to the real rape script (775). The ubiquity of rape narratives and rape scripts is dangerous because it limits the understanding of rape to an exclusive set of scenarios. This exclusivity is why sociologists have given the "real rape script" its title; it references a popular notion that rapes that occur differently are less "real" or legitimate.

The lack of narrative diversity and overreliance on scripts in young adult rape fiction is remarkable and disturbing, yet it makes sense when we understand its influence by popular rape prevention discourse. Like rape prevention discourse, young adult rape fiction targets young female readers and seeks to inform their ideological development and behaviour in order to either prevent their rape or guide their rehabilitation. As Hall explains, "Current norms for the presentation of sexual violence statistics empty individual rape cases of their specificity, erase the particular stories of the women who have been raped, assimilate them to numbers accumulated, and employ them as generic models with which to threaten other women into practicing 'healthy caution'" (8). These generic models, or scripts, hold women accountable for avoiding rape, as they imply that rape can be avoided by avoiding certain trajectories, and by suggesting that there is only one way to be raped. This mode of representation holds girls and women responsible for avoiding their own seemingly inevitable victimisation. When popular representations of rape use scripts derived from popular rape prevention rhetoric, they partake of this same victim- and woman-blaming ideology. While authorial intention is doubtlessly to empower girls within a rape culture (as is often stated explicitly in paratextual material) and perhaps even to inspire feminist political awakening, neoliberal ideas which inform mainstream understandings of rape and rape prevention discourse are manifest in the implicit messages of the texts. As in popular rape prevention discourse, these implicit messages informed by neoliberalism undermine authorial intention and instead maintain the status quo and hamper ideological change.

One of the key problems with popular rape prevention discourse which also manifests in young adult rape fiction is that it is almost always directed towards female subjects. Hall discusses both the futility and the misogyny of rape prevention rhetoric which targets female subjects rather than male perpetrators, determining that "In Western cultures, the threat of male bodies or dangerous men has always been secondary to a fascination with the risk and

vulnerability embodied by women" (3). The misogyny is this is evident in the fixation upon female victimhood rather than male aggression, or on the result of rape rather than its cause. Hall explains,

> Adopting a presentational style akin to the tough-love public service announcements of the 1980s, the texts of women's safety seem intent upon frightening women into facing the harsh reality of sexual violence *for their own good*. … This mode of address—contrary to its avowed intent—not only holds women accountable for the crimes committed against them but also positions them as "waiting" to be victimized. (7)

Repeated narrativisations of rape that focuses on the female experience assign girls and women the responsibility for ending or avoiding rape by effacing cultural causes or the role of the rapist. By effacing other causes and representing women as "waiting" to be victimised, this mode of rape prevention rhetoric also constructs femininity as a subject position in which rape is a latency; rather than a crime committed against the female subject by an external force, it is an inalienable aspect of female experience or identity.

The dominance of an understanding of rape which both positions it as fundamental to female subjectivity and holds girls and women as responsible for its prevention is evident in Elizabeth Marshall's analysis of Francesca Lia Block's "Wolf." Marshall's article is unusual because of her combination of literary analysis and reader-response theory; the first half of her article is her own analysis, which focuses on the relationship between the text and cultural ideologies, and the second half is a survey of her undergraduate education students' reactions to the text. Through her textual analysis, Marshall argues that Block rejects misogynistic morality systems in her adaptation of "Little Red Riding-hood" and "All Fur" by adapting aspects of the narrative to convey that women are not inherently vulnerable, but rather that society positions them as prey. In contrast to Marshall's own critical interpretation of Block's

work, her undergraduate students' responses revealed that "despite Block's revisionist attempts to place culpability on the father figure, evidence from student readings reveals that they interpret 'Wolf' in ways that fit broader cultural pedagogies of femininity that position the girl as a victim who must learn to defend her body" ("Girlhood, Sexual Violence, and Agency" 219). Marshall concludes that disjuncture between Block's presumed intent and the students' understanding occurred because "the rape script conditions student responses to rape and to representations of rape. Students read the girl's body as a vulnerable space and know before the heroine does, the lessons that she must learn about her body" (229). Marshall's project shows the pervasiveness of narrative scripts; the adaptation of classic stories can maintain their original ideology even after the ideology has been explicitly written out of the text. My project adopts the same method of combining concepts from cognitive narratology with feminist rape theory to engage with more recent stories and scripts which belong to this same tradition of unconsciously sexist children's literature.

Young adult rape fiction serves the same function as the rape prevention material which Hall analyses; it targets female readers instead of male, with the presumed intent of teaching them how to avoid being raped, or how to recover from rape. This focus upon female victims in rape stories similarly constructs rape as a latency of the female body, particularly as the generic norm in young adult rape fiction is to exclude cultural analysis or development of the rapist character, and instead focus upon the victim's psychology and behaviour. The consequence of this narrative choice is that novels frequently also represent rape as an inalienable aspect of feminine experience and identity. The highly gendered attempt at behaviour modification makes sense, given that girls, the target audience and implied readers, exist at an intersection of subject positions that are understood as vulnerable and therefore particularly subject to intervention "for their own good": child and female. Because of readers' positioning at this intersection of subject positions, rape is typically

deployed in young adult fiction as a coming-of-age lesson which attempts to curtail adolescent female readers' potential attempts to claim power through their sexuality. According to Trites, young adult fiction is frequently employed as a pedagogical tool through which adults attempt to regulate teenage sexuality: "Because adults are quite conscious of sexuality as a source of power, they frequently subject adolescent readers to very consistent ideologies that attempt to regulate teen sexuality by repressing it" (*Disturbing the Universe* 116). Trites explains that female characters who express sexual desire or participate in sexual activity frequently end up "diseased, pregnant, emotionally devastated, or dead" (97). In one of the first theoretical texts in children's literary studies to examine rape, Trites concludes that it is regularly employed as a lesson for girls who express sexual desire (94). The use of rape as a pedagogical tool to curb young female readers' libidos is an inherently misogynist and victim blaming strategy, as it stigmatises and punishes female sexuality, suggests that girls' behaviour determines whether or not they will be raped, and effaces the role of rape culture and of the rapist.

These consequences of using rape as a pedagogical strategy are doubtless unintentional, which highlights the contradictory goals of authors of young adult rape fiction; they must balance their pedagogical imperative of teaching readers that their sexuality may make them a target with messages of female empowerment. Modelling female empowerment often relies upon depicting paths to recovery. However, depicting paths to recovery can undermine the text's pedagogical imperative. In a majority of texts, the pedagogical message wins out, with the consequence that recovery is sometimes implied at the very end of a novel, but is almost never depicted. This prioritising of pedagogy with the consequence of sacrificing empowerment is the case in *Go Ask Alice,* of which Trites writes that Sparks "wants girls to stay in control of her sexuality so that they do not get hurt. The goal may be admirable, but it comes at the cost of stigmatizing all sexuality" (94). As Trites asserts, even

where the authorial intention seems to be to offer positive depictions of female sexual agency, the implicit ideologies are negative, as rape is deployed as punishment for sexual desire. The emphasis on punishing girls for their sexuality reveals a disturbing conceptualisation not only of rape as fundamental to defining female subjectivity, but also of the female responsibility to avoid being raped, despite its representation as inevitable. Victims are thus frequently treated as disposable, despite the best intentions cited in authorial paratexts, which always insist that the victim is not to blame and offer contact details for support services which their own fictional victims very rarely use. Treating rape victims as disposable is inherently victim-blaming; as Lydia Kokkola states in *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality* (2013), "blame is implied when female characters who fail to curb their sexuality die" (49). In their attempts to balance the imperative of teaching girls to avoid rape, authors too frequently sacrifice their messages of empowerment by representing rape victims as beyond healing or redemption and therefore disposable.

The incompatibility of the pedagogical imperative with messages of female empowerment has led to an increasing number of disposable victims in young adult rape fiction, as Fiona Nelson observes in the subgenre which she identifies as "coming-to-death stories" (48). In "The Girl: Dead," Nelson contends that an increasing body of young adult literature "glorifying and romanticizing dying and death has been burgeoning," and that these novels convey that the only route to female empowerment is death (41). It is this juxtaposition of death with female empowerment that leads Nelson to question "how it is that dead has come to be promoted as a viable sexual subject position for young women?" (44). Ironically, Nelson's analysis finds that in her coming-to-death texts, dead or dying girls are actually able to find and practise sexuality without the recourse which would generally come in the form of heartbreak, pregnancy, or rape: "Being dead, or dying, becomes a viable subject position for girls who have no safe opportunities in life to realize their own sexuality"

(51). According to Nelson's analysis, there is so little space for positive female sexuality in young adult fiction that death implies a liberation from the social mores which constrain even fictional living girls. Nelson also analyses the rape text, Jay Asher's novel *13 Reasons Why* (2007), noting the victim's empowerment post-suicide, as she haunts her bullies with recorded tapes that are distributed after her death: "Her words seem to have an impact on the thirteen recipients of the tapes precisely because she has killed herself" (44). The pedagogical imperative is exercised in this text by demonstrating the danger of the victim's sexuality in that it leads to her rape, the devastating effects of which lead to her suicide. Yet the inarguable unpleasantness of the rape/suicide outcome is complicated by the victim's post-death empowerment through her ability to speak out against her bullies and be heard, a narrative twist that responds to the imperative to include a 'feminist' message of female empowerment in a rape story. In a show of typically postfeminist ambivalence, the novel evidences an uncomfortable and unsatisfying reconciliation of the pedagogical imperative with messages of female empowerment.

My first chapter, "Postfeminism and Paratexts: The Cultural Context of Young Adult Rape Fiction," analyses shifts in feminist theorisations of rape in parallel with an examination of the Afterwords and Author's Notes which frequently supplement young adult rape novels. I argue that authors' apparent need to include these direct addresses to the reader suggest both a perception that rape is a topic which requires particular stewardship, and, perhaps, a perception that their fictional stories are inadequate for delivering the intended message. This perception may expose an awareness and discomfort with the limitations of dominant paradigms within the subgenre, such as its overreliance on scripts and schemas. It may also convey discomfort with the ambivalence required by the pedagogical imperative, and the tendency towards victim-blaming ideology which it facilitates. By tracing the philosophical roots of their implicit ideologies, I contend that the ambivalences evident in authors'

paratexts are characteristically postfeminist, as they reflect the conflicts within rape prevention rhetoric which seems feminist, but is infused with victim-blaming ideology.

In my second chapter, "Controlling Consumption: The Regulation of Girls' Bodies in Young Adult Rape Fiction," I argue that novels are inflected by postfeminist discourses of corporeal control in which rape is treated as a natural feature of the female body, rather than as a crime committed against a girl or woman. I examine how rape scripts contribute to the conceptualisation of girls' bodies as 'rape spaces' or spaces in which rape is conceived of as a natural latency or inevitability. I argue that texts frequently construct female bodies as rape spaces by treating sexual harassment, molestation, and rape as an inherent aspect of puberty, which naturalises sexual violence as a normal part of female maturation and suggests that female bodies must be controlled for their own protection. This ideology also emerges in the treatment of sexual desire, which is regularly stigmatised, as rape is foreshadowed with victims' expressions of sexual desire, revealing the influence of the neoliberal value of self-determination. I examine how this stigmatisation of the body extends metaphorically through the treatment of clothing and food, which are frequently deployed in the novels to either endorse or critique discourses of controlling female bodies.

My third chapter, "Silence and the Regulation of Feminist Anger in Young Adult Rape Fiction," examines the role of victims' voices in the texts. My analysis focuses upon the 'silent victim' script, in which the victim is unable to disclose that she has been raped for the majority of the text, incurs punishment from those around her who cannot understand that her bad behaviour is the result of trauma rather than teenage angst, and finally confesses that she has been raped, which initiates a rapid conclusion to the novel. I argue that this common script isolates and pathologises the fictional victim by focusing the whole of the rape story within her individual pathology, to the neglect of any examination of the broader social implications of rape. This mode of representation is problematic because it subscribes to a

postfeminist focus upon positivity which stigmatises anger, which was a political tool and motivator for the second wave. I also examine the implications of framing the victim's disclosure as a confession, suggestive of an acceptance of guilt which is inflected by the neoliberal construction of individual subjects as self-determining. In contrast, I suggest that novels in which victims disclose their rape earlier in the text are more reflective of the feminist practise of 'speaking-out,' and allow authors the narrative space to demonstrate the formation of supportive communities and intersubjective interactions, allowing for the potential for recovery which is precluded by the hasty conclusion of silent victim texts.

In my fourth chapter, "Types of Boys: Adolescent Masculinities in Young Adult Rape Fiction," I focus on two main character types: the boyfriend and the rapist. Novels often deploy a postfeminist boyfriend character type whom I term the 'New Age Boyfriend.' This character type protects his raped girlfriend and guides her recovery, into which he has particular insight. This includes helping her to have normative, non-frightening, and non-forced redemptive sexual encounters. He is characteristically postfeminist because despite his positioning as a feminist figure because of his sensitivity to his girlfriend's needs, his particular capacity to guide her healing and insight into her needs and experience of rape positions him in a superior position to her in a gendered hierarchy. His agency displaces that of the victim, and, in contrast, she is presented as incapable of protecting and managing her vulnerable body without the assistance of a man. Sex acts are performed under his tutelage and guidance, which prioritises male sexual desire over the girl's desire, or lack thereof, and suggests that he has greater insight into the needs and requirements of a violated female body than she does. Like the New Age Man from whom his character type derives, the New Age Boyfriend is representative of a new hegemonic masculinity, who may be more sensitive than his macho predecessor, but who still maintains and reinforces a patriarchal hierarchy.

The New Age Boyfriend is typically characterised in dichotomy with the rapist, who, I argue, is underrepresented in young adult rape fiction. In a majority of novels, rapists are scarcely present and barely characterised beyond abstract and non-defined descriptions as monstrous. This failure to characterise rapists is problematic because, not only does it focus the rape story solely on the female victim, it presents rape as an inhuman act, assigning it to the realm of the uninterrogable. The failure to adequately assign blame to the rapists is inflected by the neoliberal principle of individualism in which individual subjects are self-determining, and therefore responsible for their fates; responsibility for externally imposed crimes is relocated to the individual victim. In this chapter, I also consider texts which include and develop rapist characters, arguing that these are far more effective in promoting feminist ideals than those in which the rapist is either absent or barely characterised. The narrative space given to the rapist not only takes focus away from the victim, but it allows novels to assign responsibility appropriately to him. The presence of the rapist character also allows for an interrogation of his motivations and the social factors which facilitate his crime.

My fifth and final chapter, "Spaces and Societies: Individual and Community in Young Adult Rape Fiction" focuses on how novels represent rape culture through analysis of the victim's relationship to her community and society. I analyse the treatment of private and public space, arguing that by emphasising the victim's vulnerability and fear when outdoors, public space is frequently characterised as rape space. This stigmatising of girls in public space suggests that their manoeuvring in male-dominated public space is dangerous, and is reflective of attempts to control female behaviour by confining girls and women to the traditionally feminised space of the domestic. This characterisation also has implications for community development, and I analyse the roles of families and girl friends within these spaces as either supportive or obstructive. When novels depict such characters in alliance with the victim, they model the feminist value of communal solidarity to overcome

oppression. These novels model community-development as providing potential recourse against rape culture, particularly in public spaces. I extend my analysis of the characterisation of public and private spaces to representations of the internet, a space which transcends distinctions of public and private. I argue that many novels tend to treat the internet as a local space rather than a global one, and thereby participate in discourses which extend girls' danger in public space to online spaces, focusing upon their susceptibility to bullying and harassment. I argue that this local focus fails to recognise the potential of the internet as a space which overrides definitions of public and private, and as masculinised and feminised, a function which many girls and women have found empowering, as is evident in the recent success of the #MeToo movement, and the various feminist hashtags which have followed.

While rape narratives have the proven potential to be a powerful tool for the feminist movement, the assumed inherent subversion in telling rape stories is outdated and fails to acknowledge the cultural shifts which have occurred to compromise the intention of rape stories. This outdated assumption that speaking about rape is an inherently feminist act instead precludes an interrogation of the ways in which rape is discussed and represented. According to Mardorossian, while postmodernism encouraged interrogation of absolute truths and the invisible ideologies which informed such truths, rape was off-limits for postmodern analysis, as any interrogation of dominant rape ideologies or narratives was seen as potentially offensive to rape victims. However, Mardorossian argues,

> We have now moved beyond thinking that subjecting the same experience – that is, the violation of a woman's body – to different explanations is a suspect gesture. An alternative analysis does not necessarily amount to denying the victim's suffering or their account of the incident, since victim's accounts cannot be so neatly separated from the signifying practises and discursive frameworks that culture makes available to them for making sense of their experience. (*Framing* 45)

Victims have too long been the focus of rape prevention rhetoric, both in fiction and non-fiction, and only by removing that narrow focus on the effects of rape rather than its cause can rape culture be interrogated. In a context in which popular media is saturated with rape stories, it is no longer enough to merely speak about rape. Through analysis of some of the most problematic and potentially harmful tropes which predominate in young adult rape fiction, and by tracing of their ideological roots and influences in feminism, neoliberalism, and postfeminism, I hope that this project can reveal and encourage more empowering ways of discussing rape, rather than maintaining and perpetuating the ideological status quo of rape culture.

This thesis hopes to participate in developing this moment of an evolving understanding of rape by identifying some of the deleterious ways in which rape is presented for young readers, and embracing the political potential of rape narratives for the feminist movement by identifying more productive and empowering ways to represent rape. Part of the #MeToo movement's success is the way in which it has re-politicised the personal by utilising the disclosures of individual victims to relate individual experiences to a broader community of shared experience. The vastness of this shared experience rejects neoliberal individualism by asserting that rape and sexual harassment are not isolated experiences brought on by victims' behaviour, and demands that the focus upon the individual be instead turned to the cultural factors which facilitate rape, sexual harassment, and everyday sexism. The #MeToo movement has reinvigorated rape discussion and revived its subversive potential. The goal for young adult fiction should now be to catch up with the development of rape theory by interrogating the vocabulary with which we speak about rape, and the implicit ideologies contained in rape stories, as these are encapsulated so potently in the fiction which aims to teach girls how to be women.

CHAPTER 1
Postfeminism and Paratexts:
The Cultural Context of Rape in Young Adult Fiction

Prevention programs are not victim-blaming since the advice comes prior to, and with the intention of avoiding, assault. Girls are, rightly, warned not to drink heavily at parties, not to drink punch or other mixed drinks. (Needell 235)

This chapter explores the cultural context of young adult rape fiction by analysing its ideological relationships to shifting theorisations of rape within feminist philosophy. My aim is to explain the dominant representational paradigms within the subgenre, which are characterised by a confused ambivalence and tendency towards victim-blaming ideology. Authors believe that they are writing feminist texts that will empower young female readers, as is evident in paratextual materials, such as the Afterwords and Author's Notes that accompany such novels. However, despite laudable intensions, the novels themselves are usually a confused combination of feminist rhetoric of empowerment and anti-feminist meaning. As Katy Lewis observes in her analysis of young adult rape novels, "these texts are not *either* perpetuating *or* undermining rape culture. Often, they are doing some of each" (6). This ideological dissonance is particularly evident in the incongruity between the ideologies within the novels, and the messages contained in these direct addresses, which are the subject of analysis in this chapter.

Direct addresses from the author to the reader were a convention in historical texts for children, and serve the pedagogical function of articulating the fictional story's lessons for the reader. While these first-person articulations of the story's moral which follow the main story are no longer a staple of the genre of children's fiction, let alone young adult fiction, they appear surprisingly often in young adult rape fiction through Afterwords and Author's Notes. The frequency of their inclusion, despite being generically atypical, suggests both

authors' sense of a need to provide such particular care when discussing rape, as well as a dissatisfaction with the limitations of the fictional narrative form to adequately convey the author's intended lesson. I contend that these paratexts suggest that, even as they write fictional texts for young readers, authors sense their own discomfort with the generic limitations of young adult rape fiction, and the often anti-feminist victim-blaming ideological implications dictated by its conventions. These conventions are typically characteristic of the popular rape prevention discourse in which the novels participate, which has become confused by dramatic shifts in the theorisation of rape since the second-wave, and is now largely inflected by a postfeminist sensibility.

In order to trace the ideological inconsistencies and contradictions within the novels, I analyse the novels' paratexts in tandem with an analysis of the shifting role and theorisation of rape in feminism and in popular consciousness. While rape stories were once a source of feminist empowerment, neoliberal ideology has corrupted the intention behind many of these stories: popular narrative discourses about rape now more often blame the individual victim for her failure to thrive, and function as cautionary tales to teach girls and women how to avoid being raped. That such victim-blaming still appears to be a feminist act can be ascribed to the hegemony of a postfeminist sensibility, which combines the feminist rhetoric of empowerment and assumed inherent feminism of telling a rape story with the victim-blaming ideology of neoliberal individualism. By analysing my primary corpus' paratexts in conjunction with this historical analysis, I examine the roots of the contradictory ideologies contained within the fictional texts, and between the fictional and non-fictional direct addresses, inviting a more rigorous interrogation of what is feminist about these novels, and how feminism might be better packaged for young readers.

Historical context of the direct address in children's rape fiction

The representation of rape for young readers predates the development of young adult fiction as a genre, and rape is a concern which finds its origin in the heavily didactic overtones of early children's fiction. The most well-known historical example of the moralistic nature of early children's fiction is the fairy tale *Little Red Riding-hood* (1697). In Charles Perrault's story, the predatory wolf embodies the form of the grandmother and the granddaughter does not recognise the transformation. She therefore undresses and gets into bed with the grandmother-wolf, and is devoured. Little Red Riding-hood perceives no danger to her body and her free manoeuvring in public space brings danger into the domestic space: she trusts figures she has always been in the habit of trusting. In *Fairy Tales as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (1993), Jack Zipes explains that while most fairy tales were originally created by women, as these tales were adopted and adapted by men of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, such as Perrault, "the tales were changed to introduce morals to children that emphasized the enforcement of a patriarchal code of civilité to the detriment of women" (24). The sexist bias is blatant in Perrault's texts, but in case the reader did not understand the message, Perrault addresses them directly in a rhyming passage entitled "The Moral":

> From this short story easy we discern
>
> What conduct all young people ought to learn.
>
> But above all, young, growing misses fair,
>
> Whose pretty orient blooms begin t'appear:
>
> …
>
> No wonder therefore 'tis, if over-power'd,
>
> So many of them has the Wolf devour'd.
>
> …

> With luring tongues, and language wond-rous sweet,
>
> Follow young ladies as they walk the street. (26)

Perrault instructs readers that because society perceives girls as prey, they must overcome the naïveté of innocence and learn to protect their bodies by approaching not only those closest to them with constant suspicion, but also those they might encounter in the dangerous public space. This message is very similar to those in contemporary young adult rape fiction, and the three-hundred year old rape-prevention tactic remains the same; both position girls as rape victims with the intention of policing their behaviour, and construct rape as a natural and inalienable aspect of girlhood.

A century later, rape prevention was still a pressing concern for authors of children's literature. In her discussion of "some of the very first recognisably modern children's books," Judy Simons describes *A Present for a Little Girl* (1797), which was the female-intended counterpart to *A Present for a Little Boy* (1798). Simons summarises,

> The book includes a story pertinent to the situation of young well-bred ladies about two tame geese who wander away from their farm to live with the wild fowl. When a fox approaches, the wild birds fly off but the tame geese, unfamiliar with the threat and hardly able to fly, are soon caught and devoured. "From this short tale we may learn", the narrator tells the intended female reader, "that those who forsake the state for which they are fitted by nature, will be in danger of sharing a like fate to that of the poor tame geese." (144)

In this story, the onus is on the tame geese to stay close to home and suppress their curiosity in favour of class-appropriate adventures, or fall victim to an unaccountable male predator. The story contains similar themes to those in *Little Red Riding-hood*: female vulnerability in relation to space and class, and a childish precocity which stands in for sexual desire. These

themes are discussed throughout this thesis, indicating not only the continuing persistence of adult writers' concerns about child rape and vulnerability, but also of the lack of change in the ways in which anti-rape messages have been communicated throughout the last three hundred years. Like *Little Red Riding-hood*, *A Present for a Little Girl* contains the narrator's direct address to the reader in which he carefully articulates the lesson of the story. This mode of direct address to the child reader to articulate the lesson of the story is no longer a staple in children's fiction, let alone young adult fiction, and yet it is remarkably prevalent in young adult rape fiction.

Of my corpus of twenty young adult rape novels, eleven include a paratext containing contact details for support services, and seven include extended Afterwords or Author's Notes. These direct addresses from the author to the reader often include disclosures of the authors' own experiences of rape, or those which have been disclosed to them, assert the victim's innocence, and almost always include instructions on how to avoid, report, or recover from rape. In *Faking Normal* (2014), for example, Courtney Stevens offers an enumerated list of advice and steps for victims or allies to take, including the advice that "What happened to you is not your fault," and to "Reach out to a counsellor or a rape crisis center," as well as contact details for RAINN (the United States' Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) (322-323). And yet the victim in *Faking Normal* never contacts support services; she discloses her rape to her family only at the end of the novel and they pressure the rapist (a high school teacher) to leave town, without ever involving any type of professional support or legal authority. Only one novel in the corpus of this thesis, Anne Cassidy's *No Virgin* (2016), includes a victim who calls a helpline. It is ironic that these messages to speak out and ask for professional support appear in the paratexts, but not the novels themselves. This irony points to a cognitive dissonance within the authors, as they choose to represent their victims behaving in ways that they counsel their readers not to.

The perceived necessity of such a direct address suggests both that authors sense not only a particular custodial duty towards their readers when dealing with rape, but also a dissatisfaction with the limitations of the young adult rape narrative form for communicating with the reader. A cause of this dissatisfaction with the limitations of the rape narrative is perhaps revealed in the Afterword to Louise O'Neill's *Asking For It* (2015). O'Neill writes, "In both *Only Ever Yours* and *Asking For It* I decided to end the stories in rather bleak, ambiguous ways. I didn't do this to be sensational or to emotionally manipulate the reader. I did it because I wanted to have an ending that was true to the narrative itself" (342). O'Neill's concept of an ending being "true to the narrative" is a potent articulation of the influence of scripts in the ways in which stories are both created and cognitively processed, as well as their dominance in the genre of young adult rape fiction. Her comment suggests discomfort with the limitations of dominant narrative paradigms which prioritise the pedagogical imperative to teach girls how to avoid being raped, particularly as this pedagogical imperative precludes messages of female empowerment which might be located in a less, as O'Neill puts it, "bleak" ending. One example of how the pedagogical imperative undermines feminist ideology is in that by not having their victims contact support services, novels attempt to teach by negative example; the victim behaves wrongly and is punished throughout the novel for her bad choices. Just as in *Little Red Riding-hood* and *A Present for a Little Girl*, with the added guidance of the paratext, the reader is meant to recognise the victim's bad choice and make better choices should the same thing happen to her. This representation is victim-blaming, as it focuses the whole of the rape story on the victim's bad choice, for which she is punished. O'Neill's comments suggest that these dominant narrative paradigms are very difficult to avoid, even where the author may be uncomfortable with the ideological implications of their requisite parameters.

The pedagogical imperative therefore can create a disjuncture between the act of telling a rape story, which is assumed to be an inherently feminist act, and the ideology which is often required by the constraints and expectations of the subgenre of young adult rape fiction. The authors' frequent disclosures that they have been raped or have counselled rape victims suggest that they have a particular insight into the 'truth' or 'nature' of rape, and yet the frequency with which problematic ideologies emerge suggests a lack of understanding of the implications of popular rape prevention rhetoric in which they are participating. Mardorossian points out that rape victims' "experiences themselves are steeped in historically and culturally contingent constructions and require that we attend to the signifying practices (including feminist ones) through which they are given meaning" (*Framing* 47). Hegemonic ideologies are nearly invisible to those living within a society in which such ideals are assumed and it is impossible to discuss rape free from the involuntary inflections of a hegemonic ideology. When the ideologies implicit in that rhetoric are not interrogated, those ideas are offered to readers with a shroud of authority. By tracing the historical importance of rape to the feminist movement and changes to the conceptualisations of victimhood with the neoliberal and postfeminist shift, this chapter aims to illuminate the sources of these potentially harmful ideologies and undermine their hegemony. Further, I intend to make these ideologies visible by tracing the representation of rape to a period when rape stories functioned as a politically productive tool of female empowerment.

Second-wave feminism and the political utility of rape narratives

Rape narratives have served an important function for the feminist movement. The centrality of rape to the feminist movement is particularly true of the second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960s in the United States, and spread throughout the Western world. While first-wave feminism was primarily concerned with legal rights, such as suffrage

and property ownership, the second wave was primarily concerned with social issues, such as sexuality, family structures, and working conditions. In *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (2000), Maria Bevacqua notes that "feminists were indeed effective in their efforts to address the rape issue because they were able to make significant, lasting changes in public policy and public consciousness. On few other issues was the women's movement able to garner as much widespread public ideological support as it did with rape" (12). In *Rethinking Rape* (2001), Ann Cahill explains why rape stories had such political efficacy:

> Paying women less than men for identical work, the injustice of marriage laws, reproductive choice: if feminists found it difficult at times to inspire political outrage at these and other social manifestations of women's inferior status, rape was a phenomenon that all members of society ostensibly decried. As an unequivocally unjust act, rape functioned as an effectively disruptive lever that had the potential to reveal the systematic discrimination against and devaluation of women. (15-16)

Telling rape stories was both a subversive political act, and sound political strategy, as rape provided a solid and effective base upon which the second-wave feminist movement could rally people to a cause. This political utility caused discussion of rape and rape narratives to proliferate.

Within this second-wave context, the discussion of rape provided a vehicle for empowerment for individual women, and for the feminist movement more broadly. Rape stories functioned so well as vehicles for empowerment because they encapsulated the systemic misogyny of patriarchy, but also offered a solution by inviting women to join a collective movement which demanded recourse. Discussions of rape or sexual violence specifically, and sexism and misogyny generally, were not an end in themselves, but provided an impetus to action. Mardorossian points out that "[F]or second-wave feminism, being a

victim did not signify a lack of agency. Identifying and rallying *as* victims was all about reappropriating the concept for women's empowerment and about exposing the arbitrariness of the supposedly fundamental dichotomy between victimization and agency that defined approaches to sexual oppression" (*Framing* 42). Claiming victimhood was a political strategy for the Women's Liberation Movement, which wrested the 'victim' subjectivity from its status as a mechanism of control and claimed it as a means of empowerment. The rape story provided a parallel with women's experience under patriarchy: a moment and period of ultimate passivity was framed as a potential route to agency.

Some of the paratexts of this thesis' primary corpus evidence this second-wave spirit of feminist empowerment, particularly through the deployment of rape narratives to create female communities. In the Author's Notes in *The Mockingbirds* (2012), Daisy Whitney discloses her own date-rape in her first year at university, her decision to pursue charges, and the results of that decision:

> [W]omen who had been date-raped started writing down the names of the perpetrators on a bathroom wall in the university library. But they didn't stop there. They went to the administration and demanded that the university step up. … It's amazing what a group of vocal students, the image of a long list of names of rapists on a bathroom wall, and a national newspaper can do! (333-334)

Whitney's personal experience foregrounds the potential of recognising victimisation as a shared experience and its empowering and potentially politically transformative power. Her reference to the long list of names of rapists conveys the prevalence of rape on her university campus, but frames it as a tool for the women who contributed to that list in order to effect change. Similarly, in Alina Klein's Acknowledgements to *Rape Girl* (2012), she discusses her experience of disclosing her rape at sixteen-years-old, along with five other girls who were raped by the same man. Both Whitney and Klein cite their own experiences with rape as

evidence as they attest to the potential to create empowering bonds by recognising shared experiences. Both stories participate in the spirit of second-wave feminist rape narratives as an impetus to activism by highlighting the importance of creating feminist community. It is also notable that both authors maintain their ideological consistency, as both fictional victims break with generic conventions by speaking out and naming their rapists at the beginning of their novels.

Neoliberalism and postfeminism

The utility of leveraging victimhood as a shared experience to create feminist community was compromised in the 1990s, which marked the advent of third-wave feminism, and was both a period of both neoliberal flourishing and of intra-feminist dissent. Although coined in 1938, the term neoliberalism is now primarily used in application to the ideology attached to a set of conservative economic reforms under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1970s to 1990s. The governing principle of economic neoliberalism is that national economic flourishing requires the competition enabled by a free market and globalised economy. A consequence of this focus on market competition is the scaling-back of social services, and the privatisation of previously public services (Gill and Scharff 5). By the 1990s, neoliberalism had ceased to be simply a set of political and economic policies, and had become a dominant cultural and ideological regime, chiefly characterised by the valourisation of individualism. Neoliberalism functions by "constructing individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating. The individual must bear full responsibility for their life biography, no matter how severe the constraints upon their action" (Gill, "Postfeminist Media" 163). Neoliberalism hinges on the notion that individuals are responsible for and wholly capable of determining their own fates, and the failure to do so is a personal failure and not a systemic issue. While individualism and self-

determination are of paramount importance within neoliberalism, these principles are fundamentally at odds with the Women's Liberation Movement's attempts to manifest political change through collective action.

Postfeminism emerged during this period and manifests not as a defined movement, but as a phenomenon which illuminates how gender relations function under neoliberalism. Gill suggests that postfeminism can be understood as a "sensibility," which is made up of an awkward and contradictory fusion of both feminist and neoliberal traits (147). The postfeminist sensibility came to displace feminist philosophy in popular consciousness, compromising the political potential of rape narratives by functioning as a spectre for feminism through the use of feminist rhetoric, while promulgating politically quietist meaning by suppressing political critique and resistance to oppressive regimes. During the second-wave, the Women's Liberation Movement sought to assert that issues that had previously been dismissed as personal, such as sexuality, reproductive rights, and household labour were political issues because they stemmed from systemic patriarchy. This belief is encapsulated in the movement's slogan "the personal is political." In contrast, postfeminism, popularly recognised by its slogan "girl power," is focused upon individual consumerism and commodification, and is defined by a set of themes which Gill usefully delineates: "[T]he notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference" (147). These dominant themes of individualism over community and preoccupation with the female body undermine the notion of the personal being political and demonstrate that postfeminism is far more closely aligned with neoliberal ideals than with those of the feminist movement. While postfeminism seems feminist in its insistence on the empowerment of girls and women, this empowerment is assumed as having

already been achieved, an assumption which precludes the discussion of their systemic

disempowerment under patriarchy. The majority of young adult rape fiction is dominated by

this postfeminist sensibility and adopts this same performative tactic; novels masquerade as

feminist texts through their use of feminist rhetoric and the mere act of rape-story-telling, and

yet their implicit ideologies are dominated by neoliberal anti-feminist ideals, such as victim

blaming discourses.

Individualism is also key to revealing how postfeminism compromises the feminist

potential of young adult rape fiction. In her work on the young adult rape novel, Angela

Hubler focuses on the use of first-person narration, writing that "the feminist effort to

politicize what has historically been understood as private can be undermined by formal

features of the novels" (114). Hubler asserts that first-person narration is individualistic and

undermines the principle of feminist community formation: "the first-person narration

utilized by *Speak* and by many other young adult rape novels frequently results in a univocal,

individual, and psychological focus that aligns, ironically, with postfeminist rejections of

feminism in favor of neoliberal individualism" (114). Hubler connects this individualism with

the lack of coherent feminist philosophy in young adult rape fiction, observing that within her

corpus, "only one out of twenty-five YA rape novels includes the word 'feminism'" and

notes the rarity of having "a character who explicitly states that rape results from women's

subordination to men, that feminism sees this subordination as unjust, and seeks to end it"

(125, 126). It is also revealing, given the history and evolution of rape prevention rhetoric

from second-wave feminism to postfeminism, that the books which Hubler argues, "depict

sexual violence in more adequate and complex ways" were written between 1978 and 1993

(115). This period begins during the second-wave and ends before postfeminist ideology

became hegemonic, redefining and compromising the political utility of the identity 'victim.'

Postfeminism and victimisation

A key moment in the neoliberal shifting conceptualisations of victimhood was the publication of Naomi Wolf's *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How to Use It* (1993). Wolf denounced the tactics of second-wave feminism, which she labelled "victim feminism": "Victim feminism is when a woman seeks power through an identity of powerlessness," which uses the tactic of "appealing for status on the basis of feminine specialness instead of human worth" (135). According to Wolf, the focus on victimhood merely reinforced perceptions of women as weak and incapable of agency, and therefore in need of extra protection. Wolf juxtaposed this "victim feminism" with what she labelled "power feminism," suggesting that women would be better served by rejecting the "victim" mindset which perpetuates their oppression, and exercising their existing civic rights to seize the power already available to them.

While there is something appealing about Wolf's argument that repetitive images of women as victims merely reinforces that status, she fails to account for the impact of patriarchy as an oppressive regime. Instead, her proposition suggests that feminists should stop speaking about the system which disempowers women, and instead find a way to fit into that system. Wolf's proposition is, essentially, a 'fake it til you make it' strategy; it not only rejects discussion of the systems of oppression which prevent women's access to power, but also pretends that such a system does not exist. Remarking upon the "profound relation between neoliberal ideologies and postfeminism," Gill writes,

> What is striking is the degree of fit between the autonomous postfeminist subject and the psychological subject demanded by neoliberalism. At the heart of both is the notion of the "choice biography" and the contemporary injunction to render one's life knowable and meaningful through a narrative of free choice and autonomy, however constrained one might actually be. ("Postfeminist Media" 163, 154)

Neoliberalism neglects to account for social context, or the ways in which society might constrain an individual ability to self-determine. Wolf's "power feminism" rejects the community-building potential of shared victimisation in favour of individualism, which echoes the neoliberal strategy of recontextualising collective oppression as personal failure. The individual woman is presented as being free to determine her own fate and outcome, without the restraint of any cultural regime, and she is held accountable for any failure to claim and act upon her supposed power.

Wolf's dismissal of "victim-feminism" also presupposes an inherently negative connotation in the identity of victim. Discussing the linguistic shift in discourses about rape in which the word 'victim' is replaced with the word 'survivor,' Mardorossian observes that "To reject the term 'victim' is inherently to accept a definition in which blame is implied" (*Framing* 26). Rejection of both the word and identity of 'victim' stigmatises victimhood and isolates victims. Opting for the word 'survivor' may be understood as insistence on agency post-rape, but this implicitly suggests a lack of agency for the victim, for which she is held accountable; the onus is placed on the victimised individual to overcome her victimisation. Mardorossian frames this linguistic shift as a capitulation to patriarchal pressures and media attempts to subvert or corrupt a word and its associated concept which have been integral to the feminist movement, arguing that "[T]his current obsession with the ideological repercussions of a term people would often no longer be caught dead using obscures the fact that this negativity is not inherent in the term itself" (42). While Wolf's observation on the potentially harmful impact of recurring images of women as helpless victims is sound, her strategy denies the political utility of actually discussing oppression, and not only sacrifices the political utility of rape discussion, but also blames victims for their failure to avoid victimisation.

The redefinition of the word victim exemplifies a key means by which postfeminism functions as a political spectre for feminism: through the manipulation of language and meaning. Postfeminism appropriates the language and vocabulary of feminism, but hybridises it with the frequently anti-feminist political ideology of neoliberalism. Language is therefore the vehicle through which postfeminism pretends to perform the same function as feminism, while actually undermining its core ideals, as is evident in Wolf's scorn for the word 'victim,' in which the feminist keyword is emptied of its power, and replaced with the neoliberal ideologchal implication of self-generated failure. Explaining this process of postfeminist linguistic redefinition in *The Aftermath of Feminism* (2008), Angela McRobbie explains that "Drawing on a vocabulary that includes words like 'empowerment' and 'choice', these elements are then converted into a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in this new guise, particularly in media and popular culture, but also by agencies of the state, as a kind of substitute for feminism" (1). The feminist intent of postfeminist discourse is presumed to be implicit in the use of words and language linked to the feminist movement, yet these words mask the meanings of the ideas expressed, which actually align with a neoliberal discourse. The fusion of contradictory language and ideas encapsulates postfeminism's confused ambivalence: the meaning undermines the form. This postfeminist influence explains why young adult rape novels may seem to be acting on a feminist agenda, while actually undermining their goals of empowerment with anti-feminist ideologies that are implicit within the story content.

Postfeminism therefore clearly operates at least partially in opposition to the goals of feminism, by both undermining the value of collectivism, and by failing to account for patriarchal constraints on female subjects. McRobbie argues that postfeminism emerged because of a backlash against second-wave feminist gains in the 1970-1980s, as the goals of feminism were perceived to have been already achieved: "Elements of feminism have been

taken into account, and have been absolutely incorporated into political and institutional life"
(1). Feminism was assumed and understood to have already been naturalised, and was
therefore both unnecessary and embarrassingly outdated: "feminism had achieved the status
of common sense, while it was also reviled, almost hated" (6). This hostility to feminism is
evident in Wolf's proposition that women should stop complaining about their
disenfranchisement and claim the power to which they already have access. Describing this
period of backlash against feminism in politics, the media, movies, television, fashion,
beauty, and from feminists themselves in *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American
Women* (1991), Susan Faludi writes that "It is hard enough to expose anti-feminist sentiments
when they are dressed up in feminist clothes. But it is far tougher to confront a foe that
professes not to care" (95). Postfeminism emerged as the 'new' feminism, focused on power
and ways of celebrating and exercising that power, while rejecting discussion of constraints
to that power as passé or gauche.

Postfeminism and rape

The postfeminist shift in discourses about rape was signalled by the publication of
Katie Roiphe's *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism* (1993). In her analysis of rape
culture on college campuses, Roiphe argued that "rape crisis feminists" had fabricated a "rape
epidemic" by redefining the parameters of rape to include date-rape: "Today's definition has
stretched beyond bruises and knives, threats of death or violence to include emotional
pressure and the influence of alcohol. The lines between rape and sex begin to blur" (53). She
suggested that when feminists cited the statistic that one in four college women had been
raped, this erroneously interpreted incidents in which young women who reported drinking
alcohol and then having non-consensual sex as rape, which she argued disregarded that young
woman's agency because "If we assume that women are not all helpless and naive, then they

should be held responsible for their choice to drink or take drugs" (15). She insisted that the prevalence with which feminists claimed that rape was occurring on campuses was a myth created by feminists whose fear-mongering had confused and terrorised young women to the extent that they could not distinguish bad sex from rape (53).

While Roiphe's ideas were largely dismissed within the feminist movement, what was important about *The Morning After* was that both her media popularity and her self-described positioning as a feminist, gave it credence outside of the feminist movement in broader cultural conversations. Bevacqua points out that "If such a book was directed towards a scholarly audience who could see through its illogic and misrepresentation of social science research, its impact would be minimal," however it was directed towards a popular audience, and presented as legitimate feminist material from a Harvard and Princeton graduate (191). *The Morning After* was a product of popular media; Roiphe wrote the book after the success of a 681-word op-ed piece on the subject published in *The New York Times* in 1991. *The Times*, possessing a reputation as being an authority on literature, promoted the book before its release and, upon publication, printed a 4,700 word excerpt. In "The Selling of Katie Roiphe," Jennifer Gonnerman argues that Roiphe was an ideal mouthpiece with which *The Times* could present their ideas from a feminist figurehead: "Coming out of the mouth of a young, self-proclaimed feminist, the idea that date rape is the product of young women's hysteria had legitimacy" (Gonnerman). Like Wolf, Roiphe argued that feminist conceptualisations of victimhood are debilitating for individual women and for the feminist movement. Her substantiation of this argument dismissed the most common forms of rape as rape, undermined the accounts and perspectives of victims, and blamed victims for their choices, primarily their choice to drink alcohol and then have sex (consensual or not) with regrettable sexual partners.

The neoliberalism of Roiphe's argument is discernible in her focus upon agency; she elevates the individual's right to self-determine (especially in their choice to drink alcohol) as more important than their right to consent to sex. The postfeminist element of her argument can be seen in her insistence that it is anti-feminist to assume that women are "helpless and naive" by making the choice to drink and therefore accept responsibility for the consequences of that choice (Roiphe 15). As Gill explains, "The patterned nature of the contradictions is what constitutes the [postfeminist] sensibility, one in which notions of autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side-by-side with surveillance, discipline and the vilification of those who make the 'wrong' 'choices'" ("Postfeminist Media" 163). Roiphe's fervent assertion that every individual has agency, and a full capacity to exercise that agency, results in the denial of the possibility that another individual or social system may compromise that exercise of agency. This failure to account for structural social forces is evident in her focus upon women's choice, and the absence of the rapist from her analysis of campus rape. Roiphe's arguments are characteristic of one way in which neoliberalism manifests rape-prevention rhetoric: it focuses upon victim behaviour rather than that of the rapist. Rape is thereby constructed as a female's failure to protect or manage her own body, such as the failure to anticipate that rape is a natural consequence of the choice to drink alcohol. A consequence of the individualism which makes the political personal is its implications for victimhood; whereas the feminist movement strove to highlight the notion that women were collectively victims under patriarchy, neoliberal individualism relocates this victimisation as an internal manifestation of personal failure.

While all the paratexts in my primary corpus include some statement to the effects of 'it wasn't your fault,' some juxtapose these anti-victim-blaming statements with statements that are blatantly victim-blaming. In her novel *The Word for Yes* (2016), Claire Needell begins her Afterword in big, bold, capitalised letters: "WHAT READERS SHOULD KNOW

ABOUT RAPE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, STRANGER RAPE, NONSTRANGER RAPE, DATE RAPE, ACQUAINTANCE RAPE, AND SEX WITH A DRUNK OR OTHERWISE INCAPACITATED PERSON … ALL OF THE ABOVE ARE RAPE" (235). This statement is one which is perfectly in line with the feminist project of broadening definitions of rape. However, what follows suggests that those affirmative statements are a perfunctory requirement of the subgenre and reveal a disturbing contradiction which is characteristic of postfeminism. Needell writes, "Nonstranger rape prevention has generally focused on victim behavior. Prevention programs are not victim-blaming since the advice comes prior to, and with the intention of avoiding, assault. Girls are, rightly, warned not to drink heavily at parties, not to drink punch or other mixed drinks" (235). Needell expresses an awareness of a discourse which rejects policing the behaviour of girls instead of boys as victim-blaming, yet dismisses the problems associated with that discourse. Her rejection may be understood as realistic and pragmatic. However, it fails to consider the role of rape prevention in constructing rape and constructing girlhood. When she writes, "Do not blame yourself. If you were drunk, blame yourself for being drunk, but not for getting raped," the message may be sound, but it undermines her non-victim-blaming statement; if girls are taught that getting drunk leads to rape and they choose to get drunk and then are raped, blame is very much implied through that correlation of choices (238). Rather than treating rape as a systemic social issue, and a crime perpetrated by rapists, she presents it as an avoidable consequence of a girl's bad decisions.

Like Roiphe, Needell is preoccupied with alcohol and the victim's choice to drink. Needell explains the danger of giving in to the desire for alcohol: "the more you consume, the less able you are to control your *other* desires – whether these are sex or food or to run naked in the streets," and explains to the reader that "Many young people (and older people) feel that they can control their human desires, even when drunk. This may be partially true, but it

is never wholly true for anyone, and it is especially untrue of young people, whose developing brains are not well-designed for self-control as older people's" (236-237). These statements conflate consensual and non-consensual sex, and suggest that rape victims' behaviour or sexual desire invite rape. This conflation of consensual and non-consensual sex also combines a stigmatisation of teenage sexuality with a condescending and presumptuous division between childhood and adulthood with questionable implicit power dynamics. As Roberta Seelinger Trites argues, "Sex may be one of the first times they become aware of their own power—but negative depictions of human sexuality provide the author with an occasion to remind the adolescent not to become too powerful, not to become too enamored with their knowledge of pleasure" (*Disturbing the Universe* 116). Referencing the trend of posting nude pictures online, Needell writes, "The idea that there is a public record of our most shameful, hurtful moments in life is, naturally, devastating. The upside to this is that this sort of thing, posting nude or drunk pictures, tagging girls as 'hoes,' has become so common that it is almost normative. Essentially, if everyone is a hoe, no one is a hoe" (242). Needell's solution to sexual online bullying is, it seems, to accept it as a new normal. Needell follows in Roiphe's tradition of dismissing legitimate concerns about rape culture by focusing upon victim behaviour (particularly the choice to drink alcohol), removing the onus for preventing rape from boys and plainly assigning it to girls, conflating consensual and non-consensual sex, and suggesting that rape can be prevented by girls choosing not to drink or take naked photos.

While the Women's Liberation Movement had provided a consensus around the purpose of rape stories which was effective beyond the movement, this function was compromised by feminists who accepted the promises of neoliberal individualism. Part of the second-wave's success was because rape had the status of an untouchable issue: "The anti-rape movement, by and large, has been spared the burden of resisting the efforts of an

organized, well-funded, politically savvy, single-issue opposition. This is due, in large part, to the nature of the issue involved: very few people would admit to holding 'pro-rape' beliefs" (Bevacqua 182). Rather than face an organised opposition, the critical opposition which compromised feminist anti-rape activism came largely from within the feminist movement itself, from figures such as Wolf and Roiphe, whose feminism conferred authority to their arguments and justified their critical positioning. This backlash played out largely in the popular media, as Faludi observes,

> The truth is that the last decade has seen a powerful counterassault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women. This counterassault is largely insidious: in a kind of pop-culture version of the Big Lie, it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women's position have actually led to their downfall. (12)

This backlash came from second-wave feminists as well. In Betty Friedan's *The Second Stage* (1981), her follow-up to the second-wave classic *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), she wrote, "Obsession with rape, even offering Band-Aids to its victims, is a kind of wallowing in that victim-state, that impotent rage, that sterile polarization. Like the aping of machismo or obsessive careerism, it dissipates our own well-springs of generative power" (257). Rather than address the legitimate criticism that one of the primary tools of feminism, the rape narrative, was contingent on potentially problematic images of women as disempowered victims, this attack was leveraged against the feminist movement.

The backlash against feminism led to a fracturing of discourses on victimhood; while previously, victim discourses *were* discourses about power, now the two were not only divided, but fraught with ambivalent and often contradictory ideological implications which are reflective of their confused and contradictory genesis. In her analysis of postfeminism in

U.S film, Sarah Projansky explains that "Paradoxically, … the popular acceptance of some feminist anti-rape discourses *contributed* to a cultural representation of feminism as 'already successful' and thus no longer necessary: rape narratives helped support postfeminism, which in turn implied that feminist activism was no longer necessary" (11-12). As such, rape prevention discourse stagnated. In popular culture representations of rape, ideologies which had become hegemonic were accepted at face value and feminist intent was assumed, despite the inherent contradictions within those ideologies. The contradictory and inconsistent ideologies which inform images of victims which is characteristic of this stagnation in rape prevention rhetoric is evident in a majority of young adult rape fiction, as well as in popular constructions of girlhood.

Fractured victim/power discourse

This division between the two modes of articulating feminist discourse (victim and power) is evident in Marnina Gonick's identification of two neoliberal girl types which she observes as emerging in the 1990s: Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia. Gonick describes these types: "On the one hand, Girl Power represents a 'new girl': assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity. On the other hand, Reviving Ophelia presents girls as vulnerable, voiceless, and fragile" (2). While these character types may seem contradictory, Gonick suggests that they can be understood as two potential constructions of young female selfhood under neoliberalism, as both "participate in the production of the neoliberal girl subject with the former representing the idealized form of the self-determining individual and the latter personifying an anxiety about those who are unsuccessful in producing themselves in this way" (2). These types of girlhood exemplify some of the contradictory lessons of postfeminism, as girls are offered two models of ways of being female, both of which are contingent on the false assumption that the subject is able to

fashion their own identity. While there are two models of girlhood presented, the Girl Power model is clearly the preferred model to aspire towards. The message is that girls should not become the Reviving Ophelia type, which suggests that girls have choice.

The type of female subjectivity offered by the Reviving Ophelia type is bleak, and reflective of social perceptions of a girlhood as inextricable from disempowered victimhood in the 1990s. The name Reviving Ophelia is derived from American Psychologist Mary Pipher's bestselling *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994). During the 1990s, girlhood was the site of a moral panic, which involved a widespread concern that negative messages about femininity in the media had created 'girls in crisis.' As Clare Bradford and Mavis Reimer write in *Girls, Texts, Cultures* (2015), "As girls have become more publicly visible they have often become the locus of moral panics, many of which centre upon their bodies and behaviours, and which are exemplified by debates over topics such as the sexualization of young girls, obesity, eating disorders, and consumerism" (12). Blaming the media for creating a "girl hostile culture," Pipher claims that "something dramatic happens to girls in early adolescence," as "girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions. They are sensitive and tender-hearted, mean and competitive, superficial and idealistic. They are confident in the morning and overwhelmed with anxiety by nightfall. They rush through their days with wild energy and then collapse into lethargy" (15, 20). While predicated on a concern for girls and characteristically feminist interrogations of media constructions of femininity, 'girls in crisis' discourse co-opted a feminist rhetoric of empowerment, but attached neoliberal ideologies of girl-policing, and distracted from social issues by deeming them personal and pathological.

The individualism of the Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia types is characteristically neoliberal, and compromises the feminist value of community building. Gonick writes, "Both participate in processes of individualization that … direct attention from structural

explanations for inequality toward explanations of personal circumstances and personality traits" (2). Interestingly, Faludi characterises the construction of such pairs as typical of the neoliberal media's backlash against feminism. She demonstrates that

> The trends for women always came in instructional pairs – the trend that women were advised to flee and the trend that they were pushed to join. For this reason, the paired trends tended to contradict each other, for example, Superwoman "burn-out" versus New Traditionalist "cocooning"; "the spinster boom" versus "the return of marriage"; and "the infertility epidemic" versus "the baby boomlet." (105)

This creation of dichotomous types of women is reductionist and creates caricatures of femininity. Rather than foster community and shared bonds of experience between girls and women, such dichotomous types places women in opposition to each other and in a clear hierarchy, wherein success according to neoliberal values and benchmarks is a measure of personal worth.

The contradictory types typical in discourses about rape are articulated in Stevens' paratext to *Faking Normal*. She writes, "You are more than a victim; you are a survivor" (Stevens 326). This statement creates a dichotomy which minimises one type, and elevates the other through an implicit and arbitrary valuation of agency, and suggests that the subject herself has both the ability and the duty to control which type she becomes; to be a victim is to fail, but to be a survivor is to thrive. Rather than foster community and bonding over a shared experience, this ideology divides and alienates women who have had the same experience by placing them in opposition according to their psychological response to the rape. This treatment of psychological reactions to rape not only minimises the victim (Reviving Ophelia) type, and the psychological reaction which is characteristic of such a type, it treats her and her rape as abnormalities, as the novel's title indicates she must 'fake normal.' While simultaneously suggesting that the spirit of a survivor is the ideal type of

victim, who responds to her rape with the optimism and can-do attitude of a Girl Power type, young adult rape fiction also overwhelmingly presents the Reviving Ophelia type reaction as an inevitability, as she is almost ubiquitously reflective of fictional victim characters.

That the majority of victims become Reviving Ophelia types after their rape conceptualises rape as both a psychological defect, and as an irreversibly life-altering, self-destroying event. This conceptualisation is powerfully represented in the book cover design of young adult rape fiction, which, it must be noted, are marketing objects over which the author generally has little input. The cover of *The Way I Used to Be* (2016) evokes associations of deflowering with virginity loss through its image of yellow dandelions, whose petals are being violently dashed from their stems (Smith). *Leftovers* (2008) also uses images of dandelions, although in this case they are dried up white ones, whose tufts are blowing off the stem (Wiess). *The Pain Eater* (2016) cover is a dark, greyscale photo of dead trees, reflective of the copse of aspens in which Maddy is raped, but also evoking death and ending (Goobie). These texts conflate consensual sex with rape by evoking virginity-loss imagery, and highlighting the disposability of the victim by aligning her rape with death. Death is also evoked on the cover of *Empty* (2013), on which the word "empty" is repeated horizontally four and a half times, and fading gradually into white, with the tagline: "Sometimes you just want to disappear" (Walton). This is a disturbing tagline to attach to a rape victim's story, especially as it foreshadows the victim's suicide at the end of the novel. These covers are evidence of the pervasiveness of a neoliberal ideology which blames victims for their failure to live up to neoliberal mores and thrive by protecting their bodies from rape, as the ideal Girl Power type would surely be able do. The virginity-loss and death imagery visually represents the concept of the disposable victim, whose psychological damage makes social reintegration impossible.

Feminist anger versus the neoliberal cult of positivity

The psychological control evident in the need to be a Girl Power or survivor type is key to how postfeminism manipulates and controls the behaviours of girls and women. This psychological control is manifest in rhetoric which promises girls and women empowerment through self-improvement: "In magazines, contemporary fiction and television talk shows, it is women, not men, who are addressed and required to work on and transform the self. Significantly, it appears that the ideal disciplinary subject of neoliberalism is feminine" (Gill, "Postfeminist Media" 156). Postfeminism encourages the female subject to focus on her own inadequacies for any shortcomings, rather than upon systemic disenfranchisement. The neoliberal focus on positivity pathologises the individual subject for her failure to achieve, redefining her victimisation as personal failure. Anger is stigmatised for its negativity, and thereby both the primary political tool of the women's movement and the integrity of the movement's successes are compromised.

Whereas the feminist movement's leveraging of victimhood was so effective because it inspired anger, under the rubric of individual self-determination, anger is no longer a legitimate emotion in a postfeminist world. In their analysis of "Love Your Body" discourses in popular advertising, Gill and Shani Orgad write, "This new spirit, embodied by the confidence cult(ure), incites women to makeover their psychic lives, and in doing so makes over feminism itself—into a neoliberal feminism that is complicit with rather than critical of patriarchal capitalism" (341). Postfeminism is preoccupied with both the physical body and its constant modification and surveillance, as well as psychological health, as defined by confidence and positivity, all encapsulated in the Girl Power type. This mandate of both confidence and constant body modification is revealing of postfeminism's characteristic ambivalence. Anger suggests a personal failing, and a psychological defect. This insistence

on the need for women to move beyond, or be above, anger, is not only politically quietist, it isolates, blames, and psychologises the individual female subject.

The stigma against anger relates to rape-prevention rhetoric because it impacts conceptualisations of victimhood and, by extension, femininity. Mardorossian writes, "Today, the concept of 'victim' automatically summons the image of a downtrodden, helpless, and usually female individual in need of assistance or counselling, all the more so since feminists themselves have acquiesced to the reframing of victimization as a characterological or psychological trait rather than the result of experience" (*Framing* 32). She locates a primary source of this in the assignation of victimhood as an internal aspect of the self, (rather than a condition or state which is imposed by an other), as an implication of neoliberal self-determination. This pre-condition also implies that victimhood is an innate condition of every female, rather than an externally imposed one. This conceptualisation of victimhood as a personal failure is one way in which neoliberalism constructs femininity as a psychologically defective state, requiring and justifying surveillance and policing. This manifests in young adult rape fiction, as the majority of texts focus on the pathology of the isolated victim, as though the whole of the rape story is contained within her, rather than in the crime, or in the rarely developed or characterised rapist.

Anderson's *Speak* (1999) exemplifies this victim-pathologising, as the scant presence of the rapist, aside from vague descriptors as monstrous and inhuman, leaves the novel to focus wholly on his victim's psychological distress. *Speak* is an important book not only because of its popularity, but because of its influence on the subgenre; indeed, it seems to have set the pattern for contemporary young adult rape fiction, and established many of the scripts and schemas for representing rape for young adult readers. As Lewis observes in her analysis of the novel, "*Speak* does not critically address any of Melinda's fears, especially her fear of not being believed about her rape, and the novel ends with the assumption that

speaking about the trauma is enough" (13). The novel employs the 'silent victim script,' which I discuss in Chapter Three, in which the victim is unable to disclose her rape, suffers punishments inflicted by those around her who do not understand the cause of her anti-social behaviour, and finally confesses that she has been raped, after which the novel concludes hastily. While Erika Cleveland and Sybil Durand write that "When Melinda finally reveals that she was sexually assaulted at the party, her life changes for the better," this is not demonstrated for the reader, but merely implied, as the novel ends right before Melinda's disclosure (Cleveland & Durand). Chris McGee, by contrast, interprets Melinda's silence as disrupting normative child-adult power dynamics and finds her narrated internal commentary too witty to be indicative of a Reviving Ophelia type. However, he too finds fault with her final confession at the end of the novel: "Melinda, it seems, must transfer her wit and insight and identity into a form that can be seen, understood, or, in Foucault's words, judged, punished, and forgiven" (McGee 183). The novel reinforces psychological focus on the victim, which pathologises the victim, whose final disclosure takes the form of a confession: rather than accusing her rapist, she confesses the secret she has withheld throughout the novel. This focus on the victim undermines Anderson's own paratext, which reads, "We need to speak up a bit louder, I think" (231).

The absence of race

Another way in which young adult rape fiction is reflective of postfeminist media culture is the absence of race, and the implicit construction of a prototypical rape victim as white. As Projansky observes, "the central figure of postfeminist discourses is a white, heterosexual, middle-class woman. Whether she is a professional or a homemaker, a mother or a (hetero)sexually active and expressive twentysomething single woman" (12). The lack of non-white victims in young adult rape fiction not only reinforces a universalising white

construction of femininity, but also participates in feminism's historical marginalisation of non-white women, while overlooking statistical evidence that non-white women report a higher incidence of rape. Therefore, the lack of race in young adult rape fiction not only reinforces the erasure of victims of colour from fictional and pop culture representation, it can also obscure racial disparity. In their analysis of young adult fiction which represents teen dating violence, Heather L. Storer and Katyayani R. Strohl problematise the lack of non-white characters, pointing out that "Although TDV affects teens from all demographic groups, evidence suggests that individuals from underrepresented minority groups (particularly African American teens) are at disproportionately high risk" (1732, 1174). Because of an absence of primary source material, this project contains disappointingly little discussion of race. Another impediment may arise in that, as young adult fiction is a genre which is dominated by 'problem novels,' race may be understood as the bigger 'problem' than rape. Therefore, novels which include discussion of both race and rape may be more popularly discussed as belonging to the category of books about race, than about rape. Such a reluctance to actively thematise both race and rape is all the more likely because of the ubiquity of representations of rape, so its representation may be naturalised and sometimes go unnoticed. It may also be evidence of a generic failure to appreciate and depict intersectionality, as young adult fiction tends to separate problems thematically, so that a book about race focuses only on race, and a book about rape focuses only rape.

It must be noted that a lack of young adult rape fiction which engages with race has been repeatedly problematised by theorists of young adult fiction. While Cleveland and Durand have a small sample size of four novels, they assert that "[T]he novels we surveyed did not adequately represent the experiences of youth of color, youth who identify as LGTBQ, or males who are the victims of sexual assault and coercion," an occurrence which they align with the problematic disjunction with statistics which reveal the actual racialised

incidences of rape (Cleveland & Durand). They therefore suggest supplementing discussions

of this literature in classrooms with non-fictional material: "[W]e recommend that educators

who use YAL to foster critical discussions about sexual assault in their classes supplement

the texts with research articles or inquiry projects that challenges rape myths, including the

likely victims of sexual assault." While Lydia Kokkola offers a lengthy and insightful

analysis of Sapphire's *Push* (1996) in *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality* (2013), she does not

engage with the fact that, despite being a coming-of-age story from childhood to young

adulthood, and containing all of the dark and disturbing themes characteristic of young adult

fiction, the novel was not published or marketed as young adult fiction. In a genre which is

replete with sexual violence, but severely lacking in representations of non-white victims, one

might infer that the protagonist's race contributed to the decision not to publish or market

Push for young adult readers.

Conclusion

Instead of the supportive ideology of victim-empowerment which the second-wave

offered, a majority of representations of rape in young adult fiction have adopted

understandings of victimhood which are inflected by a postfeminist sensibility. The

prevalence and influence of this discourse is understandable, as postfeminism is hegemonic

and therefore invisible as consensus truth. Gill explains that "postfeminism has tightened its

hold in contemporary culture and has made itself virtually hegemonic. It is harder today to

see postfeminism's 'edges' or borders. … [I]t has become the new normal, a taken-for-

granted common sense that operates as a kind of gendered neoliberalism – and it is all the

more troubling for this" ("Affective" 609). As neoliberal postfeminist ideologies have

become hegemonic, their logic and validity are assumed. The cause of the confusion and

contradictions in the majority of young adult rape fiction, despite authorial intention, can be

located in the hegemony of a postfeminist sensibility, which is itself defined by this confused mix of often contradictory feminist vocabulary and neoliberal ideology. As Marion Rana concludes in her analysis of the subgenre, "A broad segment of young adult fiction not only supports prevailing rape myths but also recreates traditional sexualized gender roles (such as female passivity and male sexual dominance and aggression) and the acceptance of sexual violence as a rite of passage" (178). A majority of young adult rape fiction is therefore caught in a paradox of representation, as its adherence to dominant representational paradigms invokes rape prevention discourse which blames victims and undermines the very intention of the text – to empower girls.

Authors' perceived need to supplement their novels with a direct address to the reader suggests an awareness of this paradox, and a dissatisfaction with the paradigms which limit the young adult rape narrative form. The impossibility of balancing the pedagogical imperative with messages of female empowerment often results in victim-blaming discourse, particularly evident in the frequency with which victims are disposed of either through death or an inability to recover. This frequent failure to imagine a way for girls to recover from rape suggests that authors cannot envision a route to recovery within the limits of a rape culture. However, as long as authors continue to perpetuate the ideological dictates of oppressive systems such as neoliberalism and patriarchy, it is impossible to break out of the logic of those systems.

What is required is an epistemic break from the logic of neoliberalism, and a return to the second-wave focus upon female empowerment which is evident in the #MeToo movement. In young adult rape fiction, this break involves a rejection of traditional modes of representing victims, and also of the limited types offered by postfeminism. By rejecting these types and recognising the ideologies that inform them, postfeminism might cease to function as a political spectre for feminism by attaching the word and concept of

empowerment to something that is not empowering, but, rather, antithetical to feminism. This project aims to contribute to that epistemic break by highlighting how and why so much of young adult rape fiction participates in problematic discourse, and by contrasting these representations with novels which reject conventional representational paradigms in order to represent empowering constructions of girlhood.

CHAPTER 2
Controlling Consumption:
The Regulation of Girls' Bodies in Young Adult Rape Fiction

Never let them know you're vulnerable, especially if you are. Never trust someone else to protect you, and never forget that every choice you make is on you. Ignorance of the outcome doesn't exempt you from the consequences. (Wiess 6)

The growth of the subgenre of young adult rape fiction suggests that authors are responding to an impulse to caution, inform, and protect girls during adolescence, the period in which sexual characteristics and desires intensify. Rachel Hall explains that as targets of conventional rape prevention strategy, every female is assigned the status of pre-victim: "Within this schema, a woman's body, or more precisely, her sexual anatomy, becomes one risk factor among others. She is addressed by prevention discourses not exactly as less than a subject; rather, it is that her subjectivity momentarily collapses into her sexual autonomy" (2). The neoliberal logic of self-determination suggests that it is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from rape, and the failure to do so compromises her right to subjective agency. This ideology frequently emerges in young adult rape fiction, in which the distinctly corporeal preoccupation of such novels often inadvertently naturalises rape as a biological component of female bodies and an innate facet of the experience of girlhood. The female body is thus conceptualised as a 'rape space.' Through an interrogation of the treatment of the female body in discussions of puberty, sexual desire, and relationships to clothing and food, I examine how a postfeminist sensibility influenced by neoliberalism encourages representational paradigms in young adult rape fiction which participate in this kind of victim-blaming rhetoric in their construction of girlhood.

Rape spaces are spaces in which rape is cognitively constructed as inherent, and the rapist merely fulfils the purpose of the space by committing rape. For example, in the real

rape script, the most popularly cited rape script, a woman is walking down a dark street when a strange man attacks and rapes her (Ryan 775). The essentialness of the dark street setting to this scenario suggests that rape is latent in the dark street itself. The rapist's agency is thus relocated into the dark street, removing his responsibility for the act while suggesting that dark streets somehow contribute to, even cause, rape. The same dynamic applies to women's bodies: by removing the cause (the rapist) and focusing on the effects of rape (the victim), rape is naturalised as a phenomenon which inheres within the female body. Carine Mardorossian explains the implications of this conceptualisation of rape: "victimization once referred to something tragic or criminal (outside the self) that affected one's life experience, it is now increasingly used to denote a problem that is intrinsic to the self and that makes one partly if not wholly responsible for the regrettable experience to which one was subjected" (*Framing* 31). Neoliberal strategies for preventing rape which address risky female bodies rather than threats to them are inherently victim-blaming, as rape is cast as a precondition of the female body which is validated, rather than created, when the rapist rapes: rather than crime committed, it is risk fulfilled.

When rape is constructed as inherent to the female body, independent of the actual crime having been committed, the construction of the female body as a rape space applies not just to victims, but to all girls. The conceptualisation of female bodies as rape spaces therefore not only blames victims, but blames all girls and women for rape. As fault for the crime is removed from the rapist and from society, girls and women are made wholly responsible for a crime committed against them, as well as for preventing that crime. Neoliberal ideology which employs this schema treats female bodies as "risky spaces" and transform every girl and woman into a "previctim" (Hall 3, Cahill 157). This risk justifies the policing of female bodies, which is both externally imposed and internalised, largely through

the same neoliberal strategy of affective regulation. Rosalind Gill argues that internalised surveillance is a key aspect of how neoliberalism functions through postfeminism:

> Intimately related to the stress upon personal choice is the emphasis on self-surveillance, self-monitoring and self-discipline in postfeminist media culture. ... First, the dramatically increased intensity of self-surveillance, indicating the intensity of the regulation of women (alongside the disavowal of such regulation). Second, the extensiveness of surveillance over entirely new spheres of life and intimate conduct. Third, the focus upon the psychological – the requirement to transform oneself and remodel one's interior life. ("Postfeminist Media" 155)

Postfeminism addresses girls and women specifically by asserting their need to self-surveil to satisfy the neoliberal burden of personal responsibility and self-determination. This focus upon responsibility is, essentially, outsourced to the individual, and is especially effective because of its focus on the individual's psyche. The root of any failure to thrive is located in the individual female's psychology, prompting her to internalise of messages of inadequacy and self-blame, which in turn compel her to behave in ways which conform to neoliberal ideals. In rape prevention rhetoric, this inadequacy is both psychological and corporeal, as rape space discourses which locate the threat of rape inside the female body demand that girls and women self-surveil constantly in order to protect their bodies.

This mandate of self-policing can be understood as functioning as a panopticon-like state, in which girls and women internalise sexist ideas about inherent female vulnerability rather than culturally supported male predation, and therefore police their bodies to mediate that vulnerability. In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) Elizabeth Grosz explains how within patriarchal society, female bodies and sexuality are both the predominant markers of femininity, and are classified as weak, making them also the vehicle for female oppression: "Misogynist thought has commonly found a convenient self-

justification for women's secondary social positions by containing them within bodies that are represented, even constructed, as frail, imperfect, unruly and unreliable, subject to various intrusions which are not under conscious control" (13). By representing vulnerability as an inherent and defining characteristic of the female body, both subordination and paternalistic protection are justified and reinforced. Instead of addressing the insidious patriarchal ideals which bolster rape culture, neoliberalism demands that women and girls accept either paternalistic protection, or internalise self-policing. Mardorossian observes that "It is as if, having noted the failure of the panopticon project to individually reform criminals, we now applied it to their victims by gradually asking women to police their own behavioural and mental maps," which creates "an interiorized and individualized system of surveillance by which every woman becomes her own overseer" (*Framing* 58). Rather than challenge patriarchal social structures which disempower and endanger girls and women, fear and vigilance is not only encouraged, but leveraged as a tool for controlling the female subject, and one that is, conveniently, internalised.

Another consequence of placing responsibility for rape on female bodies is that the internalised struggle to prevent a latent crime from manifesting can create a dysfunctional relationship to the body. Ann Cahill suggests that "In acquiring the bodily habits that render the subject 'feminine,' habits that are inculcated at a young age and then constantly redefined and maintained, the woman learns to accept her body as dangerous, wilful, fragile, and hostile. *It* constantly poses the possibility of threat, and only persistent vigilance can limit the risk at which it places the woman" (161). Constant awareness of the body as a site of risk seeds a mistrust of that body, and a need to control and manage it to ensure self-preservation. This constant fear and vigilance against the threat of their own embodiment affects the way that women conduct themselves, as women internalise the victim-blaming messages of neoliberal rape prevention, such as tying up one's hair, not walking alone at night, and

choosing one's wardrobe carefully: "It is the event women have to fear, experience, avoid, and deter and whose pervasiveness, feminists argue, has shaped women's bodily comportment whether they are conscious of it or not" (Mardorossian, *Framing* 1). The internalisation of this ideology can lead to the logical interpretation of rape as a failure of those monitoring systems for which the individual is responsible, because "To be the victim of an assault whose danger has been persistently reiterated virtually guarantees an emotional reaction of guilt and responsibility" (Cahill 121). Locating the crime within the victim creates a dysfunctional relationship with the female body, in which crimes committed against it are the fault of the victim: the victim must maintain vigilant control over her own body to prevent that crime.

In young adult fiction about rape, this desire to control female bodies is compounded with the societal impulse to control adolescent bodies, as both categories of youth and of femininity are disempowered ones. Since Roberta Seelinger Trites' *Disturbing the Universe* (1998), policing sexual bodies has been understood as a primary concern of young adult fiction, as she explains that "Because adults are quite conscious of sexuality as a source of power, they frequently subject adolescent readers to very consistent ideologies that attempt to regulate teen sexuality by repressing it" (116). In her discussion of the cultural obsession with adolescent bodies, Lydia Kokkola argues that this attempt to control adolescent sexuality is inspired by stubbornly persistent Romantic fantasies of childhood innocence, which are violated by the emergence of sexual characteristics and sexual desire at puberty (36). Adolescent sexuality complicates the distinction between childhood and adulthood and is therefore policed by adults. Novels which denigrate female sexual desire by teaching girls about their sexuality from the perspective of their vulnerability create rape space, as the sexual female body and the rape-able female body become interchangeable as they are cognitively fused.

The 'nature' of girlhood and the pubescent female body

Young adult rape novels adopt conceptualisations of femininity which are informed by a preoccupation with victimisation. That they should do so is understandable, as young adult fiction is preoccupied with teaching young people how to exist within the culture in which they are born, and neoliberalism is the prevailing Western ideology. The cognitive fusion of victimhood with femininity is the default mode for representing femininity, and this hegemonic trope of femininity is categorically disempowered and damaged: "Victims themselves are represented as irremediably and unidirectionally shaped by the traumatic experience of rape and hence incapable of dealing with anything but their own inner turmoil" (Mardorossian, "New Feminist Theory" 767). As experiences of femininity are overwhelmingly infused with rape in these novels, girls and women are represented as disempowered and debilitated by their trauma and fear. Young adult rape novels are preoccupied with laying out 'honest' experiences of what it means to be a girl, and these conceptualisations of girlhood are overwhelmingly dominated by this trope which defines femininity as a state of debilitating victimisation.

In young adult rape fiction, this representation of femininity as defined by victimhood compounds with representations of puberty and the two are conceptually blended to present rape as a biological inevitability. According to Grosz, puberty "is a period in which the biological body undergoes major upheavals and changes as an effect of puberty. It is in this period that the subject feels greatest discord between the body image and the lived body, between its physical idealized self-image and its bodily changes" (75). Addressing girls during this period in which physical changes emphasise the disjunction between biology and its meaning and experience, many novels adopt representations which naturalise rape and sexual harassment as another biological change. Young adult rape fiction is particularly likely to construct female bodies as rape spaces when it aligns vulnerability to rape with the onset of

puberty, and naturalises the potential (and inevitable) threat of rape as another aspect of puberty and the development of a sexualised body. By adopting typical tropes of femininity as it is cognitively fused with victimhood, novels not only fail to recognise this representation as a cultural construction, let alone to dismantle the logic which informs it, they also reinforce it by aligning it with nature and biology.

Courtney Summers' *All the Rage* (2016) provides one example in which rape is conceptually blended as part of the nature of girlhood. When Romy is told that her boyfriend's sister has had a baby girl, her instinctive reaction is grief for the child who has had the misfortune of being born not only female, but also black:

> All the things coming Ava's way they won't be able to control, things she won't always ask for because she's a girl. She doesn't even know how hard it's going to be yet, but she will, because all girls find out. And I know it's going to be hard for Ava in ways I've never had to or will ever have to experience and I want to apologize to her now, before she finds out, like I wish someone had to me. Because maybe it would be better if we all got apologized to first. Maybe it would hurt less, expecting to be hurt. (Summers 263)

Romy is framed as having special insight and authority into the experience of femininity because of her rape, as though she has experienced the true and ultimate form of feminine experience. This supposed insight allows her to adopt an authoritative tone as she asserts that girlhood is a state of inevitable trauma. Far from presenting empowering models of femininity and girlhood for the reader, the novel adopts an implicitly misogynistic tone, as the conflation of victimisation and girlhood situates femininity as a decidedly undesirable subject position. Romy also suggests that Ava's misfortune to be born female will be all the worse for her being black, predetermining her to a fate even worse than Romy's. In one of few examples of intersectionality within the subgenre, racism and misogyny are overlaid as

inevitable and irreparable problems, and the black female is treated as a powerless object. This passage demonstrates the inevitability of a girls' transformation into a rape space; the female baby is safe now, but her natural and innate victimhood will emerge when she grows up, as it is a biological inevitability of both her gender and race rather than a cultural condition which can be interrogated, resisted, and changed.

Girlhood is also represented as synonymous with debilitating victimhood in Laura Wiess' *Leftovers* (2008), a novel in which the primary theme is the dysfunctional formation of feminine subjectivity. Blair and Ardith's story is rife with the girls' observations on the nature of girlhood and the truth of what it means to be a girl. Like Romy's perspective on the doomed baby girl in *All The Rage*, these comments are delivered to readers of *Leftovers* in a tone that is both jaded and insightful, elevating their status and giving them an air of wisdom informed by experience. After Officer Dave asks Blair how she knows about the experiences of a girl who was manipulated into giving a boy oral sex at school and then teased about it, she says, "I'm a girl, remember? And no, it wasn't me, but how many of us do you really think make it through without scars?" (Wiess 5). Blair's rebuke suggests that the knowledge of this prevalent type of exploitative incident is intrinsic to female experience; it is simply part of being a girl. Her use of the word "scars" when describing the trauma that is endured by girls indicates its distinctly corporeal manifestation. While these scars are figurative, they also resonate with her literal scars, as she intentionally cuts herself after her rape.

The pedagogical function of this representation of female bodies as naturally susceptible to rape in young adult rape fiction is to teach girls that they must protect their vulnerable bodies. Yet this allows novels to partake in another troubling aspect of popular rape-prevention discourse: female bodies, when conceptualised as risky spaces, are understood as property which may be violated, and the prevention of this property violation is a female's responsibility. As Hall insists, "The treatment of women's bodies as threatening

because reducible to their (vulnerable) sexual anatomy revives treatments of women's sex as property that must be protected because it is capable of being trespassed upon" (2). Despite the alienation of ownership reminiscent of both early legal codification of rape, and of the neoliberal panopticon which postfeminist discourse encourages today, girls and women are positioned as guardians of the vulnerable bodies.

In *Leftovers*, the post-pubescent female body is presented as an object and a target, and exemplifies a representation of the betrayal of the pubescent body and the need to monitor its vulnerable sexuality as it is converted into a rape space. Ardith narrates,

> Each day brings a different worry like hairy armpits, periods, and BO, and wondering if you really *are* only worth your cup size. You start keeping your opinions to yourself because they might be dumb but you hate yourself for doing it, but it seems safer to blend in than stand out. And yet you *want* to be noticed, but only by being the-same-but-different, and nothing about that confuses you. The reactions to your new body do, though; you strut and show for guys in your school, but shudder when an old man leers, because you don't know how to twitch his crawling gaze off your skin. (Wiess 8)

Ardith describes a confusing convergence of betrayal from inside and outside the body, which is viewed as categorically negative and dangerous, and in which value is assigned to the superficial. While her view of her body provokes anxiety and requires management, as it emits hair, blood, and smells, her corporeal changes meet with approbation from boys and men. Ardith enjoys, but also feels threatened by, reactions to her body, and struggles to reconcile these ambivalences. Her experience of puberty is dominated by concerns about safety and difference, and these anxieties are naturalised as they emerge alongside biological changes. Blair further validates Hall's argument when she says, "Never let them know you're vulnerable, especially if you are. Never trust someone else to protect you, and never forget

that every choice you make is on you. Ignorance of the outcome doesn't exempt you from the consequences" (6). In the text, the individual female is responsible for protecting her own body, and she is to blame for the violation of that body. By emphasising the girls' internalisation of neoliberal victim-blaming discourses, the novel highlights an almost dystopian disjunction between how things should be and how they are. Blair's reaction to rape, constant sexual objectification and harassment is to accept and internalise the only messages which offer her any degree of self-preservation, despite the consequence of internalising a panopticon state of constant vigilance and self-blame.

Blair's analysis of the role of female bodies in society similarly participates in neoliberal rhetoric by evoking an understanding of the female body as a commodity which the individual female must manage and protect. She tells Officer Dave,

By the time you hit fifteen, there are certain survival lessons you'd better have learned. Like, that breasts are power. Sad to say, but it comes down to a matter of supply and demand. Girls have them, guys want them. Even a skank is a hot commodity if she can offer up more than a couple of mosquito bites. Not saying she *should* offer them up, just saying she should recognize her advantage and not put out every time some guy manages to string together a couple of compliments. (3)

Blair's analysis of the nature of girlhood includes economic vocabulary which exposes the impact of neoliberal commodification of femininity and of female bodies. Her discussion of "supply and demand" and reference to the female body as a "hot commodity" demonstrates self-awareness of the unreliable narrator's sociocultural context. And yet the lesson persists, as the girls' experiences of girlhood are genuinely and disturbingly fraught with sexual harassment and exploitation. The novel can be read as a social critique of neoliberal ideology and its corrupting effect on female psyches, as is encouraged by Blair's compromised authority as an unreliable narrator, and yet the novel demonstrates no alternative to these

ideologies. The practical course of action, in Blair's view, is to accept the codification of her body as a commodity and try to leverage it for power. While the text can be read as problematising a social discourse which prevails within its subgenre, these lessons are not only framed as teachings on the nature of girlhood from two authoritative narrator-figures, but it offers no alternative way of being female within this problematic social context, and disappointingly little evidence of the feminist principle of female-community.

Another text which naturalises rape and sexual harassment as a consequence of puberty is Colleen Clayton's *What Happens Next* (2013). The sexual characteristics which emerge at puberty invite male predation and cause Sid to lose control over her body, suggesting that sexual violation is a natural latency in her body. Sid explains, "The summer I turned eleven, I was attacked by mutant hormones. They invaded my body and sent all the baby fat in my belly, limbs and face screaming directly into my boobs, hips, and ass" (Clayton 27). She perceives physical biological changes as an alien invasion of her body, which suggests mental and psychological alienation from the body. An essential aspect of this loss of control is its sexualisation: "I'd get all kinds of lusty looks from older guys – teachers, coaches, neighbours, old farts in grocery stores" (27). Sid associates the loss of control over her body with the increased incidence of sexual harassment, suggesting movement towards internalisation of cultural constructions of her body as a rape space; she is alienated from her body because she understands it as a magnet for sexual violence and one which she is incapable of protecting. Sid's perception of her body as attracting sexual violence is legitimised, as it foreshadows the rape that subsequently occurs.

The novel also contributes to the construction of female bodies as rape spaces by locating the cause of rape inside Sid's post-pubescent body and undermining her ability to control that body, as she understands it as being literally synonymous with her identity. After the rape, Sid's subjectivity is characterised by a disavowal of her physical body: "I don't look

in mirrors now unless I have to, and it's not necessarily because of some deep-seated Freudianesque type shame, although that may have something to do with it. It's because I can't look in the mirror and not have the Truth staring back at me. Literally" (47). Rather than present the rape as something which happened to Sid, affecting her identity formation, the novel presents the rape as a physical part of her self, one which stares back at her in a mirror. The word "Truth" is a substitute for 'female body' and 'rape victim,' illustrating that sexual violation is an inalienable aspect of Sid's experience of inhabiting a female body. Unable to assign responsibility to the rapist, who is almost completely absent from the story, Sid becomes the crime, as it is tethered to her pubescent body.

The treatment of female bodies as property denies female ownership of that body, while still insisting that the individual female is responsible for defending it. As Hall writes, "Women's safety pedagogy addresses the social body of women as a series of individual bodies responsible for protecting their own 'stuff.' In this way, current prevention techniques privatize the woman's body in order to refuse the responsibility for safeguarding her freedom to live, move, and socialize unharmed" (6-7). Rather than encouraging greater political or social responsibility for rape prevention, the cognitive fusion of rape with female bodies and experiences of femininity displaces the responsibility for rape-prevention onto women, and into individual female bodies. Young adult rape novels which conform to this generic convention represent this awareness of the need to protect their vulnerable bodies from rape as an aspect of the emergence of sexual characteristics at puberty, and makes sexual harassment synonymous with maturation.

The disempowering potential of sexual desire

A common trope of young adult rape fiction is the evolution from the pre-victim fun-loving, sexually liberated or curious Girl Power type to the victimised, anxious, fearful, and

hyper-sensitive Reviving Ophelia type (Gonick 15-16). While the Girl Power type is the postfeminist ideal, the Reviving Ophelia type is damaged, anxious, and preoccupied with others to the extent that she obfuscates her own subjectivity. She is also the quintessential and proto-typical victim of young adult rape fiction. That the fictional rape victim so frequently begins the novel exemplifying neoliberal discourses of freedom and empowerment characteristic of the Girl Power type before her rape, and subsequent transformation into a disempowered and enfeebled failure of a Reviving Ophelia type after her rape, exemplifies the limited potential of empowerment under the precepts of postfeminism. According to Gill, postfeminism uses the feminist vocabulary of liberation and empowerment, but its implementation in the context of neoliberal individualism and surveillance contradicts this: "On the one hand, young women are hailed through a discourse of 'can-do girl power', yet on the other hand, their bodies are powerfully reinscribed as sexual objects; women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, but they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance which has no historical precedent" ("Postfeminist Media" 163). The generic trope of the rape victim's transition from a Girl Power type to a Reviving Ophelia type is evidence of this postfeminist contradiction. Despite the liberatory vocabulary poached from second-wave feminism, the ultimate lesson in these texts is far more in line with a neoliberal ideology of corporeal control, and sexuality is the vehicle for teaching girls that their bodies require discipline and constant surveillance.

In young adult rape fiction, the victim almost always expresses sexual desire before her rape. As Trites argues, desiring girls are punished in adolescent fiction in order to curb their power and teach that the dangers of sexuality outweigh its benefits (*Disturbing the Universe* 116). According to narrative conventions of cause and effect, when the victim acts upon sexual desire and is then raped, her desire becomes the cause of the rape. Kokkola explains that "By treating childhood innocence and carnal desires as binary opposites, the on-

set of sexual feelings during puberty becomes the ideal target for policing the boundaries of adulthood" (36). This impulse to police the boundaries of adulthood is why much of young adult fiction is so heavily didactic. Sexual desire is a target area in which to control adolescents because it is perceived as an unnatural violation of appropriate child behaviour, and a transgression into the adult arena of sexuality. The narrative consequence of this transgression is the message that the girl who dares to transgress her childhood innocence and venture too far in her exploration of the adult world via sexual activity will be punished, and end up irretrievably damaged. In young adult rape fiction, pre-victim Girl Power characters are described by others in the text as different or special because they express their sexual desires, and yet their downfall is cast as an inevitability of these traits. The resulting transition to Reviving Ophelia types post-rape suggests that they are doomed to the constraints of their gendered bodies. This is a victim-blaming narrative, as the message to young female readers is that they should be guarded, conservative, and seek to repress their sexuality.

An example of this transition from a Girl Power type to a Reviving Ophelia type appears in Christa Desir's *Fault Line* (2013). Ben initially admires Ani for being, as he describes, different from other girls: "Being with Ani was like being smacked upside the head. There wasn't anything she wouldn't say. It was like hanging out in the locker room with a bunch of guys, only she was wrapped up in a package of gorgeous" (Desir 41). Ani's difference from other girls, Ben observes, is distinctly non-feminine; not only is she like one of the "guys," she is like one of the guys in a locker room, a notoriously hyper-masculine space. He finds Ani's show of masculinised traits exciting and unexpected, and especially appreciates the manifestation of these traits in the package of a beautiful girl, as the description of her subjectivity ultimately reverts to a description of her physical appearance. However, Ani's transgression of gender norms wears on Ben, as he later narrates,

I liked Ani's directness but sometimes she went overboard.

"Beezus … I'm kinda tipsy and I bet you taste like the bottom of a garbage can. If you want to feel me up, okay, but you'll probably mess it up with your drunken gropes, and I wouldn't say that's exactly good times, you follow?"

"I'm not drunk," I said. Why was I defending myself in front of Kevin and Kate? I looked like a novice who'd never touched a boob before. (49)

Ani's sexual power is emasculating to Ben, who resents the public implication that he has less sexual experience than she does, and less refined sexual prowess. Ani takes control of her body by articulating what she does and does not want from the sexual encounter, and Ben expresses his resentment of her boundary-setting. This is highly problematic in a young adult rape fiction, a priority of which should be articulating consent, modelling female characters who are able to do so successfully, and modelling male characters who accept and appreciate mutually consensual sexual interaction. After she is raped, Ani is transformed into a different kind of 'special,' and she says, "No one is going to know about this. No one. … I'm not going to be *that* girl, the one everyone feels sorry for. The one everyone talks about," and Ben narrates, "I didn't know how to warn her that she was already *that* girl" (109). Ani's sexuality is the vehicle through which she is punished, a sexuality which Ben has deemed precocious and transgressive. While he initially admired her for being a 'different' type of empowered girl, after the rape, he sees her as a pitiful type of girl: a Reviving Ophelia type.

Ani's narrative situation as a Reviving Ophelia type is further enforced by her complete inability to take any action that could lead to healing or recovery. Her attempts at recovery only cause further psychological damage. She attempts to heal herself by acting out sexually, but this only serves to further undermine her sexual agency and ability to manage her own body. Referencing the cigarette lighter that was surgically removed after it was left

inside her vagina after her rape (which also features on the front cover of the novel), Ani tells Ben, "I need you to fuck me. I want to close my eyes tonight and think that the last guy who was inside me cared about me and maybe even loved me a little, instead of thinking that last guy inside of me thought I was so worthless he left a lighter as a parting gift" (108). Ben initially has sex with her but eventually begins to resist, suspecting that sex is an unhealthy coping mechanism: "She started to unbutton her jeans but I stopped her hands. 'We can go slow. We don't have to get right to it. I haven't really kissed you in weeks. Maybe we could start with that?" (142). Ani's sexual agency is compromised when her sexuality is deemed self-destructive. Ben is shown to be more capable of managing her body and psychological wellbeing than she is, as he controls and dictates the pace of their encounter, ostensibly for her sake. Ani tells Ben,

> "I make the choice about what I want to do with my body," she said, and her chin tilted up slightly. It was actually a relief to see defiance in her eyes after so much void.
>
> "That's right. You do. But is this really what you want? Is this what I deserve?" I held her face and looked into her eyes, searching. Her pupils darted around, refusing to engage with me. I tapped her cheek to get her to focus.
>
> "What does it matter what I want or what you deserve? This is who I am."
>
> (177)

Ani's Girl Power rhetoric as she tries to claim control over her own body is undermined and she instead claims her self-destructive sexuality as a defining aspect of her post-rape identity. Ben's positioning indicates his dominance and control of the situation, as he is positioned above her and holds her face. She is thus placed in a submissive position, which her darting eyes suggest that she wants to escape from. His tapping on her cheek is an infantilising

gesture, as he uses the movement to remind her of her obligations towards him. Her psychological debilitation as a result of her trauma trumps the feminist claim to power over her body, and she is too disembodied and disengaged in this scene to sustain the stand she has attempted to take.

Another example of this transition from an empowered Girl Power type to a Reviving Ophelia type occurs in *What Happens Next*, in which Sid's articulation of, and attempt to act upon, her sexual desire functions within the narrative to preclude her from consensual sexual activity, consequently defining her body as a rape space rather than a sexual space. She is introduced as a sexually desiring subject who fantasises about the possibility of satisfying this desire in an environment without parental control: "I just laid there imagining Kirsten, Paige, and me on the slopes, ski bunnies on the rampage; no parents, hot guys everywhere" (Clayton 1). She fantasises about her transition from childhood innocence to adult maturity in terms of her sexualisation. She envisages a scenario in which this transition is unpoliced and unsupervised. Like Ani, she transgresses normative models of feminine submission and masculine dominance by envisaging herself as a predator in this situation; it is she and her friends who will rampaging for hot guys, rather than being the objects of the rampage: she is a Girl Power figure.

Sid's attempt to exercise sexual agency is punished; when this scenario is not realised, and instead she finds herself in a supervised house with the other teenagers, Sid leaves the house to meet an older attractive man, who becomes her rapist. When she meets him, she wonders, "Do I tell him how old I am? That I'm a sixteen year old junior who rode in on a big yellow bus with the rest of the ski club from Lakewood High? … Did I mention that he is hot?" (15). She recognises that she is breaking informal rules that control a teenager's body but is too preoccupied with sexual desire to recognise danger. This desire is then subsequently punished with rape. Later, when she is dating Corey, Sid describes her physical

affection for him in much less sexually aggressive terms: "I love hugging him and holding his hand. That's all we've done though, that and a ton of kissing" (247). Sid is less anxious to be sexual with this partner as she has learnt her lesson, indicating that her previous experiences have functioned to compromise her sexual agency. The novel explains how restrained female sexuality is received by boys: "He knows I'm not ready for that – he hasn't even made it up my shirt yet" (265). Sid has lost her sexual agency and Corey is constructed as the sexually agentic party: he must make it up her shirt and act upon the sexual desires which she has lost, while she polices both of their libidos. The novel rewards her subsequent anxiety about sex with an understanding boyfriend, who nevertheless still holds all the sexual power over her. The novel perpetuates the notion of the female body as rape space by presenting female sexual desire as both an invitation and the vehicle for rape.

Louise O'Neill's *Asking for It* (2015) presents a dysfunctional girlhood that is distorted by a repressive Irish society that mixes messages by asking girls to remain chaste, while objectifying them sexually. Emma does not express desire, but is sexually active. She sees herself as a sexual object before the rape, and uses her body to fulfil male desires rather than her own, which are never expressed: "During sex I'm thinking about what I look like, trying to make sure the other person is having a better time with me than they did with the last girl. And, of course, even before they come I'm wondering how I'm going to make them keep their mouth shut about what we did or didn't do" (O'Neill 88). Emma displays an internalised conceptualisation of sexuality in which her body is a commodity, but one that requires complex management in order to be leveraged for social power; she has sex with boys, and can increase her worth by competing against and performing better than other girls, but must at least appear to hide or deny her sexual promiscuity for the sake of propriety. The novel interrogates the failures of feminism in the context of a postfeminist culture that is preoccupied with consumerism and competition, and in which girls' value is limited to their

embodiment as physical and decorative objects. However, the novel ultimately conforms to generic norms, as Emma is punished for her sexual activity. As a result of her rape, she transitions from a Girl Power type who attempts to empower herself through her sexual body to a Reviving Ophelia type, and is alienated from her body as a result.

This transition from Girl Power to Reviving Ophelia involves Emma's alienation from her body, which she dismisses as weak and a target. Emma narrates, "I don't want to be 'in my body'. I am like a shadow, still attached to the thing that people called Emma, following it around wherever it wants to go, but I am lighter now without all the *stuff* that body had, the memories, the attention it attracted. I feel less substantial" (200). Emma experiences her body after the rape as a shell which is detached from her self. It is an automaton to which she is anchored, but in which she does not belong. Emma refers to her body's "*stuff*," which are the trauma, sexual attention, and gossip which are drawn to her body: the baggage of girlhood. Emma feels liberated by her dissociation, as the separation of her mind from her body frees her from all of the baggage. This representation constructs the body as a rape space by locating all of this baggage of girlhood in the female body. Emma conceives of her rape as a biological aspect of her body: "I will never have children now. I would not allow them to grow inside me, where I could infect them" (287). This is a disturbing articulation of the perception that rape is a trauma that can never be overcome, which is articulated as the ruined state of Emma's body. She views her body as infectious, reinforcing her perception that the rape is self-contained, rather than externally imposed. While the novel attempts to illustrate and problematise this idea, and the cultural baggage which neoliberal society assigns to girls' bodies, it does so through the questionable method of maintaining generic messages which create rape spaces of girls' bodies, without modelling any ideological alternative.

In contrast to these texts in which sexual desire is punished with rape, Daisy Whitney's *The Mockingbirds* (2012) presents female sexuality as potentially empowering, as Alex deploys her sexual desire in her recovery. Like Sid, Alex blames herself for the rape and sees her body as permanently devalued because of it: "Martin can't possibly like me now that he knows I got drunk and stupid and went to Carter's room. I'm damaged goods" (Whitney 140–1). Like Sid, she senses that a piece of herself has been stolen: "This is … [t]he kind of guy worth waiting for. *Worth waiting for*. Then like a kick in the gut, I'm doubled over. Because I'm *not* worth waiting for. I have no virginity to give up because mine was taken away" (224). Alex's internalisation of rape-culture ideology is demonstrated in her perception that she has lost all value because she is not a virgin. She expresses this belief by conjuring a cliché which emphasises the commodification of female bodies and reduces them to a hymen. However, Alex manages to overcome these insecurities, leveraging her sexuality for power by acting on her sexual desire: "The kiss could last for ten minutes, ten hours. I lose track of time because with every touch, every taste of his warm lips, his cool breath, I'm reprogramming kissing, making it mine again, the way it should be" (212). Her sexual desire does not become a lesson in self-control but a vehicle of empowerment, as she uses a computer analogy to describe her reclaiming of sexual desire. Rather than condemn her sexual experiences prior to the rape, Whitney shows them as helpful in that Alex uses her knowledge of a romance script to gauge whether what has happened to her was right:

> I run an experiment. I close my eyes and swap out the leading man. Daniel's dark blonde hair becomes Carter's pale, almost white hair. Daniel's shoulders turn into Carter's. Daniel's lips, his cheeks, his hands, they all belong to Carter now. And I'm kissing Carter like I kissed Daniel. I squeeze my eyes shut tighter, forcing Carter to fit, forcing this kiss to become Carter's. But the puzzle pieces won't fit. I don't

> remember kissing Carter like this. I don't remember pulling him close to me, wanting
>
> it, wanting him. (17)

Rather than be alienated from her body like Sid and Emma are, Alex listens to her intuition, desire, and sexual experience to reinterpret the violation of her body. Her judgement is not undermined but is instead crucial to the categorisation of the encounter as date rape and to her own recovery and reintegration of her body with her self. This representation of adolescent female sexuality acknowledges the influence of rape-culture ideology on the victim but rejects it; far from becoming a Reviving Ophelia character because of her sexual curiosity, Alex manages to empower herself through her desires.

The novel further breaks from generic conventions which punish sexual desire and compromise future sexual agency by representing a rape victim who experiences a passionate sexual encounter after her rape. Alex is thoroughly embodied as she exercises sexual desire and engages in a consensual encounter with Martin:

> So I do something I'm not supposed to do. I reach for his hand and pull him into an
>
> empty classroom. I put my palms on his face, then push my fingers back through his
>
> hair, soft and feathery on my hands. I press my lips against his mouth, sweet and
>
> salty, warm and hungry for me. I take a few steps backward, holding on to him the
>
> whole time, until my back meets the blackboard, far out of view of the other students,
>
> of any teachers. I lean against the blackboard and kiss him harder, draw his body
>
> closer to mine, his jeans against mine, his belt loops against mine. He's mine and I
>
> want him and I'm not letting him go. I pull him tighter and he responds, pushing up
>
> against me, his body pressed against mine, so there's no space between us and I can't
>
> stop kissing him and he can't stop kissing me and we're pressed together skin-tight
>
> and snug and I can't stand it – really, I *can't* stand it – how much I want him in every

way right now. Because I'm not *that girl* anymore. I'm just *any girl* now kissing her

guy how she wants, where she wants, when she wants. I am ready. (263)

Alex knows that she is violating the rules, but does so anyway, and breaks the generic model

identified by Trites by experiencing pleasure instead of punishment. The novel details the

corporeality of the encounter by focusing on physical responses rather than emotional

reactions, as their bodies connect and interact in a moment which is given immediacy through

the use of present tense. The repeated use of the pronoun "I" indicates a focus on her desire,

as she takes charge of her sexuality. The scene begins with short sentences and ends with a

lack of full-stops, heightening the tension and creating a pace which emphasises that Alex is

overcome by excitement, rather than preoccupied with her trauma. The rape is a scant

presence in this scene, except where Alex recognises and celebrates the significance of the

sexual act to her recovery. In a notable breaking of generic conventions, the pair are not

punished for the encounter, despite Alex's full awareness that they are breaking the rules.

Rather than conform to the pedagogical imperative which condemns female sexuality as a

dangerous potential gateway to rape, the novel asserts that Alex's healing is more important

than literary, and perhaps social, conventions.

While Jenny Downham's *You Against Me* (2012) is not so bold as to include a

consensual sex scene with its rape victim, it also avoids condemning or punishing female

sexual desire or constructing the female body as rape space by offering comparative

experiences, similar to Alex's experiment, and by demonstrating a positive sexual encounter.

Ellie and Mikey's sexual encounter is depicted as providing a contrast to Tom's rape of

Karyn. Ellie narrates her foreplay with Mikey: "He reached across and touched her mouth

with his finger as if he could brush the cold away. And it was astonishing the things her body

did in response – her heart racing, the crazy adrenaline rush. She wanted to kiss his finger. Or

lick it. She wanted him to put it in her mouth" (Downham 117). Ellie has sexual impulses, but

she is not punished. She and Mikey are equally agentic in the sexual encounter and there is no suggestion that she must control his impulses. In contrast, the scene preceding Karyn's rape is narrated as predation: "Freddie and James … were carrying Karyn across the landing between them. She was laughing, her hands clutching on the banister, the wall, the light switch. But her laughter turned into a low moan as they swung her round and edged her into Tom's bedroom" (361). Karyn is drunk and barely conscious during the lead-up to the rape, and her lack of consent is indicated in the laughter which turns into a moan, marking the sexual encounter as rape. The novel avoids condemning all female sexuality by contrasting consensual and non-consensual sex in these two scenes.

Food as metaphor for sexual desire

Just as sexual desire is punished by rape in much young adult rape fiction, so too is the desire for food, which often functions as its metaphor. Beth Younger identifies this trend in her analysis of young adult fiction, in which she finds that "Promiscuous sexual activity is often linked to a character's weight and signals that character's lack of sexual restraint," concluding that "These associations of weight with sexuality serve a dual purpose in YA literature; they reinforce negative ideas about body image and signal the reader to 'read' a fat character as sexually and socially suspect" (4-5). Just as Trites establishes that rape is frequently a punishment for sexual desire, Younger's analysis also reveals that in young adult fiction, rape is frequently deployed as punishment for girls who struggle to control their appetites for food (16-17). This stigmatising of eating does not only apply to the amount of food consumed, but also the type of food. In her analysis of *Ella Enchanted* (1997), Elizabeth Reimer finds that the type of food represented (junk food versus nutritious food) functions to identify characters as good or bad: "The sides are represented on the one hand by a culture of hyper-consumption, commodification, domination, and unsustainability … and on the other,

by a culture centered on food production, sustainable consumption, mutuality, generosity, and pleasure" (35). The focus given to girls' relationships to food is evident in that not only the amount, but the types of food consumed, are wrought with so much moralistic meaning; this is a dynamic which is symptomatic of postfeminism's emphasis on the female body, and encouragement of girls and women to internalise mechanisms of psychological control in order to discipline that body.

Encouraging girls and women to internalise messages about controlling their consumption of food in order to avoid negative consequences is traceable to broader popular social discourses which attempt to police female bodies. This body-policing is directly linked to sexuality, which is frequently aligned with food, as Susan Bordo observes in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993): "The most extreme cultural expressions of the fear of woman as 'too much' – which almost always revolve around her sexuality – are strikingly full of eating and hungering metaphors" (161). Sexist images which express fear of female empowerment or dominant women are infused with images of her unfettered desire and access to food, which indicates its effectiveness and utility as a vehicle for oppression and control. In their discussion of what they term the "neo-liberal ideology of healthism," Helen Malson et al. link this association to the ideology of neoliberal self-determination, observing that "Within this discourse the thin/slender body is read as a sign of health and 'excess' body weight is constructed as unhealthy and a consequence of irresponsible lifestyle choices" (331). Healthism, or the preoccupation with controlling food consumption, can thus be understood as another manifestation of the panopticon, through which neoliberal ideology exerts control over the individual female by threatening dangerous consequences to any failure of vigilance over the body, or the failure to make the right choices. When young adult rape novels adopt this ideology by associating their victims' food

consumption with rape, they similarly suggest that the rape is the result of their female protagonists having made the 'wrong' choices, and that they are therefore at fault.

This implications of this ideology are demonstrated in *Fault Line*, in which Ani's character exemplifies the trope of victims whose sexuality is aligned with their consumption of food and who are subsequently punished. On his first date with Ani, Ben narrates,

> I ordered us hot dogs, a hot pretzel, and two Cokes. … Ani ate most of the food. When we finished, she dabbed the mustard off her lips and leaned across the table. Her kiss startled me and I almost pulled back, but she grabbed the back of my head and tugged me closer. She tasted delicious and kind of gross at the same time. … "I just realized you don't like mustard on your hot dogs so that probably wasn't very appetizing for you. Sorry." (Desir 38)

Ani's sexual desire is aligned with her appetite for food as she transgresses gendered limitations both by eating more of the junk food than her male companion, and also by taking the initiative to kiss Ben. By ordering mustard, she has made a choice that makes her kiss unappealing – in effect, the wrong choice – and as a result she is unable to act upon her sexual desire as she is compelled to. Her assertion of power is indicated in her grabbing his head, despite his pulling away. Ben resents the move, and Ani recognises and immediately regrets her transgression, and apologises for her boldness.

Another common element in how young adult rape novels punish victims who eat too much junk food is in their subsequent development of anorexia. Bordo explains that anorexia is encouraged by cultural ideologies which are founded on a mind/body split: "The attempt to subdue the spontaneities of the body in the interests of control only succeeds in constituting them as more alien and more powerful, and thus more needful of control. The only way to win this no-win game is to go beyond control, to kill off the body's spontaneities entirely –

that is, to cease to *experience* our hungers and desires" (146). By alienating the mind from the body, hunger becomes an external invader: "These women experience hunger as an alien invader, marching to the tune of its own seemingly arbitrary whims, disconnected from any normal self-regulating mechanisms. Indeed, it could not possibly be so connected, for it is experienced as coming from an area *outside* the self" (146). Controlling hunger can be a means of negotiating trauma, as it offers culturally sanctioned self-regulation and power over the body, as well as power to meet the culturally determined physical ideal of slenderness. Controlling one's urges to eat also offers the victim the ability to alienate body and mind.

Sid's character in *What Happens Next* is a prime example of how food functions as a metaphor for sexual desire and is similarly punished. Sid is a chubby girl who loves to eat, is then raped, and consequently develops bulimia. Before the rape, she has a lunch-date with her rapist – an incident in the narrative that is depicted sparsely, but includes the details of her food consumption: "He buys me a coke and a burger and we split a tray of chili-cheese fries" (Clayton 19). These food-items fall into the junk category which Reimer has demonstrated is associated with bad morality. After the rape, Sid develops bulimia, as she attempts to punish the body that she is unable to control, acting out against herself rather than her absent male oppressor: "There was no confrontation or rage coming out of me that night; the only thing I did that night was lay there while it happened, my mind and soul drifting in the void, my body laid out like a gift" (160). Sid is ashamed of the passivity of her drugged body and blames herself for not fighting back. She perceives the moment of the rape as an alienation of her mind from her body; as a consequence, she spends the majority of the text punishing her body through bulimia, and trying to shed the female markers of her breasts and hips which made her a target.

Sid's resentment of her body and attempts to shed its feminine markers are also reflective of a hostility towards the female body which reinforces the conceptualisation of

rape as a physical latency within the female body. According to Bordo, girls suffering from anorexia often describe the hunger inside them as a "ghost" or "dictator," and always as male (155). In the context of rape fiction, this invader can be understood as a surrogate invader figure for the rapist, who is absent in both *Fault Line* and *What Happens Next*. These are both narratives in which the victim exhibits anorexia or bulimia as a result of their rape. The absence of Sid's rapist from the action subsequent to her rape causes her to direct her anger towards herself rather than him: "The anger is shrieking to be let out, and what I want – no – what I *need* is to go somewhere right now where I can be alone and just bawl and scream and wreck myself from the inside out" (Clayton 300). Sid's rage at her rapist is necessarily self-destructive because of his absence from the text; she sees her own body as a rape space, betraying her by allowing itself to be violated. Her externally imposed sexualisation as well as the messages that her sexual vulnerability is inherent in her body cause her to rebel against her corporeality. She reacts against the natural biological factors which she sees as drawing unwelcome attention, rather than against those individuals who give her that attention. Powerless to act out against her actual attacker, her only option is to attack her body itself, by attacking its hunger, which acts as rapist-surrogate.

Anorexia can be understood as a logical reaction to discourse which locates rape in the female body: if this discourse is accepted and internalised, then the only form of recourse is the destruction of the physical proof of femininity which operates as a symbol of oppression and makes the female a target. As Bordo writes, "Some authors interpret these symptoms as a species of unconscious feminist protest, involving anger at the limitations of the traditional female role, rejection of the values associated with it, and fierce rebellion against allowing their futures to develop in the same direction as their mothers' lives" (156). In the social context established by the neoliberal appropriation of female bodies as public domain, self-destructive behaviours can also be understood as both a means of reclaiming

subjective agency and as a rebellion against one's status as public property. In her analysis of *Girl, Interrupted* (1993), Elizabeth Marshall applies this analysis in her argument that behaviours which might be interpreted as indications of a psychological disorder can actually be rational responses to cultural oppression:

> It may be that through suicide attempts, and other forms of self-mutilation, such as wrist banging or cutting, girls make visible surreptitious girlhood lessons that teach young women that their experiences are inconsequential, that their reactions to oppression are pathological and that their bodies incite gender-based violence.
> ("Borderline Girlhoods" 130)

Marshall suggests that forms of self-inflicted violence typically associated with girls and young women may be understood as a logical psychological reaction to sexist ideology which pathologises a sense of oppression and locates its source within the body. This idea lends itself well to analysis of constructions of rape space within rape prevention discourse, which is the basis for some of these girlhood lessons. Hall points out the consequences of locating rape within female bodies: "Addressing rape pedagogy to women does not stop rape; it creates a culture of fear in which women are encouraged to resign themselves to the inevitability of sexual violence" (11). The impossibility of ending rape through one's own body can lead to a hateful and destructive relationship with that body, manifest in these texts through bulimia and anorexia, as the female body (and not cultural forces or an individual rapist) is understood to be responsible for endangering the girl or victim.

Sid's subversive potential in demonstrating that bulimia can be a means of proto-feminist protest (albeit a self-defeating one), is compromised when she decides to recover for her boyfriend's sake, rather than her own. In other words, he takes ownership of her body, as he is shown to be more capable of managing it. Corey tells her that he has always thought that she was beautiful, that it scares him how much weight she has lost, and asks her to stop

binging and purging: "Will you do it for me, at least?" (Clayton 290). Sid follows with the narration, "I thought I was being strong. Now I look at my arms and legs and I don't know this body anymore. Corey's right" (290). She does not recover by confronting the pressures which cause her condition but rather by having a boyfriend express a sexual preference, which provokes such a swift recovery that it is narrated within the span of a few pages of text: "He's been a real champ about our PG-13, fully-clothed make-out sessions, but it's time for an upgrade. Plus, I've gained seven pounds back, and at least five of them are in my boobs. He'll be thrilled" (293). Again, she polices his sexual agency, which is prioritised, as hers is absent. Her recovery from bulimia is too easy, and she expresses none of the struggle which one would expect from a bulimic at her weight gain, but rather celebrates her success at transforming her body into a form which her boyfriend will be pleased with; the female body's worth is once again assessed against its ability to attract male attention. Her relationship with food has mirrored her expression of sexual desire, and her eagerness and pleasure at consumption leads to her devastation, as her attempt to claim a subjectivity that is aligned with the Girl Power type instead lapses into the Reviving Ophelia type.

The generic ubiquity of this representation is evident in Ani's similarly miraculous recovery at Ben's same request in *Fault Line*. After the rape, Ani's appetite disappears, and Ben intervenes:

> "You've lost too much weight," I whispered, touching her rib cage.
>
> "Food doesn't taste good anymore."
>
> "You need to eat for me. I don't want you to waste away." I kissed her neck.
>
> She turned and touched my chin. "Okay, I'll eat. For you." (143)

Ani quickly and easily submits to her boyfriend's authority over her body, and her own subjectivity is compromised. And similarly again, her submission to his authority is aligned

with sexual desire, as he exercises sexual agency by kissing her neck as he asks that she eat. This suggests that both Sid and Ani must be given their boyfriends' endorsement before they are allowed to eat again, which has disturbingly victim-blaming implications for their sexuality, given that food functions as a metaphor for sexuality.

Before they are raped, both Sid and Ani are Girl Power figures who demonstrate their empowerment by voraciously consuming food while expressing sexual desire, and afterwards develop eating disorders as they are transformed into Reviving Ophelia types. This resonates with the generically typical transition of female characters in young adult rape fiction from Girl Power types to Reviving Ophelia types. Marnina Gonick explains that Girl Power type is the model of neoliberal girlhood that is capable of meeting the exacting demands of neoliberal self-regulation, while the Reviving Ophelia type is the girl who fails to meet those demands (2). The typical anoretic described by Bordo can be understood as failing to live up to society's expectation of a Girl Power type, and ultimately becoming a Reviving Ophelia type. Again, the feminist value of collectivity and community is compromised, and responses to systemic problems are dismissed as individual pathological disorders. In her analysis of anorexia, Bordo observes that "Anxiety over women's uncontrollable hungers appears to peak, as well, during periods when women are becoming independent and are asserting themselves politically and socially" (161). While Bordo discusses a macro-level dynamic of socially regressive swings to curb women's rights in reaction to gains, this same dynamic is enacted at a micro-level with Sid and Ani: female empowerment is punished via appetite, and women's agency over their bodies is either limited or ceded altogether. These novels use food to inculcate ideologies which foster harmful relationships between girls and their bodies.

In contrast, there are a handful of novels which recognise the harmful and sexist ways in which food typically functions ideologically in young adult rape fiction, and explicitly write against these ideologies. A good example of this is *You Against Me*, in which the

gendered power of food is critiqued. The gendered dynamics of food service and consumption are evident in a scene which depicts the rapist's family at dinnertime:

> Mum carried a dish of lamb chops across to the table and Tom stabbed two of them up with a fork. Mum went back to the oven and turned peas and carrots into bowls. Tom passed the chops to Dad. Mum put the vegetables on the table and Tom helped himself. Mum went back to the oven and pulled out a tray of roast potatoes, using a tea towel as a glove.
>
> "Any mint sauce?" Dad said.
>
> "Yes, yes, it's coming."
>
> "Gravy?"
>
> "That too."
>
> Dad tapped his fingers on the table to get Ellie's attention. "Are you going to help your mother, or are you just going to sit there?" (Downham 256)

The table politics establishes the female as subservient to the male in this scene, which is rendered almost slapstick because of the selfishness of the men. The men eat and heckle the women for more food and faster service, and the women cannot eat before the men are fed. The latent criticism of this social structure emerges in the primal, animalistic feel of the scene. That the scene is functioning as a critique is emphasised in the description of Tom's eating as he and his father discuss Karyn's crush on Tom prior to the rape: "His lips shone with grease, his fingers too. He ripped meat from the bone with his teeth as though he hadn't eaten for days" (256). The conversation, overlaid with the description of Tom's eating, overlays Karyn's raped body with Tom's animalistic brutality. The scene creates a direct link between the sexist politics of the dinner table and a propensity to commit rape, as they both reflect the same impulse to subordinate women.

The reversal of gendered food politics is also used in the novel to indicate feminist rebellion. While Ellie initially expresses anxiety about her diet, food later becomes a vehicle for female rebellion: "Ellie knew what she wanted – one of Tom's double chocolate muffins, kept in the bread bin and not to be eaten by anyone but him. She ignored her mum's frown as she helped herself and sat down to unwrap it" (174). Her theft of the muffin indicates a minor rebellion against the rules imposed by the family and their complicity in misogynistic food politics, as the junk food is reserved for the son and not the daughter. Food also becomes the vehicle for Ellie's mother's rebellion against her husband, as she tells him,

> "She's shivering out here in the cold. Why don't you go and put the kettle on or something?" Her dad looked confused, as if Mum had suggested something so unusual and particular that it made no sense. … "You could make some sandwiches as well. I expect Ellie's hungry, aren't you?" It was wonderful having her mother suddenly fierce, as if new ways of being were possible. (299)

Ellie's mother reverses the gendered food-service dynamic by asking her husband to prepare food for their daughter. He is confused by his repositioning in a caretaker role, but complies. His capitulation demonstrates the triumph of Ellie's mother's rebellion, and suggests future gendered shifts to come. The novel foregrounds its rejection of ideologies of repression through food by depicting Ellie's consumption of a chocolate muffin as both empowering to Ellie, and inspirational to her mother.

A similar problematisation of sexist relationships related to food is evident in *The Mockingbirds*. Alex is aware of the character type of the anorexic traumatised girl, embodied by Sid in *What Happens Next* and narrowly avoided by Ellie in *You Against Me,* and refuses to conform to that type. She loves food and hers is a practical struggle: "I haven't gone to the cafeteria since the run-in there last week with Carter and Kevin. I've been subsisting on pretzels and Clif bars and whatever T.S. and Maia bring back for me" (Whitney 121). Rather

than express concern about the type or amount of food that she is eating, she is afraid of confrontation in the public dining space. This concern is allayed by her alliance with other students who bring her food, indicating the power of community support. Alex wonders, "Is he afraid because this vote could give me the power to do something about it, the power to be someone other than that girl who's not eating dinner, not eating lunch?" (130). She recognises food and the denial of food as a potential vehicle of patriarchal control. Alex's appreciation of allies and friends, who facilitate her ability to eat without making herself vulnerable, indicates an awareness of the fact that for girls, food is often a vehicle of patriarchal subordination. The novel thus uses food to foreground the power of community for overcoming sexist mechanisms of control.

The novel also subverts the junk/nutritious paradigm of neoliberal healthism. When Alex sees her bully while she is walking across campus from the site of her rape to her room, she worries, "She'll see me, throw her head back, and grin cruelly because she'll have a tasty piece of gossip. She'll tell her friends and they'll all blab about me in the caf when they go eat their whole-wheat pasta and bananas and broccoli" (11). Alex sarcastically mocks the paradigm which aligns nutritious food with moral rightness and junk food with moral laxity by aligning the bully's pretence of moral righteousness with her consumption of healthy foods. In contrast, Alex's own diet includes both nutritious and junk foods: "When it's time for lunch, I head for my dorm, remembering there's a fresh bag of pretzels on my desk. Casey dropped it off the other night, along with apples, Diet Coke, M&M's, popcorn, and homemade blondie brownies" (180). The diversity of her food choices and her lack of any interiorised self-critique or guilt subtly rejects the stigma against girls' eating, in both its quality and its quantity. The subtlety of this representation of self-acceptance is a rejection of the generically typical use of food as a vehicle for policing girls' bodies.

The limited liberatory potential of clothing

Another key site at which young adult rape novels engage with constructions of female bodies as rape spaces is in their treatment of clothing. Since Roland Barthes' examination of the semiotics of clothing in *The Fashion System* (1967), clothing has been understood as a system of language. This is key to postfeminist discourse, which tends to recognise that the historical means of patriarchal oppression is through bodily control, and pretends to reject this by claiming that bodily codification through clothing is key to reclaiming the body from sexual objectification. In "Girls, Power and Style: Social and Emotional Experiences of the Clothed Body," Emilie Zaslow observes that "Rooted in neoliberal language of choice, girl power offers girls and women a sense that they can choose when to be girly and when to be powerful, when to be sporty and when to be sweet, when to be sexy for male pleasure and when to be sexy for their own pleasure" (115). Clothing choices are understood within postfeminism as an act of rebellion, as they provide the means to co-opt and reclaim the body as the vehicle of empowerment. This discourse suggests that by using clothing to claim and celebrate female corporeality, girls and women can reclaim the historical tool of oppression, diffusing its oppressive potential, and disempowering the oppressor.

However, these supposedly liberating performative acts of empowerment are of questionable efficacy given the social conditions in which they occur, particularly the undue surveillance and policing to which girls' bodies are subject. Gill points out that within postfeminism, "The body is presented simultaneously as women's source of power and as always unruly, requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodelling (and consumer spending) in order to conform to ever-narrower judgements of female attractiveness" ("Postfeminist Media" 149). The supposed 'reappropriation' of the female body offered by postfeminist discourse obfuscates its own focus upon dictating the types of

bodies and clothing, and processes for bodily alteration, which are demanded in exchange for belonging within the society in which girls and women live. This focus upon the liberating potential of clothing is inherently consumerist, and trades a false promise of empowerment for a constant project of self-surveillance, alteration, and presentation through the need to meet a physical ideal through self-styling.

Furthermore, the focus on choice fails to account for postmodern complications of agency and an understanding of identity as intersubjective. Zaslow writes, "Although acts of style are demonstrations of agency, they are not always powerful ones and are never outside of organizing structures of discourse" (113). Not only does admission and participation within a society require some adherence to its prescribed fashions, the choices of girls and women are not made independently, but from a dialogic relationship within that culture. As Gill explains,

> Girls and women do make choices ... but they do not do so in conditions of their own making (to paraphrase Marx and Engels). The 'choice' to wear a G-string (or any other item of clothing deemed by them to be 'porno-chic') is made in a context in which a particular kind of sexualized (but not too sexualized) self-preservation has become a normative requirement for many young women in the West. ("Critical Respect" 72)

The postfeminist construction of clothing as potentially liberating for feminine subjects presumes that agency is a legitimate concept, and neglects to incorporate postmodern understandings of agency as either irrelevant or impossible, given the socially constructed nature of the individual. As Gill suggests, this is all the more pertinent in considerations of girlhood, which is a prime target of neoliberal media discourses of self-modification, commodification, and sexualisation.

This ostensibly politically subversive act of reclaiming the body through clothing actually encourages submission to capitalist regimes which are inherently misogynistic. Gill argues that despite the increasing surveillance of the female body, "It is almost as if such writing believes that postfeminism has 'come true', that white women are no longer subject to any kind of domination or disciplinary power" ("Critical Respect" 74). The pretence of liberation through fashion is politically quietest, as it falsely reframes the policing of female bodies as an agentic and liberating act, rather than a preoccupation with adjusting, controlling, and decorating female bodies. This reframing not only obfuscates the role of internalised disciplinary power in determining individual choices, but is also destructive to female alliances as it places the individual in competition with other girls and women. As Gonick suggests, "Girl Power's popularity is credited to its very lack of threat to the status quo for the ways in which it reflects the ideologies of white, middle-class individualism and personal responsibility over collective responses to social problems" (10). This political quietism is reinforced in Zaslow's finding that "While girls are active in selecting clothes, combining accoutrements, and performing narrative of self through style, the experience of pleasure and power does not always result from the act; often it is pain and fear that dominate (127). Despite the rhetoric of liberation and celebration which postfeminism associates with the act of choosing clothing, these choices are laden with the heavy baggage of an undue cultural preoccupation with the female body, and the individual's responsibility to manage and curate that body according to accepted social mores.

Clothing therefore provides another example of the ambivalence and contradictions which inform postfeminist discourse, including that in young adult fiction. The liberatory potential of clothing which is touted by postfeminism contradicts its own focus upon the body, and dictation of the terms by which it must be controlled, adapted, and modified. As Trites asserts, girls are overwhelmingly offered mixed messages about clothing and teen

sexuality: "Realistically speaking, we live in a society that objectifies teen sexuality, at once glorifying and idealizing it while also stigmatizing and repressing it" *(Disturbing the Universe* 95)*. This discourse is typical of the ambivalence of postfeminism. Within young adult rape fiction, this already confused ideology is compounded with the increased stress upon surveillance and policing which emerges from the pedagogical imperative to protect young women's bodies from rape. The tension between policing female bodies to prevent rape and the rhetoric of the empowering potential of feminine clothing intensifies ideological ambivalences.

Ambivalence towards the relationship of women to clothing, typical of postfeminist rhetoric, is best exemplified in *What Happens Next*. Sid demonstrates a confused response to the types of mixed messages about sexuality and clothing which Trites describes. Her sexuality has been punished, yet she is still expected to make her body desirable through clothing: "Spring clothes are on sale, but everything seems so skimpy. I hold a few tops up to myself and eventually put every one back" (Clayton 171). Sid is a girl who must exist in the society in which she is born, and here that is manifested in the limitation of her clothing vocabulary to the clothes available to her. She reflects upon this as she critiques the sexualisation of the teenage female body and the limited range of options presented to girls; she recognises that she is encouraged to dress in ways that are associated with sexual availability, while at the same time punished for that very availability. However, this potentially subversive moment is compromised when Sid's anxiety about sexualised clothing is characterised as a symptom of her body dysmorphic disorder: "The logical, sane side of my brain knows that the shirt is fine and appropriate. Totally pretty and girly. And that is precisely why the psychotic side of my brain hates it and will never wear it again" (197). In language echoing the traditional sexist characterisation of the masculine as reasonable and the feminine as emotional, Sid dismisses her own resentment of the sexualisation of the teenage

female body and the imperative that she use clothing to make herself sexually desirable as "psychotic." Her critique of the limited selection of sexualised clothing for young women is undermined, as items are labelled "appropriate" if they conform to the narrow definition of feminine clothing as that which is "pretty" and "girly." Sid's potentially feminist critique is dismissed as an element of her psychological disorder and the text adheres to the postfeminist rejection of the legitimacy of feminist criticism by failing to properly comment upon the shame and hatred which Sid has learnt to associate with her body and assigning this to a psychological disorder, rather than society's objectification of the teenage female body.

Ani in *Fault Line* is presented with similarly mixed messages on the appropriate levels of sexualisation for the teenage female body. Ben describes Ani's outfit for their first date: "Annika's hair fell in two braids that rested right above the black bra showing through her white shirt. Black bra. Yeah," as well as her mother's reaction: "Subtle, Ani. You've got two minutes to put a sweatshirt on or change into a different shirt. Jesus. Don't make me play the overprotective mother" (Desir 18). Again, the novel implicitly blames the victim by articulating Ani's transgressive sexual desire before her rape, as she expresses her sexuality and desire through her clothing and therefore must be corrected by an adult guardian. The novel further explains that it is Ani's mother's shirt, reflecting Kokkola's argument that teens who transgress the imposed limitations of adolescence by claiming adult knowledge are punished. Ultimately, Ani's mother is validated in her concern for her daughter's overt sexuality when she is raped. The novel also exemplifies a popular trope by detailing a period of depression after the rape in which Ani wears oversized clothing. This trope suggests that the female form attracts rape and the appropriate means of rape prevention is to conceal that form. However, more problematic is the way in which the narrative signals Ani's psychological trauma when she reverts back to wearing sexy clothing: "Kevin came over and smiled approvingly at Ani's appearance. I raised an eyebrow at him but he lifted a shoulder. I

couldn't really blame him, she'd been wearing the big sweatshirt for too long" (151). Ani's boyfriend celebrates her ability to wear sexy clothes again, as a sign of healing, and he approves of his friend's admiring Ani's body. Her body is treated as not only a public space, subject to public approbation, but a space whose purpose is to affirm male desires and expectations. Later, when Ben realises that her new wardrobe is reflective of her intention to act out sexually, he is less approving of her choices. Ani is alternately criticised and pathologised for her choices to wear oversized clothing or to wear sexy clothing.

Outfits and their meanings are a focus in *Leftovers*, which exemplifies a postfeminist preoccupation with consumerism as empowerment and a means of identity construction. In spite of this textual link between consumerism and agency, the novel repeatedly classifies the female body as a target of incessant attacks. Ardith's home is always filled with her father and brother's predatory friends, who constantly sexually harass the girls who visit the home. Ardith concocts a costume in order to protect herself:

> You avoid being caught under the mistletoe by sculpting a lumpy, red cold sore at the edge of your mouth with clotted concealer and lipstick, then slathering it with chalky white Blistex. You wear an Albert Einstein T-shirt, lime green sweats, and pink quilted bedroom booties. The pictures will be gruesome but if this doesn't exclude you from the slap-and-tickle line, then nothing will. (Wiess 67)

This outfit, constructed as a kind of shield, is contrasted to Blair's Christmas outfit when she visits Ardith's house: "She's wearing a funky pair of black, stretch-velvet, low-rise flares and a sheer, red, baby-doll top that ends right above her belly button. Black satin platforms shoot her up to around five feet eleven and a thick, gold cuff bracelet encircles her wrist" (68). While Ardith designs her outfit to repel and warns her friend to do the same, Blair's sexual precocity is evident in her outfit, which is designed to attract male attention. This outfit also makes Blair an almost immediate victim of sexual molestation: "Before you can move,

Broken Nose slips his hand up under Blair's shirt and squeezes her breast. Shocked, she pushes it away. Slaps his other hand from her butt. A terrible mix of little-girl confusion and big-girl outrage twists her face" (69). Blair's attempt to exercise her sexuality is first punished with physical harassment, and shortly afterwards with her rape, when Ardith's brother drives her home from the party and rapes her. Again, Kokkola's argument that adolescent transgressions of imposed age limitations are punished is affirmed, as Blair is overwhelmed at the clash between her "little-girl" and "big-girl" selves: the tension between knowing and not knowing, which Kokkola argues is constructed as defining the border between childhood and adulthood.

By way of contrast, *You Against Me* develops a far more effective treatment of clothing, which is exposed as a tool for controlling the female body. Ellie's family initially collaborates to decide her outfits before important public events, essentially using her body as a billboard to advertise chastity, as a means of defending her rapist brother. During a court hearing, readers are told,

> Ellie had followed all the rules of invisibility. She wasn't wearing make-up, not even mascara. She'd taken out her earrings, removed her necklace and tied her hair up neatly with an elastic. Her grey skirt was regulation length and her white shirt was buttoned to the top. She had no perfume on. (Downham 69)

Ellie's body is exploited by her family; her lack of embellishment through clothing or cosmetics is supposed to be reflective of her morality, and, by implication, the family's morality. As the novel progresses, Ellie becomes increasingly resentful of her family's control over her:

> They'd made her wear the skirt and blouse she'd got for Granddad's funeral. The skirt was black nylon and stuck to her tights with static electricity. The blouse was dark

grey. She'd studied herself in the hall mirror before getting into the car. "I look like a nun." "You look perfect," her mother had said. (216)

Ellie is physically and emotionally uncomfortable with the funerary clothes which her family collectively chooses for her and she recognises the outfit as a costume which is incompatible with her identity. The novel exposes the use of clothing as a vehicle for patriarchal control of the female body and the way in which this control is used to regulate female sexuality in order to safeguard the moral status of the family.

Like *You Against Me*, *The Mockingbirds* also acknowledges that clothing affects moral judgements by enhancing or concealing female sexuality, but rather than pander to such oppressive dynamics, it summarily rejects them as nonsensical. For Alex, clothes can function to hide and protect her body: "I wrap my scarf around my neck and pull on my gloves, wishing I could go all Audrey Hepburn and place the scarf over my head, then don a pair of massive brown sunglasses. No one would recognize me. No one could stare at me" (Whitney 65). She swaddles herself in reaction to the rape in order to protect her body from public judgement. However, when her student representative suggests an outfit for the hearing, Alex responds, "I just think this outfit is stupid. I would never wear this. It's like you're trying to dress me up as some sort of virginal girl who would never even spread her legs for a guy. That's how this outfit feels. As if it's part of the show" (265). Alex recognises the function of clothing as a vocabulary with implicit meanings that can either contribute to her blame, or to her exoneration, and refuses to comply with these social dictates. The novel thus problematises the moralistic characterisation of girls' clothing, and rejects it as a vehicle for patriarchal control and victim-blaming.

Conclusion

Within the young adult rape novels that are produced in and about contemporary Western culture, rape is inextricable from constructions of girlhood, as rape is presented as inextricable from the female body. Novels may either engage critically with this imbrication of rape with female bodies, or reinforce its disempowering effects. Current generic norms reinforce social hierarchies that disempower girls on the dual fronts of youth and gender, particularly where the focus is the victim's trauma. While the ultimate goal of these narrative choices may be to signal risky behaviours that may be modified in order to prevent rape, the consequence is that oppressive victim-blaming and misogynistic ideologies are reinforced and perpetuated, and the policing of female bodies is advocated in order to mediate this risk. Discourses which attempt to control girls by treating their bodies as risky and beyond their control are evident in novels which naturalise sexual victimisation as another characteristic which emerges at puberty, condemnations of sexual desire and self-sexualisation, treatments of diet as a marker of the potential for victimisation, and representations of clothing choices as determining vulnerability.

Rape is made inextricable from the female body through its construction of the body as a rape space, or a space in which rape is an inherent latency rather than an externally imposed violation. The construction of female bodies as rape spaces not only holds girls and women accountable for rape prevention, but encourages internalised self-surveillance and a panopticon-like state. When novels combine discussions of sexual harassment and assault with discussions of the nature of puberty, these are treated as consequential. This narrative choice naturalises the occurrence of rape as another inevitable biological change. It encourages ideas of inherent female vulnerability and undermines the girl or woman's right to control her body, and legitimises neoliberal discourses which treat female bodies as risky spaces, alienating women from their bodies, and validating the need for external control.

Female sexual agency is also undermined by the disturbing and persistent trope of aligning the victim's sexual desire with her rape. There is a distinctly postfeminist aspect to this narrative choice, in that authors tend to characterise victims as Girl Power figures, whose free expression of and acting upon their sexual desire leads to their rape, and then converting them to damaged and debilitated Reviving Ophelia characters. This shift evidences the contradictions in postfeminism, as messages of sexual empowerment are celebrated, only to be undermined with discourses of female corporeal control. While novels tend to assert blamelessness, particularly in their paratexts, the implication of the consequential relationship between sexual desire and rape not only implicitly blames victims, but stigmatises female sexual desire. Trites rightly blames the generically dominant mode of punishing sexual desire on an inability for Western cultures to "define sexuality in terms of jouissance instead of repression," (*Disturbing the Universe* 95). Novels can avoid this, quite simply, by modelling active female participation in sex without negative repercussions for the female character.

Food often functions as a metaphor for sexual desire, and just as victims are often punished for sexual desire, so too are they punished for partaking of too much, or the wrong kind, of food. The dominance of moral associations with female consumption is evident in the frequency with which girls who eat the 'wrong' foods are raped. Again, this logic hearkens back to neoliberal individualism, and the idea that those who make the wrong choices are punished. This idea blames individuals for negative experiences, denying exterior forces which affect peoples' lives, such as a rapist's choice to rape. The alignment of hunger with sexual desire also manifests in novels in which the victim develops anorexia in reaction to her rape. A number of authors recognise and write against the cultural discourses which attempt to police female bodies and desires by encouraging girls to internalise and self-police via desire-shaming discourses. These novels interrogate gendered food politics, and reject treating the victim's consumption of food as consequential to their victimisation.

Novels also often participate in postfeminist discourses which control female bodies in their treatment of clothing. Within the postfeminist sensibility, clothing is treated as having liberatory potential and enabling freedom of self-expression. In her analysis of neoliberal "confidence chic" discourses, Laura Favaro argues that "Confidence chic constructs an active subject wholly responsible for her self-care, enhancing her own well-being, rationally calculating her 'assets,' 'maximising her potential' and 'achieving success' – a hyper-autonomous, deeply individuated woman who can thereby more effectively meet the demands emanating from patriarchal neoliberal capitalism" (297). The individual responsibility placed upon this neoliberal ideal Girl Power type both guarantees her failure, and blames her for failing to thrive. This representation, however, fails to appreciate not only the basic impossibility of individual agency, untethered to social context, but also the overwhelming scope of cultural messages about girls' bodies and clothing. Girls are prime targets for these contradictory messages of both postfeminist consumerism, and the necessity for self-control. Ignorance of these factors is evident in novels in which the choice of victims to 'overdress' is critiqued as irrational, or a volitional failure to recover, and their choice to dress in sexualising clothing is condoned, whether or not they themselves are comfortable. Other novels avoid this representational problem by depicting characters who are conscious of, and actively critique, the focus on, and meanings assigned to, girls' clothing, and the enormity of pressure to conform.

Through their focus upon the fallibility of the female body, novels construct rape as a biological inevitability while simultaneously insisting that the failure to make the right choices causes rape. These novels thus offer girl readers a futile rape prevention strategy which exemplifies the contradictions of postfeminist logic. In *Aesthetic Labour: Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism* (2017), Anna Elias et al. write, "the neoliberal self is defined by its capacity to consume, which further privileges the feminine through the long-standing

association between women and consumption" (24). Girls are encouraged to consume, and yet that consumption is regulated and must only function according to a set series of guidelines: she must exercise her sexual desire the right way (guarded), wear the right clothes (flattering, but not too sexy), and eat the right foods (high fibre, presumably). Within the current conventions of young adult rape fiction, rape is typically depicted as a natural consequence for failing to manage the body by transgressing these culturally defined rules. When novels adhere to these conventions, they participate in the cultural obsession with policing girls' bodies, and buttress the misogynistic neoliberal, postfeminist discourses which transform those bodies into rape spaces by targeting them as risky spaces to be managed and surveilled.

CHAPTER 3
Silence and the Regulation of Feminist Anger
in Young Adult Rape Fiction

I always promised myself that if someone would ask, if someone would only ask the right question, I would

tell the truth. And now it's here. It could be over in one syllable. I open my mouth. I want to say it. Yes.

Yes. I try to make a sound. Yes. Say it! But my mouth is so dry, I can't. I take a breath and I choke. I choke

on the word. I'm actually choking. (Smith 328)

While the previous chapter discusses the role of the body within the neoliberal impulse to control girls and women, this chapter focuses upon psychology. One of the most commonly recurring scripts in young adult rape fiction is the 'silent victim' script. In this script, the victim is unable to disclose her rape and spends the novel agonising over this inability, while contending with punishments inflicted by those who do not understand that her behaviour is a result of trauma rather than 'ordinary' teenage girl angst, as she has not disclosed her rape. When she finally confesses that the rape occurred, the narrative concludes quickly. Texts which use the silent victim script perpetuate rape culture ideology by focusing the whole of the rape story on the victim. By focusing on the victim's period of silent torment and eventual confession, silent victim novels locate the crime in her pathology, rather than on the rapist or rape culture. Such victim-pathologising is characteristically postfeminist, as it is informed by neoliberal ideology which celebrates self-determination, and often defines victimhood as personal failure. The focus on victim pathology also participates in the neoliberal imperative of insisting upon positivity, which suppresses feminist activism by eliding social criticism and isolating the victim. Through analysis of the narrative treatments of voice and silence in young adult rape fiction, this chapter argues that by focusing on the victim's period of silent torment and eventual confession, silent victim novels perpetuate rape culture ideology by positioning rape as an individual pathological defect. In contrast, novels

in which the victim discloses the rape early in the text highlight intersubjectivity and community-building as they demonstrate her engagement with those around her as they react to the rape, which allows an opportunity to model feminist activism and organisation.

Feminist anger versus the neoliberal cult of positivity

Anger was a crucial political tool for the feminist movement, and was leveraged with particular efficacy in anti-rape activism. Recognising shared experiences of victimisation encouraged feminists to bond together and direct their rage at rape-supportive social forces and ideologies which oppressed girls and women. Far from being an identity imbued with debilitating trauma which was inherently isolating, Carine Mardorossian asserts that during the second-wave, "being a victim did not mean being incapacitated and powerless. It meant being a determined and angry (although not a pathologically resentful) agent of change" ("New Feminist Theory" 767). Significant gains made by second wave feminists were contingent upon the strategic utilisation of women's voices to express anger as a community of the oppressed: "Through consciousness-raising and speak-outs, women come to understand that an experience they might previously have perceived as interpersonal in nature is in fact rooted in historical and social relations" (Mardorossian, *Framing* 64). Women's recognition of their common experiences of abuse were a crucial factor in their unification and empowerment in the second wave. Speaking about their disenfranchisement created unity, and led to action and the rejection of dominant social regimes.

Neoliberalism compromises the political utility of anger by stigmatising it through the cultivation of an understanding of positivity as morally superior. Rosalind Gill observes that postfeminism "increasingly 'favours' happiness and 'positive mental attitude', systematically outlawing other emotional states, including anger and insecurity" ("Affective" 609). This emphasis on the superiority of positivity, and the supposed natural inferiority of negative

emotions, is largely achieved by encouraging the female subject to focus on her own inadequacies, as "academics and think tanks, politicians and newspaper columnists, call on women to recognize that they are being held back not by patriarchal capitalism or institutionalized sexism but by their own lack of confidence – a lack that is presented as being entirely an individual and personal matter, unconnected to structural inequalities or cultural forces" (618). Under the rubric of neoliberal individual self-determination, the individual female is scapegoated for a failure to believe herself empowered, and not through any broader systemic gendered oppression. Thus anger at an oppressive system is delegitimised, and anger redirected at oneself only reinforces a personal lack of positivity and confidence which in turn renders the individual female incapable of thriving within an ostensibly accommodating system. As Susan Faludi suggests, "To make a fuss about sexual injustice is more than unfeminine; it is now uncool. Feminist anger, or any form of social outrage, is dismissed breezily–not because it lacks substance but because it lacks 'style'" (95). Within a postfeminist context in which negative emotions are stigmatised and the object of critique is supposedly invalid, anger at oppression is no longer perceived as a legitimate emotion. Feminist anger, rather, is understood within this context as relic of angry 1970s feminists whose ends have been achieved and whose methods are therefore irrelevant. More than "uncool," anger within today's postfeminist context suggests a personal failing, or the pathological inability to recognise social progress. This regulation of feminist anger is not only politically quietist, it also isolates, blames, and pathologises the individual female subject while obscuring the legitimacy of a critique of patriarchal society.

The silent victim script participates in the neoliberal affective regulation of anger. Instead of being deployed alongside social critique, anger is instead directed towards the victim, both by those who do not know she has been raped, and by herself through her persistent self-loathing. Rather than speak out against her attacker, which could allow her to

foster supportive community-building, the victim who has failed to self-determine her way out of being raped is isolated, pathologised, and blamed. This script appears with inordinate frequency within the subgenre of young adult rape fiction. The ubiquity of this script is perhaps because the silent victim script is deployed in the most popular recent young adult rape novel, Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, which seems to have established it as a narrative model. However, not only do novels which reject this generically typical model provide much needed diversity to a highly homogenised subgenre, but by having the victim disclose the rape early in the text, these novels are able to promote feminist ideology by demonstrating intersubjectivity and community-building. When authors choose to have their victims disclose early in the text, they avoid isolating and pathologising the victim, and are better able to foreground the importance and process of creating community, which allows for an opportunity to model feminist organisation.

Language and power: solipsism and intersubjectivity

The silent victim script's use of silence to communicate trauma is reflective of a larger paradigm of representing trauma in fiction. In *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), Michelle Balaev explains that literary trauma theorists have traditionally embraced the notion of trauma as unrepresentable, a consequence of which is that "The unspeakable void became the dominant concept in criticism for imagining trauma's function in literature" (1). The unspeakability schema which dominates trauma literature is perhaps so popular because it evokes damage so extreme that it cannot be articulated: "the classic notion of trauma as a silent haunting or an absolute indecipherable is theoretically useful for certain ends, for example it underscores the damage done" (6). The silent victim script conforms to trauma fiction's generic norm, and represents trauma as so horrific that it cannot be represented. However, the use of silence in a rape fiction also has disturbing, if

perhaps unintended, consequences, as it pathologises the victim by fixating on her traumatised interiority to the neglect of interrogating the rapist's motivations and rape-supportive society. Unspeakability also has practical implications: if the character cannot communicate, they can neither report the crime, nor create community. Pathologising rape victims is therefore inherently isolating and precludes the intersubjectivity necessary to form a supportive community, and by extension the social engagement which would enable a social critique and examination of the logic of rape culture.

The use of the silent victim script in rape stories for young adults is particularly troubling, because representing successful adolescent development is the one of the functions of young adult fiction, and typically this development involves a demonstrated transition from solipsism to intersubjectivity. Young adult fiction about rape is an exception to this dominant representational paradigm, as the victim is frequently denied full access to the most vital communicative function of language for the majority of the text. Lydia Kokkola explains that "The abject … marks the boundary between adulthood and adolescence in that individuals who are rendered abject are expelled from both categories and thus from the semiotic order" (188). The loss of language effectively renders victims abject, and silent victim texts suggest that victims are incapable of reclaiming agency once it has been lost. Instead, victim characters are made abject as they are denied a normative transition to adulthood; they no longer belong to the category of adolescents, and yet their entrapment in solipsism precludes the development of intersubjectivity, and entry into adulthood, as it is conventionally defined in young adult fiction. In *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction* (2013), Robyn McCallum writes,

> If solipsism is the inability to perceive the otherness of the world and of others, then
> alienation is an extreme form of solipsism. In general terms, alienation in its various
> aspects – powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, self-

estrangement and cultural estrangement – denotes the radical, perceived or actual,

separation of the self from the social world, in inverse of subjectivity. (99)

In the silent victim script, the victim begins to engage with others after her disclosure, but does not achieve the intersubjectivity that is generically typical of young adult fiction, and she remains alienated from those around her. Her victimisation thus disempowers her as she is estranged from the social order and her subjectivity is denied.

An example of a silent victim text in which the victim's trauma confines her to solipsism is Courtney Stevens' *Faking Normal* (2014). Lex hides in her closet in order to manage her trauma: "The closet is both my curse and my sanctuary. For at least an hour every day, I hide there. Folded and tucked. Arms wrapped around my knees while I will my mind not to live in a whacked-out 'before-and-after' mode" (Stevens 18). Her regression into childishness is indicated in her tendency to seek out small spaces in which to fit and hide, and amplified by the description of her near-foetal physical posture. It is also a defensive position, suggesting a link between regression into solipsism and self-preservation. Lex attempts to seek refuge from her trauma in items associated with her youth, but the efficacy of this proves limited: "Among the familiar clothes and shoes and bits and pieces of things from my childhood, and Binky the Elephant pressed to my stomach, I am marginally better. With my pink notebook filled with scribbles from junior high. My old Etch A Sketch. The jumpsuit from Space Camp. These things have no purpose except comfort, so I keep them. Just like I keep my secret" (21). Lex's as-yet-undisclosed secret is identified as the cause of her retreat into small spaces, and the association between rape trauma and regression into childhood is made before the reader even knows that she has been raped. Her stunted intersubjectivity is evident in that she engages with items and memories rather than people. She retreats from people around whom she must 'fake normal,' as the book title indicates, in order to conceal her rape.

By denying the victim access to voice, these novels also deny them language, and therefore the development of an intersubjectivity which might allow for the creation of community through shared experience. McCallum writes, "Concepts of personal identity and selfhood are formed in dialogue with society, with language, and with other people, and while this dialogue is ongoing, modern adolescence – that transition stage between childhood and adulthood – is usually thought of as a period during which notions of selfhood undergo rapid and radical transformation" (3). In the silent victim script, the victim's lack of language causes her to be isolated and distanced from supportive communities. The communal nature of gendered disenfranchisement, which was so vital to second-wave empowerment, is rendered inaccessible, and rape is instead treated as an issue which pertains to an individual victim. The victim's silence prohibits the development of community, and she is therefore pathologised through the focus on her traumatised interiority, rather than allowing the crime to be public which would allow the narrative to focus on the social response to rape. The treatment of rape as unspeakable merely serves to discourage its discussion while emphasising its romanticised horror, and further reinforces an understanding of victims as abject, or expelled from the social order.

In K. M. Walton's *Empty* (2013), Dell, a prototypical disposable rape victim in young adult fiction, is made so abject that there is no possibility for her recovery and she is eventually killed off. Dell does not disclose her rape because she does not think that she will be believed, because she is overweight and unpopular, while her rapist is a popular school athlete:

> I can't tell my mother. We don't know how to talk to each other anymore. … I look at
> my phone but make no effort to reach for it. I can't do it. What just happened to me at
> Melissa's party is something I should *want* to tell my best friend, but I don't. I mean,

I've had forced sex with a very popular guy; I should tell someone. The thing is, I

know telling anyone would be social suicide. (Walton 82-83)

Dell is so afraid of social stigma that she is incapable of communicating with anyone. The repeated use of the word 'can't' indicates that it is not just a lack of desire to speak, but an almost total inability to communicate. Her social incapacitation proves so intense that rather than commit social suicide, Dell commits literal suicide. Right before killing herself, she discloses her rape by posting "Brandon raped me" on Facebook (222). While most silent victim texts involve a verbal disclosure in person to a character who offers reassurance of support and recovery, Dell's disclosure is online and impersonal. She dies before engaging in any semblance of an interpersonal interaction, perhaps because she believes it will be the best way of giving credibility to her claim. Dell's disclosure/suicide is an example of how the pedagogical imperative can impede feminist ideology in young adult rape texts. Although victims are usually not killed off, as Dell is, silent victim texts dispose of their victim protagonists through the speedy conclusion of novels after the disclosure takes place. By not depicting the victim's recovery and instead suggesting that it occurs off-page, if at all, these novels indicate that recovery is incidental to the rape story. Further, they do not provide any modelling of what the recovery process looks like. Victims fulfil their pedagogical function by demonstrating how to avoid rape, how not to respond to rape, and how bad rape is, and so, disturbingly, a focus on recovery might compromise that lesson.

The silent victim script also denies the victim agency, as language and speech acts empower the individual and allow for interpersonal engagement. While agency is a concept that has been troubled by poststructuralist understandings of the dialogic construction of the subjectivity and the impossibility of free will, like intersubjectivity, it is of paramount importance in the genre of young adult fiction. As John Stephens explains, young adult fiction overwhelmingly promotes a humanist model of agency in which "people as

individuals have a capacity to act reflectively and purposively and, through intersubjective relationships, have a capacity for either self-alteration or remaking the world" ("Agency" 141). The victim's final disclosure of her rape suggests a move towards recovering agency, but this is not actually achieved within the text, and her disclosure is, rather, a capitulation to her utter debilitation and recognition of her inability to heal. The victim remains a Reviving Ophelia figure, a failed subject of neoliberal postfeminism, as her inability to prevent her own rape proves her incapacity for future self-governance. According to Balaev, the preclusion of agency is a consequence of representing trauma as unspeakable: "One result of trauma's classic conundrum [of the unspeakability of trauma,] accordingly removes agency from the survivor by disregarding a survivor's knowledge of the experience and the self, which restricts trauma's variability and ignores the diverse values that change over time" (6). The victim's inability to articulate their story merely reaffirms the lack of agency they would have experienced during the initial rape, confining them to a state of powerlessness. The hastiness of the resolution to these novels does not allow the victim to achieve either intersubjectivity or agency, two of the most valued precepts of young adult fiction. The texts suggest healing and closure, but this is merely a suggestion, and the gesture at healing and resolution reads far too shallow. What it actually suggests is that it is impossible for authors to envision recovery for a rape victim within the context of a neoliberal society.

While she is less disposable than Dell and does not die at the end of the novel, in Amber Smith's *The Way I Used to Be* (2016), Eden also has stunted intersubjectivity, and is representative of Roberta Seelinger Trites' prototypical didactic subject of a young adult novel about sex. Eden's rape initiates her disintegration, in a narrative strategy which is presumably meant to teach young readers how not to be raped. She acts out as self-punishment, she has casual sex (Smith 107, 210, 211), does drugs with strange older boys at college parties (195), does poorly in her SATs (235), and (in a curious ordering of her

escalating crimes) calls her parents by their first names (318). The novel uses the silent victim script, and while the disclosure comes slightly earlier than is generically typical, the novel fails to redeem itself because the extent of Eden's incapacitation precludes any process of intersubjective connection. When a boy at school accidently bumps into her and apologises, she narrates,

> But I can't listen all the way because I seem to have only one thought: Just this: *Fucking die fucking asshole fucking kill you fucking die, die, die*. … I've never said such words out loud, to or about another human being, yet there they are. I can't think of any other words in the entire English language; my complete vocabulary is suddenly composed of nothing more than an endless string of obscenities punctuated with expletives. (46)

Eden's loss of communication skills is very literal, and her only linguistic recourse is an anti-social collection of aggressive words. She reacts to her rape with anger, but that anger is internal and pathological, as these words are not spoken, but reported thoughts. Towards the conclusion of the novel, a detective asks if she has been assaulted, and Eden narrates, "I always promised myself that if someone would ask, if someone would only ask the right question, I would tell the truth. And now it's here. It could be over in one syllable. I open my mouth. I want to say it. Yes. Yes. I try to make a sound. Yes. Say it! But my mouth is so dry, I can't. I take a breath and I choke. I choke on the word. I'm actually choking" (328). Far from demonstrating agency through a capacity for "remaking the world," Eden is physically incapable of speaking. The short, reflective phases indicate her process of negotiating with her own damaged psyche, as the repeated word "yes" is supplanted by the repeated word "choking," and she grapples with the damage that has been so well-wrought that she is utterly incapacitated. While the novel's slightly earlier than typical disclosure gives the narrative space for those around her to begin to understand the cause for her bad behaviour and

announce their support, she does not form intersubjective connections and she makes no progress towards healing within the text. Rather, her confession forms a pitiful gesture at re-entry into the social order. As is generically typical, the point of the novel is not her recovery, but her disclosure.

Young adult rape fiction's rejection of the generically normative representation of adolescent growth from solipsism to intersubjective agency may be interpreted as subverting the humanist dominance in the genre. Kokkola contends that "If trauma narratives are read solely in terms of the protagonists' journeys of self-growth from victimhood to subjectivity, then recovery becomes an imposition" (180). She argues that the insistence upon novels modelling healing or recovery may be interpreted as an imposition on traumatised victims, asking "whether this insistence on redemption does not further compound the abuse as the narratives can also be read as blaming youngsters who cannot recover for their failure to thrive" (173). While this is a valid objection to the concerning notion of a mandatory 'happy ending,' or the necessity of resolution and healing in a rape text, the silent victim script not only dominates the subgenre, holding far more influence than it deserves and limiting the representation of alternate experiences of rape, but it others victims, as their entrapment in solipsism renders them abject. That young adult rape fiction deviates from the generic norms of representing subjectivity so dramatically is notable; it reveals an inherently sexist ideological bias in that these novels do not model successful adolescent development in their treatments of rape victims, but, rather, unsuccessful development. Rather than model the potential for recovery, disposable and abject girls perform a pedagogical function within the novels: by demonstrating the misery and impossibility of recovery, they participate in a futile, misogynist, and victim-blaming rape prevention strategy of encouraging girls not to be raped.

Novels which reject the silent victim script not only provide far more diversity in a highly homogenised subgenre, but also encourage the exploration of socio-cultural attitudes

towards rape. As Balaev writes, "the pluralistic trauma model that allows determinate value and social specificity … acknowledges the variability of trauma in its definition and representations, and may emphasize the active potential for meaning in the moment of harm" (6). The victim's voice and perspective in interaction with her community contributes to a discussion of rape, rather than isolating her perspective within her psyche. Mardorossian explains the importance of voice for recovering victims: "[S]peak-outs remain sites where victims feel empowered by their vocalization of a narrative they know to be fluctuating and confusing. … What ultimately empowers survivors of sexual assault at speak-outs is not the process of reclaiming a unified self so much as the production of a narrative itself" (65). In young adult rape fiction in which the victim discloses her rape early, the novel charts her intersubjective development in the process of building supportive communities, as well as confronting victim-blaming speech and ideology. Mardorossian adds, "[T]he focus is on the potential for the invention of the self that this word-shaped reality entails rather than the excavation of a core center" (65). Silent victim novels preoccupy themselves with the victim's interiority, alienation and lack of power while fixating on the excavation of the victim's core centre in her final disclosure. In contrast, novels in which the victim discloses her rape early necessitate that the community of characters within the narrative, including the victim, participate in creating the rape narrative through their reactions to her disclosure. They thereby model intersubjectivity and community-development by sharing the burden of narrativisation, rather than isolating the victim.

Daisy Whitney's *The Mockingbirds* (2012) is a good example of a text which rejects the silent victim script and is instead able to foreground an agentic victim who empowers herself through intersubjective interaction and community-formation. Alex recognises the silent victim script, saying, "The least I can do is talk like a normal person, react like a normal person. I'm not going to be that person who goes mute, who writes on Post-it Notes

because she can't deal" (Whitney 48-49). She prioritises supportive intersubjective relationships as vital to her recovery. After Alex testifies, girls approach her to share their experiences, one of whom tells her, "You're doing it for all of us who didn't speak up, who were afraid. And I know you're going to make this place better for the girls who come after us. It'll be safer. Guys will think twice" (234). Rather than accept individualising ideology by focusing upon the victim's debilitating trauma in order to teach readers to speak out about rape, the novel instead illustrates the potential for feminist community-creation in intersubjective communication by modelling the empowering impact of Alex's speaking-out. Focus is kept on the perpetrators of the crime and societal reactions to it, rather than the victim's damaged psyche. After her rapist is punished at the student-led trial, Alex finds herself experiencing a moment of pure happiness and says, "In this moment I'm not defined by the other things, the things that happened to me, the things I didn't choose. This is the part of me that defines me for all time, for always. The thing I choose completely" (322). The novel conforms to the generic norms in young adult fiction by perpetuating a humanist view of the self, and partakes in a neoliberal rhetoric of self-determination through the protagonist, who sees herself as wholly responsible for her own self-construction. However, the novel's representation of an individual empowered by her formation of community is distinctly feminist, and preferable to the image of the rape victim who is defined and debilitated by her victimisation.

Another counterexample to the silent victim texts which instead models feminist community-organising is Amy Reed's *The Nowhere Girls* (2017). In a highly effective reversal of generic norms, the novel avoids focusing on the victim's psyche by almost completely removing her character from the text. The novel is polyfocalised and narration shifts primarily between three girls in the town in which the rape has occurred. By mostly removing the victim from the novel, the narrative is able to focus upon and assign

responsibility to the community reaction to the rape, and to the rapists themselves. It is not the victim, but Grace, the new resident of the victim's house, who hides in her closet:

> Light streams under the closet door as she pulls it closed from the inside. It is almost dark. She is almost hidden. But there is still light. Still enough seeping in to let her know she's not alone. Enough to illuminate the words carved into the forgotten few inches of wall between the door and the corner, an unseen place, a place so dark, it could only be known by someone trying to be small – on the floor, with the door closed. *HELP ME*, the scratches say. They are the texture of screaming, so rough they must have been carved by fingernails. (Reed 88)

Even in this most isolating of circumstances, and despite the temporal differences in their occupation of the space, the novel asserts that neither girl is alone. In the spirit of second-wave feminist organising around shared victimisation under patriarchy, the novel emphasises the empowering and unifying potential of shared experience. The girls build community through their shared experiences of isolation and social anxiety, even while hiding in the closet. The scratched words "HELP ME" inspire Grace to start a club for girls to fight the rape culture of their town and seek to punish the rapists. This club models both grassroots feminist community organising and foregrounds intersubjectivity, as the girls have frank conversations as they try to understand each other's different experiences of their femininity. The victim is the last focalised character of the novel: "Lucy sits in the bedroom that's been hers for only a few months. She thinks about the desperate words she scratched in the walls of her old room, when she wanted to scream but couldn't, when crying wasn't enough. She wonders if anyone ever found them" (404). The novel hints at Lucy's recovery by indicating that her words were carved in a darker past. Most importantly, it does so without ever prioritising her trauma and psychological torment, indicating a shift in focus onto structural issues, rather than victim-blaming postfeminist discourses.

Boundary-crossing

Female rape victims in young adult rape fiction do not typically come of age in the generically normative mode of development from solipsism to intersubjectivity, yet they do transition out of childhood. This transition is frequently characterised by a boundary crossing caused directly by their rape, a consequence of which is sexual knowledge. Kokkola demonstrates that in young adult fiction, raped girls are removed from the category of children and are suddenly treated as adults, as they become "knowing," and, whether that knowledge is voluntary or not, it is nevertheless irreversibly theirs and they must face the social repercussions (17). The representation of sexual knowledge as marking a transition to adulthood conflates sex and rape, and yet fits perfectly within the logic of young adult fiction and its concern with curtailing sexual desire. According to Trites, "adolescent novels that deal with sex, whether they are obviously ideological, usually contain within them some sort of power dynamic wherein the character's sexuality provides him or her with a locus of power. That power needs to be controlled before the narrative can achieve resolution" (*Disturbing the Universe* 85). Sexual knowledge, whether consensually gained or not, is equated with power. The victims in these texts must disclose their rape before the conclusion of the narrative, thereby surrendering the power derived from sexual knowledge, which allows their reintegration into society. In her discussion of this dynamic, Kokkola points to linguistic evidence that society conflates consensual and non-consensual sex: "The words and phrases used to describe the first time a person has sexual intercourse (whether desired or not) indicate that Anglophone society regards this as a life changing experience: 'the *loss* of virginity', '*popping* the cherry', 'the *end* of innocence' and so on. These expressions signal an activity that is a one-off event that does not allow for return to pre-sex state" (7-8). This conceptualisation of sex as a boundary crossing or loss relates to the Girl Power/Reviving Ophelia binary: girls who have proven that they are incapable of satisfying the ideal of

neoliberal self-determination by avoiding rape become Reviving Ophelia characters, and are therefore denied the full independent self-hood implied by adulthood, and instead become abject. Characters' linguistic dysfunction is essential to signalling their transition out of childhood, and into this state of abjection.

In *Empty*, Dell not only perceives her rape to be an irreversible boundary-crossing, but also conflates consensual and non-consensual sex by repeatedly using the word "sex" instead of "rape." Dell narrates, "Sex is a rite of passage – that's what my seventh-grade health teacher told us – and Brandon stole that from me" (Walton 82). Not only does describing sex as "a rite of passage," falsely indicate an irreversible transformation laden with moral implications, but it also treats virginity as a tangible possession that may be stolen. While the author invites the potential to disrupt this idea by complicating the authority of its source – the health teacher – she does not do so in the text. This concept is also present in Dell's repeated descriptions of her rape as sex: "I've had forced sex with a very popular guy", "she would go ape-shit is she knew we had sex," and, "he held me down and had sex with me" (93, 97, 150). The phrase "forced sex" indicates that Dell's rape was sex that must be qualified, and distinctly different from rape, while the formulation "we had sex" describes herself as a participant. The repeated verbal slippage between the two words exemplify Kokkola's argument that in young adult fiction, the rape victim is responsible for acquiring sexual knowledge, whether it is done consensually or not. Dell's suicide indicates the impossibility of reconciling her subject position with neoliberal conceptions of the self-determining girl or woman.

Sexual knowledge is similarly conceptualised as a boundary-crossing between adolescence and adulthood in *The Way I Used to Be*, a positioning which is evidenced in its title. Eden narrates the moment she tells her friend that she has lost her virginity: "And suddenly, the way she looks at me, I feel an entire ocean between us, and we're standing on

opposite shores, staring at each other from the farthest ends of the world" (Smith 136). Eden is alienated from her friend because she has had sex and her friend has not, conferring virginity with huge significance and value. After disclosing her rape to her supportive ex-boyfriend, Josh, Eden tells him, "This isn't who I was supposed to be. I used to be so nice. I used to be such a nice, sweet, good person. And now I just – I just – I hate. I hate him. I hate him so much, Josh, I really do. … My whole life is just hate. And I can't – I can't get it out of me. No matter what I do, it's always there, I just – I can't –" (346). Eden attempts to convey her own perception of the fundamental, and negative, character transformation which has resulted from her rape. The disintegration of her verbal capacity reinforces that this change is not the result of a development of intersubjectivity, as is generically typical, but rather because of her sexual knowledge. Her hatred is not productive, but self-consuming and debilitating.

Rape is also a boundary-crossing in *Faking Normal*, as is remarked upon by Lex's rapist and her sister, and validated by her own self-perception. Lex narrates a scene in which her rapist admires her dressed up for a date:

> "Lex, you're sure growing up on us."
>
> "I know. Happened sometime this last summer," Kayla answers for me.
>
> July 20 to be exact. (Stevens 106)

The date of her rape signifies her crossing from childhood to adulthood, and this transition is understood through sexual knowledge, rather than intersubjectivity. Her voice is removed in this scene, as her sister acknowledges and recognises the transition vocally before she does so in her narration, lending it added legitimacy through external validation. While these scenes may provide insight into the ways in which girls are taught to conceptualise their own sexuality, a critique of which is invited in Dell's mention of the seventh-grade health teacher,

they are never complicated in the space of the text. As a result, they therefore merely reinforce the notion of loss of virginity (whether through rape or consensual sex) as a boundary-crossing event, removing one from childhood and locating them as abject.

Pathologising rape victims: personalising the political

Silent victim texts pathologise victims by focusing the whole of the rape story on their debilitating internal trauma instead of on the crime committed against them. As Mardorossian suggests, "The meaning of the word *victimization* itself has simultaneously changed from an external reality imposed on someone to a psychologized inner state that itself triggers crises" (*Framing* 133). By situating rape inside female psyches, it is recast as a personal, rather than as a political problem, and the victim is isolated as she grapples with the problem alone. When narratives focus upon the victim's silence, they position her non-disclosure and tortured psyche as the problem, rather than the rape itself or the rapist himself. Kokkola provides a useful explanation of the pitfalls of the 'problem novel,' the historically dominant mode in young adult fiction:

> Although well intentioned, problem novels often inadvertently imply that aspects of identity … are "problems" the character has to struggle with or come to terms with. The problem [is] situated in the domain of the individual and not in the surrounding (racist, homophobic) community. In other words, the overarching "problem" of the problem novel is that the teenager is filled with angst about an aspect of their lives they cannot control; and the resolution of their angst signals the on-set of adult maturity. (16)

When protagonists cannot speak about the crime committed against them, the central issue or "problem" of the problem novel becomes their own struggle to speak rather than the rape. Not only does this trope blame victims by displacing focus onto the victim damaged psyche,

representing rape within the generically typical parameters of representing teenage "angst" which must be resolved to reach "adult maturity" normalises rape, suggesting that it is an inevitable part of female adolescence which must be reckoned with. The silent victim script positions the victim and her damaged psyche as the problem in young adult rape fiction, with harmful implications: it casts rape as a personal rather than as a political problem, and blames victims by suggesting that the solution to rape is located in individual pathologies.

This pathologising of rape victims is characteristic of postfeminist individualism, as its inherent isolation precludes the intersubjectivity necessary to forming a supportive community, and by extension the social engagement which would enable a social critique and examination of the logic of rape culture. The implication is that the individual female must overcome her rape, and yet her failure to do so is a foregone conclusion, as her rape has already proven her to be a failed neoliberal subject: "The dominant perception is that survivors need to be helped, taken care of, counselled, talked about, spoken for, studied, rather than assured the decision-making power and opportunities for self-making that characterized the beginnings of the second wave" (Mardorossian, "New Feminist Theory" 770-771). Rape becomes a failing of the individual victim, who is therefore rendered abject: "To the degree that the victim is made special by tragedy, she is at the same time distanced from other, everyday women who have and have not been victimized themselves" (Hall 14). This emphasis on the failures of the victim reduces the political to being 'merely' personal, discouraging collective organisation, isolating the victim with the stigma of being damaged, and distracting from the criminality of rape which would encourage examination of rapists and the socio-cultural conditions which facilitate their crimes.

One way that the externally imposed condition is recoded as internal is through heavy use of qualia, which is a formal narrative feature inherently connected to unspeakability. Popular in trauma fiction, qualia, which is "the qualitative, experiential, or felt properties of

mental states," conveys the victim's emotional distress without specifically articulating it (Levin 693). Laurie Vickroy explains, "One way qualia is illustrated is in the depiction of visceral reactions to traumatic memory that acknowledge its sensory nature and how reactions are often physical and unconscious because of the ways trauma is encoded in the brain" (140). While qualia flags distress, it can also prevent the articulation of that distress. It is both a shorthand for traumatic suffering, and a shortcut which conveys the psychological frailty of the victim without verbalizing her distress.

Juxtaposing the use of qualia in Colleen Clayton's *What Happens Next* (2013) and Jenny Downham's *You Against Me* (2012) provides a useful illustration of how formal features can be deployed to impact the ideological positioning of the text. In *What Happens Next*, Sid's reaction to the rape is pathological: "I sit back on my bed, put my head between my knees, and breathe deeply so I don't pass out. I put my hands to my ears to try to stop the ringing hiss and I am shaking badly now. … The Truth ridicules me, in a singsong voice from inside my own heart" (Clayton 176). Her trauma not only manifests as physically crippling, but also emerges from her "own heart"; the rape is a fundamental and self-destructive aspect of her inner self rather than a violation with an external source. *You Against Me* subverts this trope of locating the rape inside the victim's body by having the silent bystander experience qualia instead of the victim. Ellie, the silent witness to the rape, experiences qualia as a consequence of suppressing knowledge of her brother's crime: "Sometimes it felt physical, as if the walls were slowly moving towards her. Sometimes it felt psychological, a strange panic in her brain, which meant if she had to live in this nightmare for one more minute she'd self-combust" (Downham 36). Instead of locating the pathological problem in the victim, it is located in the witness who does not report the crime. This shift in emphasis portrays rape as a social problem which demands collective redress rather than a personal one to be managed by the victim alone.

In *Faking Normal*, Lex experiences qualia similarly to both Sid and Ellie. While, as the title suggests, Lex pretends to be okay as she conceals her rape, her damaged psyche is betrayed by her physicality: "This morning the secret has claws. And it's climbing the walls of my stomach, twisting my gut, quivering and rolling and burning. Red-hot acid in the back of my throat. Ready to explode. And I have to stop it before it spews all over my life" (Stevens 21). Lex conceptualises the secret of her rape as a physical entity inside her body, which torments her and threatens to destroy her life. She also experiences qualia when her date's teasing launches her into a flashback of the rape:

> He holds up one finger. I don't breathe as he lays it across my lips. "Shhh," he says, playfully.
>
> I am silent.
>
> Frozen.
>
> Remembering.
>
> *Another finger on my lips. Another "Shhh" followed by "Don't tell anyone." Hands on my hips. Against my skin.*
>
> *"Please don't," I say, but I'm so scared, and "don't" dies in the evening air. He thinks I'm begging for more. That's when the demon enters, binding my lips and tying my hands and laying me down in choking silence.*
>
> *That terrifies me and excites him.* (34)

The physical emptiness of the page and the use of truncated sentences reinforce the unspeakability of Lex's trauma, as she is suddenly incapable of narrating in full sentences. The association of this type of qualia with rape has been so effectively solidified that the word 'rape' has not yet been mentioned, and yet what has happened to Lex is evident. Later, Lex narrates, "I hope my pain is invisible. I don't want anyone calling in the 'crazy' squad.

Teachers, parents, doctors, therapists. When the squad arrives, the friends disappear. I've seen it before" (23). While the novel attempts to advocate speaking out through a sympathetic character who recognises that she is hiding her trauma and encourages her to disclose, the novel cannot envision a world in which the victim is not pathologised and her life is not destroyed; even though he is a gym teacher, Lex's rapist is told to leave town and his crime is not made public, suggesting that otherwise her fears would be confirmed, and her life would be destroyed.

Qualia is deployed similarly to pathologise Maddy in Beth Goobie's *The Pain Eater* (2016). She provides a potent example of qualia in a classroom meltdown when confronted by a classmate whom she believes to be one of her rapists: "terror took hold of Maddy; it rose through her in an absolute wave that picked her up, lifted her out of her desk, and shoved her toward the nearest wall. There she stood, hugging herself and trembling. Thoughts tore every which way in her head; her heart thundered like a crazy thing; with a whimper, she turned her back to the class and pressed her face to the wall" (Goobie 105-106). This bizarre episode depicts Maddy's psychological distress as it hijacks her body and removes her self-control, forcing her to behave in a strange and anti-social way. It seems to operate as both an external and internal force, wresting her body from her control, and forcing her to isolate herself from the class, strangling her voice to a "whimper."

While Maddy is a particularly disturbing silent victim who is utterly abject because of her crippled intersubjective development, the novel partly redeems itself because of the effectiveness with which it demonstrates the nature and process of intersubjectivity while relocating responsibility from the individual to the community. Maddy's classmates take turns writing a chapter of a story, "The Pain Eater," whose protagonist, Farang, is Maddy's double. After Maddy's disclosure, she tells her sister about the story, who explains, "That's not the story of Farang, Maddy. That's the story of your *class*. And *you* get to top it all off"

(230). After recognising the parallels between Farang and herself, and that, like her, Farang

has been denied voice thus far, Maddy reads out her contribution, the final chapter:

> D'you know none of you have ever talked to me? I can take care of myself. I don't
>
> *need* you. So *fuck* you and everything you wanted to do to me. … I am not going to be
>
> silent and secret and full of your hate anymore. No wonder you hate me–when you
>
> look at me, you see everything you did to me or thought about me. It's not *me* you
>
> hate, it's *yourself*. That's a problem *you* have to fix. … So far in this story we've all
>
> been criticizing Farang–every move she makes, every breath she takes. But she isn't
>
> alone–she lives in a village full of people. What about the villagers and *their* choices?
>
> (242-243)

Maddy's reflection on the importance of communal responsibility and rejection of individual

blame is punctuated with juxtaposed "I"s and "you"s, highlighting the oppositionality which

has been created through Farang/Maddy's ostracism. Her stand is predicated on Farang's

expression of anger, which is represented as both righteous and productive, as she reassigns

the personal to the political. The novel thereby successfully models how speaking out can

create feminist communities which empower the individual.

Community involvement is also crucial to the victim's recovery in *The Mockingbirds*.

The novel avoid pathologising victimhood, as Alex's victimisation is an impetus to action

which involves her in her community, rather than isolating her within her psyche. When a

friend encourages Alex to report her rape to the Mockingbirds (a student-organised judicial

system), Alex says, "You act as if I'm a victim, like I've always been some kind of victim"

(Whitney 76). Alex initially resents constructions of victimhood as pre-conditions of female

bodies and distances herself from the stigma associated with victimisation. Her friend

responds, "I don't think you've always been the victim. But you're one now, and I think you

should do something about it" (76). This response not only asserts that victimhood is an

externally imposed identity, but also frames it as an impetus to action. The empowering potential of victimhood is realised when Alex is made a leader of the Mockingbirds, in order to ensure that other students have access to justice: "From victim to ruler, powerless to powerful, that's how the Mockingbirds work" (328). By suggesting that the most effective leaders are those who have been disenfranchised, the novel makes the personal political and rejects the notion that it could be any other way.

Aside from locating qualia within the rapist's sister instead of the victim, *You Against Me* further avoids pathologising the victim by not focalising the victim, and instead reporting her speech as she categorically rejects blame. In the spirit of the second-wave, Karyn recognises her disempowerment and it makes her angry, as she verbally derides the system which oppresses her: "What happened to me happens to loads of girls. Loads and loads. … Most girls don't report it, because hardly any boys get done for it. Something like six in a hundred" (Downham 13). Karyn recognises herself as just one of a female community who are denied justice and therefore hides because of state institutions which favour rapists over victims. She rails against the system which oppresses her and locates herself within a larger community of females with a shared experience. This attempt to create female alliances through a shared recognition of disempowerment is ultimately effective, as indicated by Ellie's eventual alliance with her when she reports the truth that she witnessed Karyn's rape. The novel models how the rehabilitation of the victim might occur through speaking out against rapists and rape culture and the ways in which they are facilitated by patriarchal institutions.

The Nowhere Girls uses a similar strategy to avoid pathologising the victim by barely focalising her, thereby avoiding focusing upon her traumatised psyche. Instead, the narration shifts between different girls in the small town, with three primary protagonists, none of whom is the victim. This use of shifting focalisation effectively represents an intersectional

community composed of multiple perspectives and individuals, each of whom have their own interiority. Some chapters are titled with the name of the focalising character, and some are titled "Us," and these chapters involve brief focalised glimpses into many girls' lives. When the girls form an alliance to demand punishment for the rapists, the chapters which narrate their meetings are titled "Us," but the shifting focalisation is replaced with a single stranded third-person narrator. This narrative choice formally conveys the capacity of solidarity to overcome isolation. The novel also includes emails from the girls without specified authorship, which state their unitedness: "When they raped Lucy, they raped all of us. Because it could have been us. It could have been any of us. Who will be next?" (Reed 114). The anonymity of the emails, even to the reader, and their medium, combined with the message of solidarity and empowerment in persecution, conveys that the personal is being relocated to the political. The novel also protests the conceptualisation of victims as debilitated. When one of the three main narrators, Erin, who has Asperger Syndrome, leaves the cafeteria because she is overwhelmed, the novel reads,

> "She's not helpless, you know," Rosina says.
>
> "I know," Grace says. *But just because she's not helpless doesn't mean she doesn't need help*" (129).

The novel articulates the distinction between support and pathologisation, and is careful to note that needing help does not equate to debilitation or disempowerment. This rejects ideas of femininity, or girlhood, as a state of weakness and vulnerability, and undermines social discourses which insist upon female surveillance.

Self-harm

When anger is stigmatised because of the neoliberal mandate of positivity, the represented victim has no outlet or recourse for their emotional response to their rape.

Authors thus depict victims' reactions as inflicted inward as they manage their emotions through self-harming strategies such as selective mutism, as though it is a more socially appropriate outlet than vocal expression. One of the narrative consequences of employing self-harm as a representational strategy and denying the victim voice is that it pathologises victims by focusing on their internal debilitating trauma instead of the crime committed against them. The burden of blame is thus taken up by the victim, which reinforces ideologies which see girls' bodies as requiring surveillance because of their incapacity to properly protect themselves; first the girl is unable to prevent her rape, and then she is unable to cope with it, as is evident in her self-destructive behaviours.

In the silent victim script, the destructive effect of directing anger inwards is emphasised by the frequency with which other self-harming behaviours accompany the victim's silence. Self-harm becomes another punishment suffered by the silent victim, which reflects and intensifies the victim's psychological torment as she fails to disclose her rape. Authors presumably intend to encourage the reader to understand the necessity of disclosing. This, however, is a risky strategy, as fiction guides and normalises real-life responses and impulses. In *Radical Children's Literature* (2007), Kimberley Reynolds addresses this troubling potential influence of fiction upon reality in her discussion of the rapidly proliferating representations of female self-harm in young adult fiction, noting that "the number of YA novels dealing with cutting and related subjects/behaviours including anorexia, bulimia, and selective mutism have increased steadily" and asking, "Do these books have a therapeutic function? Do they provide helpful insights? Could they be helping to normalise such behaviour and so contributing to its increased frequency? Are they participating in the creation of an aesthetic of self-harming?" (107). While silent victim novels may perform a therapeutic function or provide helpful insights both for girls who have and who have not been victimised, the proportional space which they take up within the

subgenre is difficult to justify; this is especially so given their potential to normalise self-harming behaviours and to deny the validity of alternative experiences of trauma, thereby further limiting their representation.

The risk of normalising self-harm as a reaction to rape is particularly potent because silent victim novels depend upon dramatic irony. The reader is supposed to know something that the victim does not: self-harming is wrong, and, by extension, self-blame is wrong. However, firstly, this strategy assumes that the reader's belief system will lead them to the intended conclusion instead of normalising self-harm as an appropriate response to rape. Secondly, dramatic irony positions the reader as a critical authority, reinforcing a destructive rape culture dynamic of undermining the rape victim by subjecting her to scepticism: the reader is prompted to judge the victim's reaction to trauma as 'incorrect.' Thirdly, novels which employ self-harm as a narrative device rely upon models of self-destructive behaviour to condemn shame instead of modelling healthy and productive behaviours. In fact, almost the entire subgenre of young adult rape fiction depends upon this risky strategy of using dramatic irony to teach young readers what *not* to do.

An aesthetic of self-harm is evoked in *The Pain Eater*. In private, Maddy burns her thighs with cigarettes, and in public she digs her nails into her hands: "It didn't hurt, not much. No, if she wanted to, Maddy could give herself a real pain buzz, but she didn't need that. Not here. Not yet" (Goobie 6). The wording suggests that pain serves a medical function for Maddy, validating her self-harm by suggesting that it is actually self-medicating. The pain is described as a need, suggesting that it is a primal and therefore natural impulse. Later, when Maddy is alone and able to burn herself, the tone becomes disturbingly aesthetic:

> Eyes drowsy but intent, she watched the cigarette ember move toward the skin of her
>
> inner left thigh. It was important to be respectful of this process, she'd learned–to
>
> honor the huge forces being tamed by the approach of fire to skin. There was fear, for

instance, huge flames of it dancing inside her body; this had to be tamed, as did the

pain that could explode through her flesh. … She had what was needed to tough out

mind over matter. It was simply a matter of becoming all mind–of withdrawing in

behind the eyes and watching what was happening to your body but not feeling it.

(20)

The wording is evocative of a spiritual or ceremonial experience, legitimising Maddy's self-harm by conferring it with an aura of sanctity. The text focalises Maddy to explain self-harm's therapeutic effect of offering the distressed mind relief by divorcing it from the damaged body. The aestheticism and appeal of relief may outweigh the effects of dramatic irony and the reader's presumed knowledge that self-blame is not a natural response to rape.

Similarly, *Faking Normal* relies on dramatic irony to encourage the reader to recognise victim blaming as wrong, while simultaneously exemplifying neoliberal discourses that pathologise victims. Lex's self-harm is a direct response to her self-blame:

The problem is, I'm not angry at *him*. I'm not angry with my parents. Or

Kayla. Or my friends. And it's not the school's fault.

It's mine.

"You're the stupid idiot. You let him. You let him." Now my nails come out.

Tearing the vulnerable skin on the back of my neck.

"You let him." The scabs that needed a night to heal are under my nails again.

It doesn't matter how hard I dig, the words keep going and going in my head.

Blood smears into the collar of my shirt. It'll never go into the hamper for

Mom to wash. "You let him. You let him." God, I wish I could bleed him out of my

life.

If only I could make the outside hurt more than the inside. (Stevens 23)

The reader is invited to interpret Lex's words with scepticism because of the emotional fragility which is evident in her repeated phrases and apparent disembodiment as she speaks to herself aloud in the second person. They are supposed to recognise that she has internalised victim-blaming messages, therefore her self-blame is wrong, and therefore her self-harming is wrong. Her need to hide bloodstains from her mother encourages an understanding of Lex's self-harm as unhealthy, as hiding things from parents is routinely coded in young adult fiction as 'bad' behaviour. Yet this implicit condemnation of Lex's actions may not outweigh the appeal of the text's explication of the motivation for self-harming, when Lex wants to, "make the outside hurt more than the inside," potentially contributing to creating a self-harming aesthetic by suggesting that it is an effective treatment for emotional distress.

Confession versus speak-outs

While the silent victim script is likely an attempt by novelists to encourage speaking out by demonstrating the debilitating effects of silence, novels which employ it ideologically reinforce guilt by positioning the victim's disclosure as a need to receive the absolution that is required to end the narrative. Michel Foucault suggests that "The obligation to confess is … so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface" (60). The victims' agony throughout silent victim texts is caused by the repression of this truth; they perceive themselves as betraying loved ones by withholding information, and consequently accept punishments incurred from a lack of understanding. Rather than project their anger outward, as a potential political tool, they accept the anger that is directed towards them, and this is justified by their confession. According to Foucault, confession involves an "authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and

reconcile" (61-62). Its appeal is in the delusion that it provides "intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation" (62). Rather than direct their anger outward, the victim accepts anger that is directed towards them, and thus the confession is figured as a way for the victim to make amends. Mardorossian comments on the paradox of requiring a victim's confession: "Surely the experience of confessing a sexual act or 'sin' one commits that involves the 'truth' of one's own identity is a far cry from speaking out against a transgression committed by an agent exterior to oneself. This would simply amount to confessing someone else's 'sin'" (*Framing* 63). Like the characterisation of both consensual and non-consensual sex as a boundary-crossing out of adolescence, the obligation to confess in these novels collapses the distinction between rape and consensual sex. It also assigns blame, which rightly belongs to the rapist, to the victim.

Just as the silent victim script has the potential to reinforce an understanding of non-disclosure as an appropriate and normal reaction to rape, it can also reinforce the shame, guilt, and responsibility implied by the need to confess. Confession is a tool for subordinating the individual, in which that individual's power is sacrificed to the authority of the confessor with the promise of offering relief from the burden of concealing truth. In contrast, the second-wave feminist model of the speak-out was one through which "women come to understand that an experience they might previously have perceived as interpersonal in nature is in fact rooted in historical and social relations" (64). Verbalising the experience of rape invites others to relate to a personal experience, fostering the intersubjective connection which is absent in the traditional confession script. While both confession and speaking out involve the engagement of voices, one form of disclosure is an individual subordination to a patriarchal power structure, while the other exemplifies female subjectivity and allows for the creation of community through shared experience. In the silent victim script, the concealed

rape is a crippling burden to the rape victim and she must sacrifice empowerment for the sake of relief and social reintegration. Translating the experience of rape into words can allow another person to relate to a personal experience, fostering the intersubjective connection which is absent in confession.

In *What Happens Next*, Sid exemplifies the victim-blaming ideology implicit in confession. After her rape, she narrates, "A voice inside me screams: *Open your mouth! Tell this PTA mom what happened! You need to go to a hospital!* But overtopping the voice is the awful banging in my head. A sick regret washes over me in rising waves until I'm drowning in thoughts of: *What have you done?*" (Clayton 40). Sid's self-blame prevents her from speaking out, and she punishes herself by remaining silent, converting her impulse to disclose into a delayed confession. Her reported thoughts allow the reader the privileged position of witnessing the battle between the voices in her head, some of which Sid understands as her own thoughts, but some of which she understands as an external voice within her. When Sid finally does confess to her mother, her mother provides comfort and assures her that she will recover: "I tell her what happened. All of it. And when I'm done and we've cried ourselves out, she says it again, with renewed intensity: 'You're going to be okay'" (310). However the novel ends with this scene and no movement towards recovery, only the mother's promised reassurance. *What Happens Next* does not offer a model of the path to recovery, but rather a process of tortuous self-blame which simultaneously validates and is validated by the necessity of the confession.

The trope of victim confessions is manipulated in *You Against Me* in order to expose the patriarchal power relations intrinsic to rape culture ideology. Ellie lies to cover up Tom's crime, and shares Sid's compulsion to tell the truth, repeatedly trying to discuss the rape with Tom, which he refuses to do: "You reckon we can stop talking about this now? A sad little shag with a crazy girl is a bit humiliating to discuss with my sister. … He patted her quickly

on the head. 'Don't forget.' Another expression from their father" (Downham 49). Tom uses degrading and misogynist language to minimise his crime, his victim, and his sister, as he reinforces Ellie's sense of inferiority through his dismissive tone and actions, such as patting her on the head. His characterisation of the rape as a "sad little shag" suggests that it was actually just a disappointing sexual encounter and his dismissal of the victim as a "crazy girl" likens her accusation to female hysteria. Ellie tries to accept his minimising of the event but is unable to do so: "I told myself it was Karyn's fault–she was drunk, she's a liar, she's jealous of us because she lives on a rubbish estate, she's mad at Tom because he didn't want to go out with her–anything I could think of. … It's been doing my head in trying to find ways to keep Tom innocent and I can't do it any more. I need to tell the truth now" (352). Her impulse to confess comes from a recognition of the misogyny inherent in Tom's excuses and signals her movement away from patriarchal control and towards a recognition of its power structures. As was done so effectively with its use of qualia, the novel displaces the need to confess on to the witness or bystander instead of the victim, which subverts the silent victim script's trope of confession and assigns blame to the silent onlooker instead of the victim.

Rather than employ the dynamics of confession, *The Mockingbirds* models feminist speaking out, as Alex develops her understanding of the assault in interaction with two other girls, and discloses her rape shortly thereafter. Alex was unconscious during the rape, and only regains her memory gradually throughout the novel, and so she is initially confused about what has occurred. She tells her sister and a friend, "I met a guy, I had some drinks … And then I had sex. Twice, evidently. So it was a stupid hookup. So I'm a slut" (Whitney 38). Alex attempts to deny her rape by employing misogynist clichés, labelling herself a "slut" instead of a victim. While Alex's internalised misogyny is clear to the girls, they do not force this perception on her. Rather, her sister says, "I don't know what happened, Alex … Only you do and he does. And you'll know for sure when you remember more. But I'm just saying

something doesn't sound right. It sounds as if he had sex with you while you were sleeping. Alex, it sounds like he raped you" (42). Alex comes to her own conclusion, through the support of and dialogue with two loved ones, rather than through any internalised compulsion to confess truth. Her moment of self-blame acknowledges the damaging effect of pervasive victim-blaming discourse. However, the novel quickly moves beyond victim-blaming discourses to develop modes of confronting rape and an interrogation of its causes. The novel responds to postfeminist individualism by instead foregrounding community, illustrating that speaking out is a far more satisfying model for rape recovery than confession.

Unspeakable rape

The unspeakability of trauma evidenced in the silent victim script categorises rape as an extralinguistic event. This representation is harmful because it romanticises a common reality, thereby obscuring both its commonality and its abhorrence. Positioning rape as beyond language and as therefore unrepresentable precludes its discussion and interrogation of its causes. According to Hall, in rape prevention rhetoric,

> [R]ape is rendered both the worst imaginable, and to a certain extent, unimaginable. Rape refuses constructivism; it is too physical, too violent, too real to be made or made up. It is beyond us - a detestable practice that we accept by abjection to the extent that, in defending rape against appropriation, we position it outside language where it becomes untouchable, repulsive, yet absolute. (10)

The silence around rape romanticises it and positions it outside of its own reality, lending it status as an almost mythical event whose its intangibility renders it undiscussable. By preoccupying itself with the romanticised interiors of girls' traumatised psyches by insisting upon the unspeakability of trauma in the rape story, the silent victim script mythologising rape and contributes to its unspeakability.

In young adult fiction, a genre which is definitively targeted towards naïve readers, this unspeakability also raises a very practical issue; Kokkola identifies this in her discussion of novels which tell rape stories but in which rape is not narrated or explicitly described: "[U]sing absence as a narrative tool is a risky strategy: how do readers work out what has happened?" (173). Not only does treating rape as unspeakable discourage its discussion, it has the potential to conceal its own subject from the readers it attempts to educate. Sid either never remembers or never relays the details of her rape, and Ellie did not witness the actual moment and therefore cannot describe it. Rape is described as "too horrible for words" in *What Happens Next,* and "unspeakable" in *You Against Me* (Clayton 43, Downham 46, 258). Novels too frequently do not explicitly state what the crime is, and instead keep the emphasis on the victims' pathologies. This focus on pathology fails to interrogate the cause of rape, and makes the girls' damaged psyches the problem. As Hall writes, "Rape, when articulated as an impossible problem, erases the question of how we might stop it. Or, rather, that question gets deflected back onto individual women as vulnerable subjects" (6). Again, the failure to articulate the rape story outside of the victim's mind is victim-blaming and sexist, as girls are encouraged to self-monitor, self-regulate, and self-discipline in order to prevent their rape.

Presenting rape as unspeakable also requires the use of scripts and schemas, which limit the conceptualisation of a diversity of rape experiences. Kokkola suggests that excluding detailed sex scenes from the narrative may be an effective strategy of catering the text to the young reader's level of knowledge: "The text adjusts itself to fit the level of reader involvement - precisely how much effort the reader wishes to invest in working out what happened - and also how much the reader already knows" (175). However, in rape narratives, this strategy means that authors must reply upon rape scripts and schemas, which limit the diversity of representations of rape, and thereby its conceptualisation and recognition in reality. Kokkola points out that without such details of what has actually happened, "What

readers witness is the transformational impact of carnal desires" (16). If the process of rape is not articulated, readers are left only with the aftermath to define the act, and thus the victim's reaction becomes wholly representative of rape. When novels rely upon rape scripts and hint at rape by evoking narrative conventions instead of specificity, those schemas are reinforced and the definition of rape is limited.

Another major issue with treating rape as unspeakable is that it encourages a fear of speaking about rape. The victims' reluctance to name the crime or speak the word reinforces the notion that speaking about rape is inappropriate, socially unacceptable, or reserved only for the most desperate of victims. In *Faking Normal*, Lex's date makes a joke about not being a rapist, and she uses the word "assault" instead of "rape" (Stevens 90). Later, she worries about meeting the boy whom she has been flirting with through notes written on a desk: "I'd never have to tell a desk no. A desk would never *hurt* me. A desk would never … R … me. I exhale. The *R* word is abrasive, even in my mind" (168). Lex's shame and denial are so profound that she cannot even think the name of the crime committed against her. Beyond the risk of the reader not being able to learn the parameters of rape even in a novel whose plot is wholly centred on it, the stigma and shame around discussing rape are reinforced.

In contrast, Anne Cassidy's *No Virgin* (2016) is a very unusual example in which the victim-narrator does not speak out early, yet she avoids being stigmatised by her rape partially because she names it immediately. The first line of the book reads: "My name is Stacey Woods and I was raped" (Cassidy 3). Stacey does not immediately report her rape, but the novel spans the approximately one week in which she struggles to decide whether or not to do so. It is followed by a sequel, *No Shame*, which details the court case against her rapist. The novel successfully avoids pathologising the victim by having her immediately recognise and name the crime that has been committed against her, and then consider the social ramifications of reporting it. She explains, "The word *rape* didn't seem to cover it though. It

seemed too slight, too simple to describe what had happened. I thought of other words: assault, betrayal, robbery. Because I *had* been physically assaulted; there were no scars but nonetheless my body had been abused" (181). For Stacey, the word rape is not a terrifying behemoth of an obstacle to overcome, but a descriptor that is too small and insufficient for what she has experienced. Rape is neither romanticised, in the way the Hall critiques, nor is it minimised; it is identified as a very serious crime, the seriousness of which the victim believes to be underestimated, but the novel avoids fixating on the victim's trauma as a means of achieving this.

Aaron Hartzler's *What We Saw* (2015) is another example of a text which depicts the specifics of rape while removing the victim from the story. After some boys in her popular group of friends are accused of rape, narrator Kate goes to visit the victim in order to get some clarity: "I came here to ask Stacey face-to-face. The only information I have is secondhand: Sloane's news reports and gossip at school. No hard evidence at all. Sure, there are formal charges, but right now it's Stacey's word against Dooney's" (Hartzler 148). Stacey's only presence in the book is in these two scenes where Kate tries to visit her and Stacey shuts her out. Stacey recognises that she has been raped and reports it, and refuses to entertain Kate's investigation of her claim. Because of her absence and lack of voice in the novel, there is no first-hand account of the rape scene, and yet the novel circumvents this by having Kate describe the scene from the video which has been found on Tumblr (252). The novel avoids pathologising the victim, who does disclose the rape, and yet still succeeds in detailing the parameters of rape for readers through a description of the physical act.

Conclusion

The repetition of the silent victim script does not complicate the values from which it emerges; rather, it reinforces them, and the potentially silencing denial and guilt from which

they derive. When novels suppress victims' voices through the silent victim script, they participate in the neoliberal suppression of feminist anger and compromise one of the primary tools of the feminist movement. As Lyn Mikel Brown writes in *Raising Their Voices: The Politics of Girls' Anger* (1998), "If we take away girls' anger, then, we take away the foundation for women's political resistance" (13). Far from functioning as feminist texts to empower young women, silent victim novels instead compromise the legitimacy of anger – the very tool by which both the second wave and now the #MeToo movement have found significant leverage against both patriarchy broadly, and rape culture specifically.

The denial of voice refuses the victim access to language to create intersubjective relationships, and also to agency, both of which are of paramount importance to modelling the boundary crossing from adolescence to adulthood in young adult fiction. Rather than model intersubjective development, as is generically typical in young adult fiction, novels instead offer victims who are trapped in solipsism. Far from leveraging rape narratives to highlight shared experiences of sexual violence and female disenfranchisement under patriarchy to create politically empowered communities, victims are treated as abject and alienated. This representation suggests that 'victim' is a deviant identity, rather than a common experience. The exceptionality of young adult rape fiction tropes to generic norms indicates that the victim's function in young adult rape fiction is not typically to model recovery, but instead to teach girls to avoid being raped. This futile and victim-blaming strategy can be avoided by having victims disclose early, which allows them to use language to form relationships and supportive communities. This allows the rape story to unfold within a society, and not within the confines of the traumatised victim's mind.

When victim's psychology is treated as the problem, the political problem of rape is recast as a personal one, in a reversal of the efforts of second-wave feminists. By confining the narrative to the victim's internal trauma, novels which use the silent victim script

pathologise victims as they make the victim's psychology the problem that must be overcome, distracting from the act of rape as the primary conflict. The victim's trauma is often manifest as an internal entity via qualia, leaving the victim to grapple with her internal struggle, rather than the external rapist figure. This internalisation is also evident in the frequency with which victims physically self-harm, suggesting that rape is an internal problem, not an external one, and, again, distracting the narrative from the actual problem of the rapist's act. When novels reject the silent victim script and victims disclose early, novels can instead focus outside of the victim's psyche and instead of community responses to rape.

The victim's fault is also reaffirmed by the need for her confession. The silent victim script ends in the victim confessing, with no demonstrated movement towards recovery. The victim capitulates to pressures from without and within, unable to continue to bear the brunt of the punishments inflicted by those that do not understand that her bad behaviour is the result of trauma, and not teenage girl angst, and confesses the secret that she has withheld. In exchange for confessing to a crime that is not her own, she is promised recovery, which is merely implied as it occurs off-page, again indicating that recovery is peripheral to the typical young adult rape story. In contrast, novels in which the victim discloses early avoid the build-up of fault and blame incurred by bad behaviour, and their disclosure instead models the feminist practise of speaking out, which allows the victim to articulate her experience and engage a community her supports her recover.

When novels fail to adequately name or define rape, they rely upon and reinforce dangerous rape scripts that leave the victim's reaction to rape to represent rape. In the silent victim script, this means that rape is wholly defined as the victim's trauma, and not the rapist's act of sexual assault. According to Balaev, representations of trauma which reject the notion of unspeakability instead highlight "the ranging values and representations of trauma in literature and society, emphasising not only the harm caused by a traumatic experience but

also the many sources that inform the definitions, representations, and consequences of traumatic experience" (6). By rejecting the silent victim script, novels have the narrative space and freedom from convention to redefine victims, rapists, and rape itself throughout the text, as they vocally interrogate its definition, parameters, and social perception. Rather than employing dramatic irony to encourage speaking out by modelling the damaging effects of silence, these novels highlight the healing and empowering potential of supportive communities, and the intersubjective exchange through which those communities are formed. This narrative strategy in turn facilitates public and community discussion of rape, interrogating the mechanisms of rape culture, rather than the damage of the isolated victim's psyche.

CHAPTER 4
Types of Boys:
Adolescent Masculinities in Young Adult Rape Fiction

"It's not like I'm some pervert out lurking on a jogging trail somewhere waiting for a victim. I'm just a guy, not a rapist. So why'd you go out of your way to ruin my life just because we had sex?" (Klein 120)

Previous chapters have argued that a majority of young adult rape novels represent rape as central to the experience of girlhood, which holds girls and women accountable for ending rape while obscuring the causal role and responsibility of boys and men as its perpetrators. Carine Mardorossian argues that rape "is an issue pertaining to masculinity, an ideological construct that cannot and should not be reduced to biological sexual difference and whose authority in culture derives from its structural and relational positioning vis-à-vis femininity" (*Framing* 2-3). Boys and men are predominately the cause of rape, and not female victims, and therefore dismantling hierarchical constructions of masculinity is the most effective recourse against rape culture. The goal of a feminist text should therefore be not only to rewrite femininity, but also to destabilise schemas of masculinity. As Beverley Pennell argues, "Just as feminist texts repudiate patriarchal metanarratives where the female subject is constructed as the inferior other to man, so too the operations of traditional normative masculinity must be made visible" (56). With the aim of interrogating traditional normative masculinity as these are presented to young readers, this chapter will examine constructions of adolescent masculinity in young adult rape fiction with a particular focus on the two predominant boys' roles in these texts: boyfriends and rapists.

Victims' boyfriend characters are frequently characterised as what I refer to as the New Age Boyfriend type. The New Age Boyfriend is a new postfeminist hegemonic masculinity, which is constructed in contrast to antiquated and regressive masculinities

through his sensitivity to his victimised girlfriend's needs. The postfeminism of the New Age Boyfriend is evident in that he is presumed to have understood and internalised the precepts of feminism so that its goals can be understood as having already been achieved. He is constructed as pro-feminist through a contrast to other anti-feminist and chauvinistic masculinities. This is achieved particularly by demonstrating that his sensitivity allows him to guide his girlfriend's recovery, the consequence of which is the undermining of his girlfriend's capacity to manage her own body. R. W. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). The New Age Boyfriend may be a new kind of hegemonic masculinity, but, characteristic of the ambivalence of postfeminism, he retains his hegemony as he is demonstrated as more capable of managing the victim's body and damaged psyche after her rape than she is.

While the New Age Boyfriend is ostensibly a figure enlightened by feminism, the rapist is typically characterised as an abstractly monstrous figure who serves as a symbolic receptacle into which all of the dangerous toxicity of masculinity is funnelled. This undefined masculinity is dismissed as inhuman and therefore unexplainable. The dichotomous construction of the two types of masculinity is ironic, as these two characters function according to the same patriarchal logic of entitlement to female bodies: while the rapist evidences this by raping, the New Age Boyfriend's absorption of his victim girlfriend's subjective agency by proving his superior capability to manage her body and health precludes egalitarian gender relations. The dichotomising of these two masculinities distracts from an interrogation of the role of masculinity in causing rape, as rape is confined to a narrowly defined and off-page – and therefore uninterrogable – evil. The characterisation of rapists as monsters locates rape outside of the realm of human action and precludes interrogation of its

motivations, while allowing the text to shift its focus by default to the traumatised victim, and implicitly victim-blaming tropes.

In contrast, novels which develop and humanise the character of the rapist are able to explicitly assign fault to him instead of the victim, allowing for an exploration of the motivations for rape, and rape culture itself. Humanising the rapist also simultaneously foregrounds and blurs the line between boys who subscribe to patriarchal ideology and rapists. This narrative choice creates Everyman rapist characters, who are a more truthful representation of rape as it happens in the real world. Allowing the rapist a space in the text is also more productive, as it allows for an interrogation of the rapists' motivations. The primary corpus of texts for this chapter includes a disproportionate number of texts that reject traditional paradigms of masculinity by developing the rapist character. This selection allows for more diversity of representation, which in turn allows for a more effective interrogation of both generic norms of rape representation and of the underlying hierarchical gender relations which cause rape. However, it is important to note that the selection is not proportionally representative of the dominant conservatism of the subgenre, in which rapist characters are either absent or flimsy constructed.

The New Age Boyfriend

Most rape victims' boyfriends in young adult rape fiction model a sensitive male schema, which I refer to as the New Age Boyfriend, a permutation of John Stephens' New Age Boy. Stephens identifies the New Age Boy as an increasingly popular character type in youth fiction, symptomatic of a trend in which youth texts "engage in attempted social intervention by privileging variants of a 'sensitive male' schema (or postfeminist masculinity) and pejorating the hegemonic masculinity associated with patriarchy and against which preferred masculinities are depicted" (*Ways of Being Male* xi). Drawing on the

dichotomy of the New Age Man and Old Age Man theorised by David Buchbinder, the New Age Boy is presented as a solution, and as a way forward from the oppressive, aggressive, and self-centred misogynistic philosophies of the Old Age. This dichotomy positions him as ethically superior and informed by feminist social and ideological change.

This dichotomy of masculinities and the exceptionalism of the New Age Boyfriend is exemplified in Colleen Clayton's *What Happens Next* (2013). Corey is a New Age Boyfriend whose sensitive masculinity is portrayed as preferable to other masculinities. The victim, Sid, narrates, "I want to blend in so guys don't see me. So men don't see me. And Corey doesn't count. He's not a regular guy, he's not men – he's Corey" (Clayton 275). The world is presented as an environment which is hostile to and preys upon Sid's body, and Corey is characterised as a good guy because the masculinity he embodies stands in contrast to these predominant male types. Corey is so different to these men who oppress girls and women, that Sid classes him as outside of masculinity; he is so enlightened, so liberated from the objectification of female bodies that here defines masculinity, that he is 'other' to his sex.

Christa Desir's *Fault Line* (2013) similarly plays on the dichotomy of masculinities which classes the New Age Boyfriend as superior, yet also exposes his reliance upon its unspoken codes which ensure male entitlement. After learning that other boys are interested in Ani, Ben narrates, "I didn't want to get all possessive since she wasn't really mine, but it bugged the crap out of me that other people were interested in her. … 'I haven't staked my claim. I'm not a caveman.' I'd totally staked a claim, but I wasn't about to tell Kevin" (Desir 11). Ben expresses scorn for a patriarchal mentality of entitlement and defines himself against it. Yet he is simultaneously reassured by the knowledge that wide acceptance of its precepts will secure his right to the girl whom he has claimed; while he ostensibly rejects the popular philosophy of male entitlement, he still benefits from it. His belief and reliance on patriarchal ideology and male entitlement to female bodies is evident in that his condemnation of this

ideology as antiquated is merely a pretence, because he knows that his claim to her will be respected.

While the New Age Boyfriend may challenge the hegemony of macho masculinity, as Ben exemplifies, he retains masculine privilege, reinforcing patriarchal ideology and female subjugation. As Stephens suggests, "the constitution of an alternative hegemonic masculine paradigm may not in itself be a cause for celebration if all it achieves is the idealization of another model of masculinity" (*Ways of Being Male* xi). The postfeminism of the New Age Boyfriend is evident in his presentation as a new example of ideal masculinity, enlightened by feminist ideology, and yet his patriarchal dominance simultaneously disempowers the female character, as his superiority as a model of masculinity is constructed in contrast to her ineptitude. In her analysis of postfeminist masculinities, Amy Burns identifies a new male type prevalent in chick flicks, deemed the 'New Hero,' who has resonances with the New Age Boyfriend. Burns writes, "Through persistently representing the New Hero, chick flicks are working to reinforce the ideology of patriarchy to contemporary women and substantiate the traditional gender order, as women are portrayed as deficient, incompetent or simply incomplete without a man" (145-146). The New Age Boyfriend's primary function is to demonstrate the victim's ability to heal and engage in healthy normative sexual or romantic relationships. This narrative reinforces an oppressive gender construct in which the female is disempowered and agency is gendered male, as the boyfriend figure is demonstrated as more capable of managing the female body to guide her towards healing in the wake of her debilitating trauma.

This potential to displace female agency is demonstrated in *What Happens Next* through Corey and Sid's relationship. When a drunken classmate corners and sexually intimidates her, Sid narrates, "Static hisses in my ears and the world is getting far away. Then someone yells, 'Hey!' from behind Tate's big body. Tate backs away and Corey comes

running up. He catches me right before I go down" (Clayton 230). Sid's pathological defect in this scene causes her to be rendered completely incapacitated and defenceless, as she is too damaged by the rape to hold power and protect her own highly violable body. Her salvation from the dominant oppressive masculinity represented by the football player comes from the boy who is the embodiment of 'other' masculinity, in the form of Corey, the AV nerd. In this moment in which a threat to Sid's body is perceived, Sid's capacity for self-preservation is undermined as she is completely passive, while Corey is elevated because of his ability to act.

In *Fault Line*, Ben's maintenance of male control of female bodies is exemplified in his possessiveness after Ani is raped. He narrates, "I didn't want to fucking share her and I hated that the guys who raped her got her too. … I couldn't stand what we were becoming, but I couldn't be the guy to walk away" (Desir 180). Ben perceives Ani's rape as a violation of his property, reflecting past legal and philosophical conceptions of female rape as a property violation against a man. The hegemony of the New Age Boyfriend type is evident in that it is presented as the ideal model for which men should strive, as Ben must maintain a pretence of sensitivity by refusing to be "the guy" who would leave, and yet the regressive and sexist value system of this sensitive type is exposed in his reliance upon traditional hierarchical gender structures and sense of entitlement to his girlfriend's body.

The superiority of masculinity is further reinforced when Ben delegates the responsibility to protect Ani and her female friend to his male friend when they attend a party. Ben tells Kevin, "[D]on't let either of them drink. And don't go getting wasted yourself. They are your responsibility until I get there" (153). Ben's ownership and control of Ani's body extends to his friend, Kevin, and Ani's subjugation similarly extends to her female friend. Both girls are deemed incapable of taking care of themselves and are assigned a male guardian. The ideology of female weakness and inferiority is naturalised through a lack of confrontation or complication; Ben's assumption that girls need protection is simply

taken as a given in the text. While the move to make boys share in the responsibility for rape prevention is commendable, the reinforcement of a schema which disempowers girls is not. Rather than complicate or interrogate this sexist philosophy, the text presents Ben as a virtuous boyfriend, far more virtuous than Ani herself, as he tries to cope with being partnered with a damaged girl who is intent on sabotaging both herself and him and therefore cannot be trusted to manage her own body.

The New Age Boyfriend is an authority figure who possesses more knowledge than his girlfriend, and must therefore guide and educate her, particularly in relation to her recovery. This trait is also characteristic with Burns' New Hero: "Chick flicks which use a 'teacher' rescue portray heroines who require educating and a New Hero who provides the education needed. This education can take a variety of forms, but will always result in the heroine's increased success and/or happiness, along with an indebtedness to the New Hero for his assistance" (140-141). Similarly, the New Age Boyfriend maintains his hegemony not only because of his superior ability to manage his girlfriend's body, but because of his superior grasp of social and common sense. This awareness usually extends to a better understanding of how to recover from trauma than she possesses, suggesting not only that it was the victim's failure of common sense that caused her rape, but also that a boy is better equipped to handle rape and its trauma than a girl is. The New Age Boyfriend's need to implement common sense to manage his victim girlfriend's self-destructive behaviour not only maintains masculine hegemony, but also does so by reinforcing long-standing associations of masculinity with rationality and femininity with irrationality.

Leon, the boyfriend in Courtney Summers' *All the Rage* (2016), is a less typical New Age Boyfriend who seems to respect and encourage his girlfriend, Romy's, agency in some aspects, yet he nevertheless exemplifies the New Age Boyfriend's ability to manage her life in ways which facilitate her recovery. When Romy's attempts to conceal her rape involve her

lashing out rudely at co-workers, Leon intervenes, telling her, 'No, just *think* about it. …
You've got people in there who want to give you the benefit of the doubt because they can't
believe you'd do something like that. You're not making it easy tonight, Romy" (Summers
152). Leon's emphasised use of the word "think" signals that he is calling out her irrationality
and pushing her back towards sensible behaviour. He interprets the social dynamics for her
and ultimately takes on the task of negotiating with their co-workers to resolve the conflict, as
she is incapable because of the overwhelming emotional burden of managing her trauma.
Like both Ben and Corey, while his victimised girlfriend is self-destructive, the sexism of his
character type manifests itself in the novel's representation of Leon as sensible and rational,
and Romy as irrational and anti-social.

In a subgenre which is almost void of any discussion of race, let alone characters who
are identified as non-white, it is also notable that Leon and Ben are both black. Their non-
whiteness perhaps also plays into enhancing the enlightened perspective of the New Age
Boyfriend, as their blackness others them from their predominately white American society
and therefore positions them to observe social dynamics and interpret them for their
girlfriends more effectively. In *All the Rage*, when Romy almost gets Leon removed from a
public space by pretending not to know him, he says, "Jesus, Romy, I was the only black guy
there and the way that asshole was with me when he thought I was bothering *you* – I know
the kind of look he was giving me" (222). Leon's otherness gives him a potential to be easily
victimised, and this shared victimhood perhaps makes him seem a more relatable, safer, and
more sensitive option for Romy, as he can relate to her experience of victimisation. In *Fault
Line*, Ben's race helps to define him as a good guy, as his friend tells Ani, "Don't let him fool
you. He acts sort of white, but he's a total Haitian gentleman about shit like holding doors
and getting coats" (Desir 48). Ben's chivalry identifies him as a gentleman, which is atypical
of his white male peers. For both of these black New Age Boyfriends, their race classes them

as other, emphasising their exceptionality to traditional hegemonic masculinity, and facilitating their ability to objectively interpret social dynamics for their girlfriends.

Whereas New Age Boyfriends can educate their victimised girlfriends because of their enlightened perspective, in E. K. Johnston's *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* (2016) it is the girls who educate the boys about appropriate behaviour as they reject boyfriends' entitlement to control their girlfriends' bodies. The victim, Hermione, recognises that her boyfriend accepts this ideology: "I saw the jealousy in his eyes every time another guy touched me at camp, and I did nothing to reassure him. I had fun and I never thought about his feelings, mostly because he was doing the same thing with the girls he was practising with. … I should have been a better girlfriend" (Johnston 89). Hermione's psychological process of grappling with the sexist double standard is thus illustrated. She consciously weighs the motivations behind her behaviour against socially dictated norms, and measures out whether she has actually done anything wrong. Finally she concludes with, "I shake my head at that last thought, and it feels wrong. It is wrong. I owe Leo McKenna absolutely nothing" (89). The novel thus portrays a victim who reflects on sexist gender norms and accepts her own critical intuition and judgement, rather than passively accepting the guidance of her boyfriend.

The novel also provides a more active problematisation of male privilege, as the girls are constantly calling out the bad behaviours of their oblivious male peers. After her boyfriend, Leo, is pranked and he angrily grabs the female teammate of those responsible, Hermione says, "you can't just walk up here and grab a girl like that. What's wrong with you?" (37). Leo sees his actions as his right to retaliate against his bruised masculinity. Rather than accept this aggressive gendered moment of male entitlement, Hermione posits it as abnormal and unacceptable. Leo is not only scolded, but is cast as defective because of his thoughtless aggression towards a girl. When he reacts to this scolding with a sexist diatribe, Hermione's friend Polly tells him, "Get your ass to your cabin before you get caught, and if I

ever hear you talk like that about any girl, alive or dead, I will skin you" (38). The girls demonstrate female solidarity, perhaps inspired by their being cheerleading captains at a cheer camp and therefore authoritative figures over Leo, who grudgingly obeys. While the novel does hold girls responsible for monitoring boys' behaviour, the model offered by *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* offers greater recourse for girls to confront male privilege by modelling girls who educate boys who are defective in their sexist behaviour.

Dissecting male privilege is key to representing sensitive boyfriends without invoking the schema of The New Age Boyfriend, and texts can achieve this by writing boyfriend characters who become self-reflective about their privilege because of their second-hand experiences of rape. Pennell argues that the redemption of male characters in youth fiction demands "the rejection of the concept of the unitary masculine subject," and suggests that "This concept needs to be replaced by a diverse range of self-reflective masculine subjectivities whose intersubjective experiences with women and girls are not premised either implicitly or explicitly upon unequal relations of power" (56). These characters not only break from the New Age Boyfriend schematic mould, creating diversity within a highly homogenised subgenre, but their deviation from scripted gendered expectations also models alternate ways of experiencing masculinity that have the potential to destabilise hegemonic masculinity.

Mikey, the male narrator in Jenny Downham's *You Against Me* (2012), dissects male privilege effectively as he comes to recognise his own privilege throughout the text. Initially, despite actively supporting his sister, Karyn, after the rape, he does not want to hear her speak about it: "He wanted her to stop talking. He felt a rising panic that if she didn't stop right now, she was going to go on and on forever" (Downham 13). Despite caring for her, he does not want to confront what has happened to her because he perceives confrontation with the facts of her rape as potentially life-altering. When his girlfriend, Ellie, tries to tell Mikey

that her brother did rape Karyn, he does not want to listen: "To be honest, if it *is* about your brother, I don't even care. Anything could be true and it wouldn't surprise me. Maybe Karyn's lying" (276). It is simpler in Mikey's reality to ignore the conditions which privilege men, from which he has benefitted and his sister has suffered. This wilful ignorance is connected to his own privilege, as he seems more and more eager to suppress his growing recognition of male privilege as his romantic and sexual relationship intensifies. When they are about to have sex and Ellie tells him that she lied to the police about witnessing the rape, the novel reads, "His heart sank. Why wasn't anything ever simple? She was in front of him, confessing, and he didn't want to hear it. He wanted to kiss her" (292). For much of the text, recognising patriarchal social conditions which privilege boys and disempower girls constitutes an inconvenient and unpleasant obstacle to Mikey's world view and sex life, and he continually evades and suppresses the female voices that threaten his privilege.

However, Mikey is ultimately incapable of ignoring his own sense of entitlement. When he crashes a welcome home party for Karyn's rapist and encounters a drunk girl, the novel reads, "He looked up, but no one was taking any notice. He could pick her up and carry her off. He could drag her behind the marquee where it was dark and do whatever he liked to her. He could say that she wanted it, that she asked for it. … Was this how trashed Karyn was that night?" (53). This scene is ambiguously written and it is unclear whether he actually does consider raping the girl or whether he has been sensitised to recognise the conditions that facilitate rape. Either way, Karyn's rape has made Mikey hyper-aware of his masculine privilege, which gives him power over the girl, as he knows that raping her would be easy in a setting in which his word would be given more credence than hers. After watching his friend harass two girls on the street, Mikey is disturbed: "So much to do with girls made Mikey feel guilty now – stuff on TV, porn lined up in the newsagent's, song lyrics, page three of the *Sun*. He was aware of it all in a new way, and he really didn't want to be. What was he

supposed to do about any of it?" (246). Mikey's recognition of a system which disempowers girls and from which he has benefitted disempowers him, as he senses a personal duty to enact change, but feels incapable of doing so. By the end of the text, he apologises to his sister: "There were so many things he wanted to tell her – all the stuff he'd realized recently about how much she did, had always done in fact. … All he'd ever done was go to work, hang out with Jacko and pick up girls. … The last few weeks, it was as if someone had taken his life to pieces and let him see the way it worked" (378). Mikey has recognised that the privilege he enjoys within his world is contingent on the exploitation of girls. The rape, the ultimate manifestation of sexual violence and exploitation, enables him to recognise the systemic sexism that underpins society, and which is so often invisible to boys. By demonstrating a teenage boy's perspective as he recognises and negotiates the male privilege conferred to him by a hierarchical gender binary, *You Against Me* holds boys responsible for dismantling the patriarchal structures that facilitate rape, demonstrating that self-reflective boyfriend characters represent a far more effective anti-rape strategy than the New Age Boyfriend: they undermine patriarchal logic rather than implicitly reinforcing it.

Redemptive sex

Another instance in which the New Age Boyfriend undermines his girlfriend's agency is his role in depicting consensual sexual activity as a necessary step in a rape victim's recovery. In her analysis of postfeminism and rape in U.S. film, Sarah Projansky discusses the trope of associating women's independence with vulnerability to sexual violence: "Her gender identity may be mutable, oscillating between vulnerability and independence, but, more often than not, the narrative ultimately represents the family as a refuge and heterosexual romance as her salvation" (35). Not only is the New Age Boyfriend generally better able to judge what is right and wrong for his girlfriend in managing her post-rape body,

but the necessity of a post-rape sexual or romantic relationship is particularly evident in the frequency with which texts depict sex after rape as redemptive for the victim, as a sign of her healing. This trope effectively reduces female health to functional heterosexuality.

The redemptive sex trope presents the male as more capable of managing the victim's body and sexuality, as she has failed to do. In her analysis of representations of sex and power in young adult fiction, Roberta Seelinger Trites identifies a troubling trend in which texts "imply that sexual liberation is a good thing, but that it is the girl's job to make sure that male sexuality is not so liberated that she becomes victimized" *(Disturbing the Universe* 90). Agency is gendered male, yet the typical heterosexual encounter in young adult fiction which Trites describes features a boy who cannot control his libido and a girl who must exercise agency to control the encounter, or risk losing her agency completely as she becomes a victim to sexual violence, pregnancy, or disease. This formulation is inherently victim-blaming, as the boy's lack of agency and the girl's possession of it allows the boy to be exempt from blame for the rape, and the girl to be blamed for it. Where males are accorded more agency than females in every other aspect of gendered interaction, the reversal of this dynamic in representations of sexual encounters in young adult fiction is notable.

The dynamic Trites describes is exemplified in Erica Lorraine Scheidt's *Uses for Boys* (2013), in which Anna is sexually promiscuous as a way to compensate for her sadness. While the novel is an atypical rape novel in that Anna's trauma seems to stem less from her rape and is positioned (problematically) more as being a result of her single mother's neglect, her boyfriend, Sam, is a typical New Age Boyfriend, and he teaches her about appropriate sexuality. Anna narrates, "I want to be Sam. I want his life. I would do everything right. I would go to school. I would be a virgin" (Scheidt 174). Anna loves and envies Sam, not only for his nuclear family, but for his virginity. She later narrates,

Sam's a virgin. We wait. … I grow impatient.

"Slow down," he says.

"But Sam," I say.

"But Anna," he says.

"But," I say. "But, but, but," but then he holds me in a way that makes me laugh. He's very serious. He never jokes about sex. …

"I know, Anna," he says and there's a way he seems older than me. Like he knows what he wants. (176)

Sam is wiser than Anna because of his virginity, and her sexual desire is classed as a fault. The novel suggests that what Sam teaches Anna is age-appropriate innocence. Later, Anna's sexuality is categorically condemned, as their sex has punishing effects:

Sam's sick. Sicker than I imagined. His face is pale and his lips are cracked. His hair sticks to his face with sweat and he looks thin in his pajamas. He scares me. He stands unsteadily in the doorway and pulls at my hand like a child. He's excited. He takes my hand in his damp one and shows me how hard he is. He kisses me with an open mouth and when I pull away I can see how glassy his eyes are. I don't recognize him. … I start to pull back but then he kisses me until it changes and I want him as much as he wants me. … I press my face beneath his arm and I'm kissing him. His feverish body. I let go of his wrist and pull his pajamas down around his ankles. I lean back on my heels and pull off my dress. I put my mouth on his penis. (198-199)

While Sam initiates the encounter, Anna is agentic and desiring. The descriptions of Sam's illness interspersed with the sex scene indicate that Anna's sexuality is deviant and wrong. The pair are interrupted by the entrance of Sam's mother, who tells Anna to leave, and she then wanders the streets seriously ill, having caught Sam's sickness. The novel condemns transgressive female sexuality by aligning Anna's agentic sexual activity with sickness and

punishing her for it, and elevates the nobility of the New Age Boyfriend, who is here positioned as the victim of her sexual deviance.

New Age Boyfriends are usually presented as more agentic in sexual activities after the rape, suggesting that girls who have failed to exert agency when it was appropriate and required to prevent their rape have permanently lost that ability, or proven that they were never capable of sexual restraint and are therefore at fault for having been victimised. Mardorossian explains the futility of discussing agency in the context of rape: "Agency and victimization are conceptualized in opposition to one another, and the presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other. Agency is valorized as a mark of self-reliance, resistance, and moral worth, a valorization that is increasingly enabled today through the devaluation of victimhood's association with passivity" (*Framing* 32). In a neoliberal context in which agency is valorised, rape victims are seen as lacking because their deployment of agency has not triumphed to prevent the rape. This conceptualisation of rape victims' failure of agency is particularly relevant in the context of young adult fiction, in which agency is of crucial importance because of the humanist influence on the genre. The novels conform to a model in which only one participant in the sexual activity can demonstrate agency, and it is overwhelmingly the New Age Boyfriend who does so. He ostensibly leads the victim's recovery by proving that she is capable of sex as he unilaterally guides the terms of the encounter in which she is usually a passive participant, reflecting on this remarkable proof of her recovery rather than on pleasure or enjoyment.

The redemptive sex trope is exemplified in *What Happens Next*, as Corey and Sid's sexual intimacy is framed as a sign of healing, but while he acts in the encounters, she remains an object. She lacks agency, and her sexuality is characterised by resistance, discomfort, and anxiety. Before their first kiss, Sid narrates, "I've seen this boy almost every day for nearly six months now, but he doesn't just assume. He doesn't just take it. He has

asked permission first" (Clayton 243). Corey initiates the kiss, asks permission, and kisses her. Sid is a passive participant, disengaged from the kiss itself, and instead preoccupied with admiring Corey's understanding of consent. Later, Sid narrates, "He has a confident, unrushed way about him when we kiss and touch. He's in no hurry at all. If things start getting intense, he'll pull away for a breather, change the CD, take a sip of his drink, strike up a conversation. The anxious, groping, needy phase is over for him. He's been there, done that, and done it all the way, probably a lot" (250). Sid credits Corey with mastering his libido because of his extensive sexual experience as a nineteen-year-old, but his needs and his perception of her limitations dictate the parameters of the encounter. He acts, initiates, and retreats, while she is more of a passive observer than a participant. While the novel foregrounds consent, Sid's own sexual desires are unaddressed, non-existent, or irrelevant.

Fault Line's treatment of post-rape sex is also problematic, as, like Sam, Ben is a New Age Boyfriend who advocates abstinence and struggles to resist the reckless and destructive sexuality of his girlfriend. Before the rape in *Fault Line*, Ben admires Ani for not being too sexually eager. When she tells him, "I'm not really a jump-in-the-sack-after-the-first-month kind of girl," he is relieved, and tells the reader, "I was glad she wasn't. It sucks for guys to think about their girlfriends being with other guys" (Desir 61). The novel advocates chastity through a male narrator, whose perspective on desirable female behaviour for girl readers is probably (and disturbingly) a more persuasive source than the adult female author. Ben's appreciation of Ani's lack of sexual eagerness is contextualised by his jealousy and perceived ownership of her body. After the rape, Ani becomes sexually promiscuous in an effort to regain a sense of power and Ben must control her sexuality to prevent her self-destruction: "I was determined not to make our date end in sex. It's not that I minded, but it seemed it was the only way Ani and I had connected since the party and I missed just hanging out with her. Every time we started talking about anything remotely real, she withdrew or jumped me. I

was starting to get kind of messed up about it" (169). Ben recognises her behaviour as destructive to them both and tries to manage and correct her, undermining her ability to manage her own body.

The novel validates the idea that the New Age Boyfriend has a superior understanding of appropriate sexuality, as Ani's sexuality is presented as out of control and harmful not only to herself, but also to both the relationship and to Ben. Ben tells Ani, "I was tired of you putting yourself down, acting like all you are is some sex object" (172). When his protests fall on deaf ears, he speaks to a rape counsellor about it, who tells him, "[S]ometimes blatant sexuality is a form of self-destructiveness. And sometimes girls and women get their identity wrapped up in the rape and don't see themselves as anything beyond a vessel for men's sexual needs" (185). Both Ben and the counsellor assert that Ani has internalised her objectification to explain her self-destructive promiscuity. The rape counsellor also tells Ben, "I think when girls get angry, they turn it in on themselves. Guys tend to fight other people, girls feel bad about their emotions and punish themselves for it" (187). The novel problematically enunciates a stereotype about innate differences between girls and boys and suggests that self-destruction is a latent aspect of femininity. Rather than complicate these statements, they are affirmed, as Ani's self-destruction is presented as ultimately successful, as Ben reports the effacement of her subjectivity through exploitative sex. Despite her initiating and pressuring Ben to have sex, Ani is passive during the encounter, which Ben later narrates, "Her eyes stared past me to the back window. Glazed and vacant. I came and pulled the condom off quickly. My stomach heaved and I swallowed the bile in my throat. My hands shook in self-disgust. I was exactly like all those guys. I had just fucked the Manhole" (173). Ben attempts to exert the same sexual restraint that Corey has but is incapable of fending off Ani's sexual aggression. He accepts the final proof that her subjectivity has been annihilated by the rape and that she is irredeemable, as he refers to her

by the nickname, Manhole, which was given to her by school bullies after the rape. Ben's righteousness is enhanced by the fact that he is the first-person narrator throughout the novel, which privileges his perspective and gives him authority.

A less misogynistic model of sexual recovery is offered in *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*, where sexual health is presented as an aspect of healing, but not the crucial or only one. After a teammate kisses her, Hermione explains, "He'd kissed me. I just stood there, but I let him kiss me. And I'm not broken. I'm not freaking out, much" (Johnston 191). Like Sid, Hermione is passive during the encounter, but she is aware of this, and admires her own stability and psychological strength, rather than the boy's understanding of consent. The novel may avoid negotiating her agency in sexual encounters by not giving her a boyfriend after the rape, but it also articulates that this is not because she is incapacitated: "I'm pretty sure I can never date anyone as long as I attend Palermo Heights. The school can deal with me being a victim, but I don't think my classmates would know what to do if I started acting like a real person again, or at least the person I had been" (172). Hermione has been changed by her rape, but sexual incapacity is not part of that change, and she is neither damaged nor disposable. She also recognises a difference in her own understanding of her sexual health and the opinions of others which influence her behaviour. This representation not only valorises her subjectivity and perspective, but also offers a subtle criticism of an ideology which limits the sexual agency of rape victims, as espoused in other young adult rape novels.

The girls in *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* also critique the girl-blaming ideology which Trites describes by repeatedly asserting male responsibility for the consequences of sex. After the girls set their annual class goal to avoid any pregnancies or deaths by drunk driving, a boy comments, "We do our part by not dying, and the girls do their part by not getting pregnant. How hard can it be?" to which a girl responds, "Last I checked, it takes two to tango" (28). While the boy immediately interprets the goals as gendered, his teammate scolds him for the

sexist assumption and corrects him. Later, Hermione's boyfriend, Leo, gets angry at her: "You basically told everyone that girls shouldn't have sex" and she responds, "I told everyone to be careful …I bet you remember all the girls who had babies. Can you name any of the fathers?" (28-29). Leo interprets the goal as a warning to potential sexual partners and resents the perceived attack on his sexual freedom, and perhaps also the social stigma of having a girlfriend who has publicly endorsed safe sex, which he equates with abstinence. Hermione reminds him that it is the responsibility of both partners to avoid pregnancy and points out that boys tend to be exempt from the consequences of teenage pregnancy. The girls resist and vocally reject the typical narrative model of teenage sexuality identified by Trites, in which the male is constructed as having no power over his libido while the female monitors and controls the sexual encounter.

You Against Me also avoids the redemptive sex trope by not giving Karyn a boyfriend, yet the novel avoids stigmatising female sexuality by demonstrating a mutually consensual encounter between Mikey and Ellie in which they confront and dispel gender stereotypes. During foreplay, the novel focalises Ellie's surprise at her arousal: "Every girl knows if you get into a situation with a boy who has had sex already, then he will want to have sex with you. He will push at your boundaries. If you say no to a boy like this, he will try and get you to change your mind. But she wasn't saying no" (Downham 290-291). Ellie reflects upon the social conditioning which has taught her that she must resist, a philosophy which naturalises both male predation and female chastity. This gender dichotomy is deconstructed here, when Ellie's sex drive is acknowledged as equal to his and they are mutually participating partners. Ellie recognises a divergence between what she has been told and what she feels, and trusts her own perspective and intuition.

Ellie's exercise of agency during sex is also different to that problematised by Trites, as she is motivated by desire, not an impulse to resist a man's overwhelming desires. Ellie is

equally agentic in the sexual encounter because of her sexual desire, despite Mikey having more sexual experience: "She dared to lift his T-shirt and he raised his arms like an obedient child and she pulled it over his head. She loved the feeling of power as he melted towards her, the way his breathing changed under her fingers. 'Do you want me to stop?' she said. He shook his head" (293). The scene which models an ideal sexual encounter in contrast to the rape also demonstrates sensitivity to a sexual partner's body, and the physical and physiological ways in which desire is communicated. Consent is articulated, and conventionally masculinised and feminised actions and reactions are gender flipped. The gender flip continues in Mikey's focalisation: "It had never crossed his mind that his body might be special too. No girl had ever taken the time to show him. Or was it just he hadn't let them? Whichever it was, it was like a pulse rising" (293). While the male is typically active and the female body is acted upon in sex scenes, Mikey's body is the sexualised object in this scene, and he notes that the experience of being acted upon is both new and enjoyable. The novel portrays sex differently in that it is not redemptive, is represented as enjoyable rather than a source of angst, and consequently demonstrates the legitimacy of subjective perspective over cultural conditioning.

The good guy/rapist dichotomy

New Age Boyfriend characters function to demonstrate the victim's recovery and healing from the trauma inflicted by the rapist, thereby positioning them in a dichotomous binary with the rapist, who is usually aligned with aggressive and dangerous masculinity. This dichotomy is characteristically postfeminist; while the elevation of a sensitive male boyfriend and demonization of macho masculinity may seem like a productive feminist critique about what types of masculinity should be desirable, it obscures the consistent male hegemony over the female, and the ways in which seemingly 'nice' behaviour can be just as

damaging and controlling as more overt forms of violence. This construction implies that rape culture privileges only a dangerous and outmoded type of masculinity, obscuring persistent forms of male privilege and female subordination. By presenting him as exceptional to the hegemonic masculinity which ensures patriarchal dominance, New Age Boyfriends, and 'good guys' by extension, are characterised as the 'anti-patriarchy,' purporting to offer a type that is an antidote to rape culture itself.

This dichotomy is exemplified in *What Happens Next*, as Corey is held in stark contrast to the rapist. When Sid finally learns her rapist's name from a newspaper headline, she narrates, "Seeing his real name after all this time makes me cry out, and I cover my mouth with both hands. I'm going to scream. … I try to think of something nice – Corey's face, his kiss – I remember that first night with him and try to breathe" (Clayton 296). Seeing the name of her rapist humanises him, and sends Sid into an emotional panic, but this time thoughts of Corey soothe her. Memories of the redemptive romantic and sexual acts in which Corey held full control and dictated the terms serve as a literal antidote to her rape, and its symptomatic emotional crisis. Sid is biologically vulnerable and crippled by trauma and fear, and Corey is key to her healing and protection. Presenting the New Age Boyfriend as an antidote to rape culture confines rape to the realm of one type of dangerous and aggressive privileged masculinity, exonerating all other forms of masculinity from the possibility of committing rape.

What exactly characterises this privileged dangerous masculinity, aside from this propensity to rape, is undefined, as rapist characters are typically absent, undeveloped, abstractly monstrous and dehumanised characters. Hall explains that by making rape stories generic, anti-rape campaigns "propagandize rape as pure effects. This, in turn, masks the particular contexts of certain rapes – actual rapists and their very specific motivations. Instead, rape is positioned as a prediscursive flow of violence that precedes not only the

victims of rape but the rapists themselves. Rape seems, therefore, not only omnipotent but also inevitable" (8). When his character is excluded and his motivations are not interrogated, the rapist is essentially a narrative tool whose function in the rape story is secondary, even incidental. Not only does the absence of rapist characters from narratives not allow for an interrogation of their motivations, they are often explicitly articulated as being inhuman and therefore beyond explanation. The effect of erasing the rapist from the rape story is that novels resort to tropes of representing victimhood which implicitly blame victims by locating the problem in their psychology, instead of examining the cause of their trauma.

The treatment of the rapist in *What Happens Next* is generically typical: he is an abstractly monstrous character whom the victim can barely tolerate contemplating, and whose act cannot be reconciled with his humanity. He disappears from the text after the assault in *What Happens Next* and this results in Sid's pathologisation: "I don't know how it happens. It just does. I search and search for clues to tell me what happened, where he is, who else he has done this to. I find nothing but inner sickness. I get so torn up and panic-stricken that I have to slam my laptop shut and raise my window, stick my head out into the cold night, and try not to scream" (Clayton 90). This moment reveals the narrative implications of removing the rapist from the rape story: if the cause of the rape cannot be located outside of her, then it must be inside of her. When Sid is surprised with a reminder of the rapist, she panics: "I'm thinking of him as a person, as a fellow human being. And how he really wasn't. Human, I mean. He couldn't be. How could he be human and be so calculating…so…*evil?* (281). Sid is incapable of reconciling the act of rape with the perpetrator, removing its association with the rapist. Sid briefly considers the possibility of his humanity, which is characterised as an intrusive thought, beyond her control, but quickly rejects the possibility. This dismissal identifies rape as an inhuman act, which precludes interrogation of its motives and causes. As a result, the narrative defaults to a victim-blaming script and focuses on Sid's psychological

struggle, as though rape were a manifestation of her psychology rather than a crime committed against her. She explains the moment of panic: "It was a period cramp, I'm fine now'" (281). The trauma of rape is relocated to Sid's self, and it is explained as inherent to female anatomy, as natural as menstruation.

Rapists are even more abstractly conceptualised in *Fault Line*, in which the rapists are never discovered and fault is never assigned. As a result, the narrative implicitly blames the female victim for the sexual violence that has occurred. The text is wholly preoccupied with Ben's management of Ani's psychological breakdown. Ani asks Ben, "Whose fault is it, Beez? Those guys? Why would it be their fault? They were just acting on my suggestion. I told everyone I was going to get with them, and apparently, I did" (Desir 135). While Ben reassures Ani that she is not at fault for what she did while drugged, he regularly expresses doubts about this, and her ultimate disposability implicitly confirms these doubts. After seeing Ani cheat on him, he explains, "I couldn't shake the picture of Ani's arm linked around a stranger's neck while her ass filled the hands of someone else. I started the car, turned on the radio as loud as it could go, and peeled out of the parking lot. Manhole. I was dating the manhole" (140). Just as Sid's confrontation with her rapist's real name confers him with humanity, Ben's acceptance of Ani's nickname negates hers, as he collapses her infidelity into her rape. Ben accepts that her identity has been effaced because of her rape, as her unidentified rapists remain a menacing, abstract, and faceless group of boys at a party. His assertions that she is not to blame are undermined as he ultimately cannot cope with how damaged she is, and the alteration of her identity that he perceives as a consequence of her rape.

Conversely, Chris Lynch's *Inexcusable* (2005) actively engages with the dichotomy which separates good guys from rapists with the well-developed rapist narrator, Keir. Keir's

understanding of this dichotomy is revealed during an exchange with his victim, Gigi, as she tries to make him understand that he has just raped her:

"Good guys aren't rapists," she says flatly.

Oh thank God. Finally. For the first time in a lifetime, we are getting through the fog. She is seeing me again, and I am hearing what I should be hearing. She is seeing what she is supposed to see, and I could fall to the floor and kiss her feet.

"That's right," I say, nearly whining with appreciation. "That is what I have been trying to explain to you. It was just, it was just bad connections–"

"And you are a rapist," she adds, flatter still. (Lynch 163)

Keir is incapable of recognising that he has committed rape because of his conviction that he is a good guy, and he tries to convince his victim that this is a valid argument. He sees rape as the act of a 'bad guy' and because he is convinced that he is a "good guy," he is incapable of reconciling his actions with the word or concept of rape. His perception of his own privilege is exposed in that he believes that he has the power to gaslight his victim, as he says to her, "Do you even know what rape is?" (161). Keir tries to manipulate Gigi's reality by controlling its representation to make her see the situation as he would like it to be represented, through a lens in which his self-perception is tied to his supposed 'goodness,' and therefore it is categorically impossible that he has raped her.

The good guy/rapist dichotomy is also problematised in Alina Klein's *Rape Girl* (2012), when Adam struggles to reconcile his perception of his identity with the act of rape which he has committed. He tells Valerie, "It's not like I'm some pervert out lurking on a jogging trail somewhere waiting for a victim. I'm just a *guy*, not a rapist. So why'd you go out of your way to ruin my life just because we had sex?" (Klein 120). For Adam, a rapist is other than a "guy," and his internalisation of the real rape script provides his justification for

why he is not a rapist. His conviction is so strong that he perceives Valerie as attacking him. He tells her, "But it wasn't like I hurt you or anything. Your prude instinct was just kicking in. Girls always have those but they never last long" (120). The sexism which informs his justification is exposed when he argues, "But you didn't *mean* it … It's like when you tickle a two-year-old. They say 'No! Stop!' but then hold their leg out to you so you can grab 'em again" (120). This reformulation of 'no means yes' exposes Adam's belief that his own perspective and interpretation of Valerie's actions and intentions overrides hers. He feels entitled to her body and has internalised a notion of gender as oppositional, as well as romance scripts which eroticise aggression. By developing their rapists' characters, both *Inexcusable* and *Rape Girl* problematise the constructed dichotomy between good guys and rapists, suggesting that discourses which vilify and dehumanise rapists make it difficult to reconcile rape as a human act, and, by extension, to draw a connection with male privilege as key to the popularly accepted patriarchal logic of rape culture.

Everyman rapists

The dichotomy with the New Age Boyfriend creates a rapist type, which wrongly exonerates other, less conventionally 'macho' forms of masculinity from the potential to commit rape. Hall argues that in popular discourse, the rapist is constructed as special or different: "[T]he figure of the rapist is rendered more monstrous, thereby creating absolute distance between him and the everyday man, between rape and other misogynist and heterosexist practices" (14). Rapists exist in all forms, and rape is the result of a patriarchal cultural ideology which manifests itself in multifarious ways apart from rape, which often serve to justify or legitimise the gender inequality which facilitates rape. Novels which promote a narrow and limited characterisation of rapists obscure the fact that most rapists are

close to the victim, often family or friends, with the consequence that date rapists often present as 'nice' or sensitive.

In contrast, narrative space which is dedicated to developing the rapist's character allows novels to humanise the rapist. These are what I term Everyman rapists: rapists who are ordinary, typical, and sometimes even sympathetic. Mardorossian asserts that "It is only when we see rape as a problem that results from normative rather than deviant identities that its deterrence will stop being marginalized as a special-interest issue" (*Framing* 19). By humanising the rapist and transforming him into an Everyman figure, novels identify rape as an ordinary human act rather than as an exceptional manifestation of deviance. Novels which represent Everyman rapists are thus better able to reflect the reality of rape which Mardorossian describes: rape is not typically committed by deviant monstrous bogeyman, but by normal- and nice-seeming guys. This treatment also exonerates the victim; excluding rapist characters from rape novels diverts focus from the psychology of the perpetrator to the psychological trauma of the victim, which results in implicit victim-blaming.

The notion of a rapist type is refuted in *The Mockingbirds*, in which Alex contemplates the character of her rapist and ultimately decides that he is an Everyman type. Piecing together her memories of the night of her rape, Alex narrates, "I remember his tongue pushing into my mouth, his crusty lips the next morning, and above all, his unforgiveable laziness in not recycling his Diet Coke. Who doesn't recycle? I mean, really. Who doesn't recycle a soda can? Someone who'd do *this*" (Whitney 130-131). Rather than focus on the memory of his body invading her own, Alex fixates on dissecting and trying to understand a system of morality which would allow someone to commit rape. She continues, "A boy who'd rape a girl carries an umbrella. A boy who fucks sleeping girls totes an umbrella to protect him from the possibility of rain, sleet, or snow" (132). Far from the romanticised abstractly monstrous rapist which Hall problematises, Alex's rapist is very human and very

ordinary – the defining features of his morality system are that he does not recycle, and carries an umbrella.

The girls in Claire Needell's *The Word for Yes* (2016) similarly contemplate the ordinariness of Gerald, the rapist, who has been a close friend of the victim since childhood. The victim's sister, Erika, thinks, "She'd known Gerald for years, and he was one of the few boys at school who never made Erika feel nervous. He was 'just Gerald.' That was the way Melanie had always referred to him. He never struck Erika as a dangerous sort of boy" (Needell 142). The novel undermines the notion of rapist type by casting the rapist as a seemingly innocuous, Everyman sort of boy, rather than a dangerous sort of boy. The victim, Melanie, reflects on his character through reported thoughts: "Gerald had always been afraid of her. Could he have been, as Eliza suggested, just waiting for an opportunity? But didn't that make him more pathetic than anything?" (30). While locating rape as the act of an ordinary type of boy, the novel identifies male privilege as key to understanding what makes a man commit rape, as Melanie's best guess at what makes Gerald a rapist is his being threatened by a female character who undermines him, for which rape may have been his revenge, and a way of reclaiming power. In a notable counterbalance to the overwhelming tendency to represent rapists as abstract, monstrous characters, rape does not empower Gerald; rather than be intimidated or afraid, his victim sees him as pathetic as he is both humanised and belittled.

The rapist, Tom, in *You Against Me* is also a pathetic Everyman character, and is so fully humanised by being surrounded with a loving family that he can even be read, perhaps, as disconcertingly sympathetic. When the police interrogate Ellie as to why she did not protect Karyn and their mother responds, "She's only a kid. She was doing her best. You heard her say she got rid of those boys," to which the detective responds, "It's not those particular boys she needed to worry about though, is it, Mrs Parker?" (Downham 365). The

exchange highlights Tom's Everymanness, as well as the mother's difficulty in seeing her own son as a rapist, despite her knowledge of the facts. Tom retains his sister's affections despite her knowledge of his crime: "She wanted to tell this woman, *You don't know him – he rescued me from a dog once, he's funny and kind and helps me with homework.* She wanted to say, *He's lonely, he hasn't made proper friends with anyone since we moved from London. This is so much more complicated than I can ever explain*" (360-361). The reader is also given his mother's perspective, in which the rapist is recast as a little boy: "*How could he harm anyone? He's just a boy.* … I still remember his first steps, his first words, all of it. … I know you love him and I know you wouldn't have done this if you didn't have to, but he's not a monster, Ellie. I don't want anyone thinking that. … He's just a scared little boy. He's *my* scared little boy" (394-395). Tom acknowledges his own weakness, as he tells Ellie, "'I'm scared. … I'm really fucking scared!'" (398). His depiction as a feeble young man surrounded by a loving family powerfully reinforces a sense of the ubiquity of sexist ideology, in that even boys and men who are loved can subscribe to a sexist philosophy which leads them to rape. Far from being an abstract and inhuman monster, he is thoroughly humanised. He is not excused from blame, and is punished as his crime goes public, but the social forces which impelled him to rape are explored, rather than elided.

While the rapist in *All the Rage* is, unfortunately, mostly absent from the text, the novel does a good job of rejecting the good guy/rapist dichotomy and elevating the possibility of an Everyman rapist, largely by making it clear that the difference between a good guy and a potential rapist is not a set of characteristics, but an understanding of consent. This focus on consent is evident from the outset of Romy and Leon's relationship, when he articulates his interest in her: "I like you, Romy. Whatever you want to do about that" (Summers 24). Leon makes his affections known, but invites Romy to act on them. She also has a crush on him, but is not sure that he can be trusted: "Leon is nice. That doesn't mean he's safe" (27). She

articulates that being a "nice" guy does not matter, dismantling the perception that guys who present as "nice" cannot be rapists. The novel makes it clear that understanding of consent is the difference between a nice guy and a rapist when Romy is drunk in a bedroom at a party with Leon:

> I meet his lips with my own. And then his fingers tease the edge of my shirt, tugging at it, his hands trying to find a way under it and that's when I still. His hand, my shirt. Close my eyes. "Stop," I whisper. He – stops. I open my eyes. He moves off me slowly, carefully, and blinks, dazed, like he was gone from his body or too far from in it. He runs his hand over his face. "Why'd you stop?" I ask. … He doesn't think I'm sober. He doesn't think I'm sober and he's taking me out of the room with the bed in it. (65)

The novel describes Romy's physical reactions: she is sexually engaged and desiring, until she is not. Her withdrawal of consent is clear and, despite his description as being out of body, he hears and obeys her. The novel does somewhat undermine her common sense while elevating his, as she does not understand consent herself when she questions why he has respected it, yet at the same time the identification of an understanding of consent as the only characteristic which defines a good guy reinforces an understanding of the Everyman rapist.

Juxtaposing motivation and consent

Authors who develop their rapist characters are better able to explore the rapist's motivations, and this is frequently paired with an articulation of consent, often from the victim herself. Hall writes, "In the American imaginary, the figure of woman as victim also reflects her inverse or negative image: the rapist as monster" (13). Novels can challenge this simplistic pairing of the disempowered victim and monstrous rapist by juxtaposing the rapist's logic with the victim's, and this often occurs through a confrontation between the two

characters in which they discuss their perception of the rape. This confrontation allows

authors to destabilise misogynistic constructions of girlhood as defined by victimisation as

the victim's sense and perspective are given validity and credence in contrast to the rapist's

motivations, which invites an interrogation of patriarchal ideology which facilitates rape. As

Hall argues, "If we are to struggle against rape as a product of gender socialization more

effectively, we have to acknowledge how much sense rape makes in a (hetero)sexist culture

such as our own" (13). This juxtaposition of motivation and consent reveals and refutes the

misogynistic patriarchal logic prevalent in rape culture, in which male needs and desires

outweigh the rights of the female, and demonstrate that the cause of rape is located in

masculinity, not femininity.

The Mockingbirds is particularly effective at revealing its rapist's motivations and

understanding of consent, as the presence and development of Carter's character allows for a

literal interrogation when he is tried by the student-run court system:

> "Did she say yes?" Maia asks for a third time, and each time she asks the
>
> question the room grows quieter, waiting for his answer.
>
> "She was breathing."
>
> "She was *breathing*?" Maia repeats. "She was breathing?"
>
> Carter nods, latching on to this idea. "Yes, she was breathing."
>
> "That was her consent in your view? Breathing?"
>
> Carter doesn't know what to say; he's Bambi without his mom. "Um, yeah."

(293)

Carter's misconception of the parameters of consent is revealed in this scene, as he is publicly

forced to acknowledge that consent was never given. His understanding of consent

demonstrates a perception of women as sexual objects, as, to him, their mere existence

indicates sexual consent. The inclusion of the rapist in the narrative allows for his subjection to public judgement and embarrassment, as he is rendered pathetic and ridiculous when his logic does not hold up to scrutiny, and the logic of masculine entitlement is rejected.

Motivation and consent are also frequently juxtaposed by having the victim confront her rapist and challenge his perception of the rape, as is exemplified in *Rape Girl*. After Valerie's case against Adam is dropped, Valerie's principal tells her, "Adam would like the chance to speak to you now that … your troubles have been resolved … Nobody can force you to speak, Valerie, but I think Adam deserves the chance to speak to you," which Valerie translates as, "His meaning was clear. I was the guilty one, so Adam would get what he wanted" (Klein 115). Valerie's focalisation allows her to serve as interpreter for the principal's victim-blaming or rape denial as she is reluctantly forced into the confrontation with her rapist. The novel thus privileges her perspective while exposing patriarchal double-speak. Adam is just barely repentant: "Well I guess if you didn't really want it, maybe I shouldn't've or something. But who can ever tell what a girl really wants?" which gives Valerie an opportunity to articulate a definition of consent: "How about this – if she says no, shakes her head, or even just seems a little less than enthusiastic, *leave her alone*!" (121). In stark contrast to the typical fictional victim who collapses under the pressure of her trauma, Valerie stands up to her rapist. Despite his rejection of blame, she is able to confidently and competently rebut him, providing a simple articulation of consent. While, as is typical of young adult rape novels, *Rape Girl* stops short of including any serious form of justice or punishment, the novel does show that Valerie's speak-out has had repercussions for Adam, as he tells her, "Amber Sweet won't go to the prom with me because of you. Could you maybe, like, tell her it was all a mistake or something? For some reason she won't drop it" (121). While Adam still blames Valerie, this exchange does show that Valerie's speaking out has had real effects, and may prevent another girl from being victimised.

Inexcusable also contains a confrontation between the victim and rapist, however the focalisation is reversed, as the rapist-narrator is focalised when the victim confronts him with his crime. Motivation and consent are juxtaposed when Keir says, "I love you. That is what matters" and Gigi immediately responds, "I said no. *That* is what matters" (Lynch 140). Keir resists Gigi's assertions that he has raped her with the argument that his love for her makes him a good guy and justifies his actions. This denial continues until the final page of the novel, when he narrates,

> I stare into her eyes. More to the point, I get her to stare into mine. I am still certain, still lock-certain, that if she could see me for real again, this could all be put right again. … I tip her back onto the bed. I start kissing her differently now, harder, with passion, with love, with fury, I pull at her dress, get her shoulder exposed and I press the full length and weight of my body down over the full length of hers as I swing her legs up onto the bed. … I can feel horror lines grooving in my face. I am horrified. I am sick. … I roll over onto my other side, face the cinder-block wall, and wait for whoever is going to come for me. (163-165)

The reader is given a privileged view into Keir's denial as motive and consent are juxtaposed. He genuinely does not believe that what he has done is rape because of his belief in the monstrous rapist trope, and is incapable of reconciling that set of characteristics with his own earnest desires. The self-centredness of his perspective is evident in that he does not recognise that his unrequited affection does not justify his actions. When he finally does realise what he has done, he is sickened and horrified, as his self-image as good guy football hero is overlaid with the image of monstrous rapist. Masculinity is identified as the problem, as Keir's realisation undoes both the dichotomy of good guy and rapist, and of disempowered victim and monstrous rapist.

The Word for Yes also focalises the rapist, while demonstrating the importance of male society in keeping other men accountable for their actions. Gerald asks his brother, "Had he, Edward, ever, you know, messed around with a girl when maybe he shouldn't have – when maybe they were both too drunk?" (Needell 178). Despite being told by everyone at school that he is a rapist, Gerald seeks out his brother's opinion, to understand whether or not his behaviour is normal or acceptable, as they share a perspective informed by the same social norms. The narrative focalises on Gerald during this section of self-contemplation:

> He needed to know whether what he had done had been done by other boys, by other men, who were not criminals – who might even be in love with a girl. He wanted to know if it was possible to do something, and to know that it was wrong at the time, but still not be completely at fault. Could drunkenness absolve you of having made a bad, albeit somewhat conscious, decision? Was there something so terrible in what he had done, when he had wanted Melanie Russell for so long, and then she had come to him, so sweetly, so yieldingly, floating on a stream, as it seemed at the time, of rum-spiked punch? The blow that landed on Gerald's jaw was a response to that question.
>
> (178)

Gerald wants to find a way to justify his actions, and his ambiguous emotions expose genuine confusion. He knows that what he has done is wrong, but wants to resist fault. Like Keir, he attempts to justify his actions by insisting on a genuine affection for Melanie. His brother's punch in the face serves as the ultimate condemnation: "He knew now for certain what he'd suspected for the last two weeks at school. That in the eyes of the entire world, he was a piece of shit" (179). Gerald never fully accepts responsibility, and blames others for misunderstanding him, and yet by including this confrontation, the novel clearly positions his actions and justification as a problem which pertains particularly to masculinity.

This approach of exposing a disjunction between the rapist's impression of social norms and actual social norms is a proven effective strategy for male anti-rape activism. Citing research which shows that men "underestimate the extent to which other men are uncomfortable with sexist behavior toward women," in their research on male roles in rape prevention, Patricia Fabiano et al. suggest that "If men's discomfort with how they are taught to act as men could be revealed as normative, men might be more willing to be themselves and express discomfort with the behavior of other men" (106). Their study of college-age men showed that rape prevention education which focuses upon exposing a misunderstanding of the acceptability of sexist behaviour to other men as a social norm "could serve to empower men to be stronger social justice allies of women by fostering interventions against the problematic behaviors of other men" (109). Confrontation scenes allow authors to isolate the rapist figure; where rapist characters will often assert that their behaviour conformed to social norms which accusers and victims do not understand, their lack of peer support delegitimises their motivations, often exposing them as inherently misogynistic and undermining a form of masculinity which is contingent on dominating women.

Sport, masculinity, and rape

The alignment of sport and rape is a popular and recurring theme in anti-rape discourse, including young adult rape fiction. Novels frequently seek to problematise masculinity by focusing upon the rape-supportive culture associated with the hyper-masculinity of sport. This focus can be problematic in itself, however, because the alignment with sport and rape contributes to the creation of a rapist type. It suggests that the most dangerous type of boy or man is an athlete, and that athletes are more likely to commit rape. This exceptionalising of the rapist athlete achieves the opposite of the anti-type universalising and abstraction that the Everyman rapist offers. The focus on athleticism also narrows the

problem of rape culture to only include sport culture, primarily located within high school and college campuses, distracting from other culturally insidious expressions of sexism which encourage rape and constitute a broader female- and victim-hostile social context.

The tokenism of the rapist-athlete is exemplified in *The Word for Yes*, as the rapist is not an athlete but wears a football costume during the rape. When it is suggested that they attend a Halloween party in a *Grease* inspired couple's costume, Melanie rejects the idea, effectively 'friend-zoning' Gerald by indicating that she is not attracted to him: "No way am I walking in as Sandy with Gerald as what's-his-face, Danny," as she tells him to "Just do the football player thing" (Needell 62). Gerald is hurt by Melanie's rejection, a common occurrence which Melanie's focalisation reveals as pathetic and irritating: "Gerald cast a momentary hurt glance at Melanie, which Melanie chose to ignore. She hated when Gerald made his injured puppy face at her" (62). As a result, he is dressed up as a football player while raping her at a Halloween party; despite his characterisation as an Everyman, he dons the costume of hyper-masculinity while exacting revenge for her rejecting him. When Melanie asks if the rape was revenge, he answers, "I was so fucking in love with you, okay? Always. For fucking ever. I made myself believe it was finally happening. That you didn't see me as a waste of time. But I'm really just a waste of Melanie Russell's breath!" (209). Gerald refuses to accept Melanie's rejection and convinces himself that he is entitled to her body, maintaining his anger and indignation even after it has been acknowledged that he did rape her. The football costume serves to reinforce the notion that it is masculinity that Gerald is fighting for, as it is a symbol of masculine entitlement.

One way in which this narrowing of the rapist type and focusing on sport culture can be partly redeemed is by understanding sport culture as a metonym for broader masculinity. Stephens writes that in children's fiction: "Sporting accomplishment stands in metonymic relationship to masculinity" ("Page Just Waiting" 46). Sex is often discussed in parallel to

sport, or by using sports terminology, for example, getting to the bases and scoring a home run. Reflecting the dynamic which Trites describes of girls having to control male sexuality or be victimised, rather than be positioned as mutually consenting and participating partners, male and female are positioned as opposing teams in this analogy: one team must move forward to win and the other must push them back in order to prevent losing. The alignment of sport and sex eroticises the act of pushing sexual boundaries and overcoming resistance. Pennell writes, "Feminist theorizing problematizes hegemonic masculinity by arguing that it interpellates subjects with a relentless impetus to distinction with competitiveness being the essential masculine experience and 'winning' being the means of establishing self-worth" (57). If sport stands in metonymic relationship to masculinity, 'winning' in sport, or in sex, becomes essential to validating masculinity. While any specificity or typing of rapists risks creating rapist types, which risks obscuring the importance of asserting the Everymanness of the rapist, sporting worlds function as metonyms of patriarchy, so a critique of athletic culture can be read as a critique of masculinity.

This reading can apply to *Fault Line*, in which the world of sport is problematised as a space which excludes and disempowers girls, while simultaneously empowering boys. Ani tells Ben, "I've seen you with those guys after swim practice. All you do is grunt at each other. … [I]t's like this secret language of boys made up of grunting, hooting, and shoving. Maybe you could give me some sort of decoder so I could figure out what it all means" (Desir 59). The gender dichotomy is so extreme that Ani feels excluded from the language itself. She interprets the boys' language as primal and animalistic, and not merely vocal, but also physical. When she teasingly asks for insight, he responds, "You'd have to prove yourself worthy. I mean, there was a reason they separated the boys and girls in health class in fifth grade" (60). Ben jokingly rejects Ani's request and points to her gendered inferiority, and the necessity of educating boys and girls differently because of their different anatomy.

Ani responds, "Is that where you guys learned how to grunt? Well, shit. All we learned about were periods and how to put tampons in the right way" (60). While the boys celebrate their bodies through athleticism, girls are taught how to manage their messy and inconvenient bodies. Ani's comment has the potential to provoke an analysis of the sexist and exclusionary differences in health education. Unfortunately, this critique takes the form of flirty banter, suggesting that an awareness and acceptance of these gendered socialisations are an aspect of sexual desirability. This reading is reinforced, as the conversation concludes with Ben saying, "Gross. Too much information" (60). While the novel problematises the gendered exclusions of sporting culture, it also reinforces postfeminist discourses in which girls' bodies require control and regulation, a responsibility from which boys are excluded by allowing the protagonist to dismiss this critique.

Athleticism and rape are inextricably aligned in *Inexcusable*. Keir has paralysed a player with an aggressive hit on the football field, and is rewarded for it: "I had not done anything out of line. I had not done anything blameworthy. 'An unfortunately magnificent hit, in the universe of football' was what the writer called it, in the article about me being cleared. … When I got home, at the end of that first quiet day, I got the mail and opened it. I had quietly received an offer of a football scholarship" (Lynch 21-22). The novel thematises the ways in which sports culture fosters male aggression, as the journalist identifies the football universe as having its own rules. This culture of permissibility allows Keir to justify his actions and excuse his bad behaviour. His aggression is further legitimised when he is rewarded with a scholarship because of his especially (and intentionally) brutal play. The novel aligns the hyper-aggressive masculinity of the football world with sex, as Keir tells the reader, "It isn't scary when you hit a guy so perfectly, though, it is something entirely else. It almost sounds like ecstasy when you play it over in your head and you get up and trot off, just a little, little bit horny" (Lynch 18). Violence, as it is connected to the exercise of

masculinity, is erotic for Keir, and the connection between rape and sport is made explicit. To further emphasise this point, Keir rapes Gigi in a room specifically designated for football players' use, possibly for just such a purpose: "It's not my key, exactly. It's the football team's key. For their use. For our use. It's in a spot in the rosebush out front. A key to open the front door, and another one for the last room on the top floor. It's one of the perks" (Lynch 155). The isolated and private position of the room suggests that it is to be used for sex, possibly non-consensual, which Keir understands as a 'perk' for successful athletes. The novel suggests that sports culture fosters an understanding of girls' bodies as reward for the hyper-masculinity exemplified in sport, which is inextricably connected in this novel to sexual violence.

While *Inexcusable* explores the sporting culture and how it nurtures aggressive masculinity and entitlement which is so strongly connected to rape, *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* provides examples of recourse against this, by suggesting that girls too can be empowered by sport. On being co-captain of her cheerleading squad, Hermione observes that "The power is dangerous, or it could be. It's definitely fun" (Johnston 2). She recognises the prestige and power that comes with athleticism, and the potential to abuse that power. Hermione comments on her psychologist's sexism as it relates to sport: "He never fails to make some kind of insulting comment about cheerleading. … It's a bit infuriating, but nothing new, sadly. Apparently it doesn't matter how hard you work: As long as you're a cheerleader, you will never be a real athlete" (178-179). The novel addresses sexist attitudes which deride cheerleading, a female dominated sport, and the girls are clearly established as exceptional athletes, who enjoy power and prestige from their accomplishments: "[B]asketball is perhaps Palermo Heights' worst sport (and that's saying something), so we've always paid particular attention to our basketball routines. I'm not sure anyone would come to games if we didn't show up in top form" (94). Undermining this male-dominated universe by portraying

successful female athletes, the novel suggests the means by which girls can share in the empowering potential of sports, as is also evident in their confidence in calling out the occasional sexist comments of their male teammates.

Conclusion

Rape is the result of a problem with masculinity, not with femininity. The traditional focus on femininity in anti-rape discourse holds women and girls accountable for rape culture, while obscuring masculinity's role in causing rape. As Mardorossian argues, "analysing victimisation through the lens of a reframed masculinity means bringing rape to public attention not as a 'women's issue' but as an issue that saturates culture and defines structural masculinity's relation to femininity and not women's relation to men" (*Framing* 3). Young adult rape fiction should therefore preoccupy itself with complicating masculinity and male privilege, rather than treating rape as a psychological issue which girl-victims must overcome, as is generically typical. While novels which offer New Age Boyfriends and monstrous rapists may attempt to disrupt traditional expectations of a hegemonic masculinity, they merely reinforce, legitimise, and model the same oppressive patriarchal tropes which they purport to challenge.

The New Age Boyfriend in young adult rape novels tends to be a supportive figure who helps his victimised girlfriend to recover, and there is nothing inherently wrong with such a narrative. However, the representation and lack of complication of boyfriends' entitlement and superiority in relation to managing female bodies and trauma recovery undermines girls' agency and competence. The New Age Boyfriend is characteristic of a type of sensitive masculinity which may seem to destabilise hierarchical gender relations, but who actually obfuscates persistent female disempowerment. Rachel O'Neill identifies this trend in her analysis of masculinity studies, which celebrates certain models of masculinity as being

more inclusive and denounces the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a relic of the past, as a diversity of masculinities are now accepted and acceptable. However, O'Neill argues, this analysis mostly relates to a decrease in homophobia, and fails to recognise the relational role of women in the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the persistence of patriarchy. According to O'Neill, this oversight is symptomatic of a gap of enquiry into the effect of postfeminism on masculinity. She argues that this gap is all the more problematic given the insidiousness of postfeminism, which seems feminist but is not:

> The lack of discussion about postfeminism within masculinity studies suggests a continuing selective engagement with feminist scholarship, and raises further questions about the political orientation of the field. In neglecting to engage the analysis of postfeminism, masculinity scholars fail to address how men are implicated in what many feminist scholars regard as the remaking of gender and sexual inequality in new and ever more insidious forms. (O'Neill 115)

The sensitivity of the New Age Boyfriend, in contrast to his peers, suggests that he represents a benevolent type of masculinity, yet this benevolence is characteristically postfeminist, as it merely conceals his privilege beneath a veneer of sensitivity. In so doing, the New Age Boyfriend character type assumes that these reformulated masculinities have internalised and processed feminist ideology, and are therefore beyond interrogation. However, as O'Neill points out, "Where women are constructed as the 'beneficiaries' of social change, the logic of feminism as a social and political movement is undermined" (102). The presumed feminism of the New Age Boyfriend type, who is often celebrated in young adult rape fiction, precludes interrogation of the naturalised patriarchal philosophies and persistent male privilege which underpin rape culture and facilitate rape.

The lack of interrogation of naturalised patriarchal ideology and its causality in rape is evident in the dichotomy which is constructed between good guys and rapists in young adult

rape fiction. This narrowing of the rapist type not only exonerates 'good' guys from a potential to rape, despite statistical evidence that a majority of rapists are known to the victim, it also dismisses the potential to commit rape as a feature of a vaguely defined antiquated and socially deviant type masculinity. When the rapist is located in the uninterrogable realm of the inhuman, while the victim bears the brunt of narrativisation, he becomes a narrative tool which enables examination of the female psyche, rather than the main conflict in the rape plot. In contrast, novels which develop the character of the rapist humanise him and locate rape within the realm of human action, enabling interrogation of his motivations, which are frequently and productively juxtaposed with an articulation of consent. Narratives in which rapist characters are developed not only create much needed generic diversity, they also humanise the act of rape. This characterisation enables authors to expose the mechanics of female subjugation as it exists in social practise, and not merely in the impenetrable minds of monstrous rapists.

The reiteration of oppressive patriarchal tropes and beliefs encourages and permits the cognitive justifications for rape, and this can be circumvented by representing diverse adolescent male types who undermine traditional schemas. Authors achieve this goal by dissecting male privilege, particularly through the self-reflectivity of male characters, by eroding the good guy/rapist dichotomy by creating humanised, even sympathetic or pathetic, Everyman rapist characters, and by developing those characters to allow for the juxtaposition of explorations of motivation with a careful articulation of consent. As Stephens argues, "To degender social relations requires the resignification of masculinity and femininity so that they are not bounded and oppositional concepts" (*Ways of Being Male* xiv). Nowhere is this goal more critical than in a discussion of rape, which is the enactment of male privilege. By rejecting these scripts and schemas in favour of an interrogative examination and discussion of masculinity, young adult rape novels have the potential to interrogate structural patriarchy

upon which rape culture is founded, and to interrogate traditional paradigms of an oppressive

masculinity which are the very cause of rape.

CHAPTER 5
Reckoning with Rape Culture:
Individual and Community in Young Adult Rape Fiction

"Jamie, come on. We talked it through and we agreed, didn't we? We agreed it would be easier not to make a big deal of it, especially when everyone there was underage and there'd be so much shit if it got out. It would just mean that people would be pissed off with you for getting them in trouble, and you'd miss out on all of the parties because Dylan's friends wouldn't want you there anymore. … Listen … I think you should go home." (O'Neill 94)

Young adult rape fiction typically focuses on an individual girl's reaction to the trauma caused by her rape, and not her recovery, which usually occurs off-page and is implicit in her confession. As I have argued throughout this thesis, this narrative choice positions rape as a personal issue, not a cultural one. By assigning responsibility for rape to individual girls and women, texts not only blame victims, but also obscure societies' causal role in facilitating rape. In *Transforming a Rape Culture* (1993), rape culture is defined as "a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. … 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*" (Buchwald et al. vii). Young adult rape novels tend to acknowledge rape culture by creating characters who are debilitated by a recognition of their inevitable and overwhelming disempowerment. Victims are typically represented as reacting to this recognition by alienating themselves within their traumatised psyches, rather than engaging with their supportive loved ones or communities. The focus upon the victim's isolation as a response to gendered injustice is characteristically postfeminist, as these novels acknowledge rape culture as an unfortunate social norm, but do nothing to help dismantle it, as their ideology of neoliberal individualism leaves no room for

recourse; it is up to the individual to manage their response to sexual violence, and blame is implied for their initial victimisation, as well for an inability to recover from it. The uncomplicated lack of societal accountability for acts of rape in these novels normalises the sexual violence and victim-hostility of rape culture, suggesting that reconciliation and acceptance is girls' only means of moving beyond trauma.

There are, however, an increasing number of novels which shift both the focus and the onus of grappling with rape from the individual to the community. This shift is more reflective of a feminist understanding of the personal as political: rape is not treated as an individual problem stemming from an implicitly innate failing, but as a collective social issue which must be tackled as such. In her discussion of the term 'rape culture,' Carrie Rentschler points to its social rather than individual focus: "Rather than focusing explicitly on the perpetrator of sexual violence, the term targets the cultural practices that reproduce and justify the perpetration of sexual violence" (67). Culture is created by community, and the focus on the community allows for an interrogation of its culture; these novels have the potential to interrogate rape-supportive belief systems through both interrogation of the ideas which facilitated the act, and of the community's response to it. These novels acknowledge that, while the experience of trauma is individual, the victim's reckoning with trauma necessarily occurs within a society and therefore cannot be experienced in full isolation. In her analysis of trauma fiction, Laurie Vickroy contends that "social opinions can re-traumatize or undermine victims," and "the possibilities for healing often depend upon social interconnections, through acts of witnessing or sympathy" (137). By analysing the representation of the relationship between victims and their communities, including peers, families, and private, public, and online spaces, this chapter will argue that novels which focus on community-building instead of isolation provide more effective interrogations of rape culture.

Rape spaces

Fictional and non-fictional spaces are mutually constructive. Literature affects the ways in which we engage with physical space, and the narrative characterisation of spaces can similarly impact upon our existence in the physical world. As David Herman explains, narratives can "be thought of as systems of verbal or visual cues prompting their readers to *spatialize* storyworlds into evolving configurations of participants, objects, and place" (263). The characterisation of spaces, particularly of either private or public space, is key to understanding how novels construct the individual's relationship to her community, as spaces function alternately as an area for the victim to retreat in solitude, or to engage with her community.

A key way in which narratives characterise space is by treating them as 'rape spaces.' As discussed in my second chapter in relation to the female body, rape spaces are created when the repetition of a set of narrative elements in rape stories causes those elements to become conceptually blended with an understanding of actual rape. When rape stories rely on repetitive scripts, the story of rape becomes focused on the other repeated narrative elements, relocating the rapist's agency into the physical setting and the presence of a victim. The rapist's agency is displaced, rape becoming an inherent aspect of the space itself, and his responsibility for the crime is negated, as he merely fulfils the purpose of the space by raping. For example, in the real rape script, the necessity of the dark street as a narrative element implicitly suggests that dark streets contribute to causing rape. Rape space is particularly likely to be constructed in narratives in which the rapist character is either barely characterised or absent altogether, as his agency is displaced into other narrative elements, such as the female body, or the dark street.

The impact of the discursive creation of spaces as inherently conducive to rape is evident in the misperception that women are more at risk in a public rather than a private

space, despite statistics which reveal that an increasing majority of reported rapes occur in domestic space (Planty, et al.). Gill Valentine describes this paradox as "a mismatch between the geography of violence and the geography of fear" ("Images of Danger" 22). In young adult rape fiction, victims are typically raped in domestic space, usually at house parties. The impact of the real rape script is evident in that despite being raped indoors within domestic spaces, these fictional victims commonly develop a fear of outdoors and public space. In her eco-feminist analysis of young adult novels in which victims are raped outdoors, Amber Moore writes, "The wild outdoors in which they are assaulted largely becomes reread as a traumatic geography, and so, for the most part, the girls retreat from this space, compromising their relationships with the land" (81). The outdoors is usually characterised as a rape space, dominated by the threat of dangerous men, or of public opinion which accepts rape culture ideology and is therefore hostile to the victim. This characterisation also obfuscates the statistically more common danger of being raped in indoor, domestic spaces, making girls and women more vulnerable to sexual violence as it is actually experienced. Characterising public and outdoors space as rape space also suggests that rape culture is limited to public spaces, in turn suggesting that a female puts herself at risk by engaging in these spaces.

Public space is where community and culture are formed through interactions with other people, and the construction of public space as rape space discourages community-creation and social engagement. In her survey of parents' and children's relationships to public space, Valentine found that because of "stranger danger" campaigns characteristic of neoliberal rape prevention tactics, parents have become increasingly fearful of letting their children outside. She writes, "[P]arents consider abduction to be the greatest danger faced by primary school aged children (45%) rather than traffic accidents (34%), drugs (9%), gangs (3%) and accidents in the home (1%)" ("Oh Yes I Can" 69-70). Her study showed that

parents were particularly concerned about sexual violence and about the possibility that children would not know how to recognise its threat or process its occurrence (70). Her interviews with children determined that they "are usually treated as if they have less knowledge and less experience than adults," and yet "young people often have well developed local knowledge of both incidents and rumors of danger and good understanding of local 'place ballets'" (79). The ability to move freely in public space is empowering and allows for the development of both social and self-protection skills. The ability to move independently in public spaces enables children to take responsibility for their own safety and develop the confidence to do so, which is crucial to social interaction and community formation.

The construction of public spaces as rape spaces reinforces gendered perceptions of private space as the realm of the female and public space as the realm of the male. This construction has the potential to limit girls' and women's comfort and mobility, making them fearful of manoeuvring outside of the domestic. Another study conducted by Valentine found that while both boys and girls are seen as vulnerable to sexual attack in outdoor space during early childhood, these fears become gendered as children reach adolescence. Until the age of ten or eleven, boys and girls had similar limitations on their access to public space but "After the age of 11 the gender division of space becomes a reality for children … as parental restrictions on boys' spatial ranges are relaxed and restrictions on girls are intensified with the emphasis placed in their physical vulnerability to attack" ("Images of Danger" 24). Freedom to manoeuvre outside the home becomes increasingly gendered. A study of women's relationships to outdoor space conducted by Eileen Green and Carrie Singleton shows that girls internalise such constructions of the outdoors as a rape space and it affects their behaviour: "These girls expressed fear and anxiety about what might happen to them in outside spaces, especially in the evenings, which they considered to be their time for leisure.

They linked this fear with perceptions of 'dangerous men', figures characterized as 'men out of control'" (860). The persistence of the real rape script is evident here in that the concept of outdoor spaces is inalienable from that of violently aggressive men. This fear of outdoor space has implications for community formation, as Green and Singleton's study found that "Girls are often found to use 'inside' spaces and this can be of detriment to their psychological and social well-being" (866). The schema of public space as dangerous and private space as safe is a mechanism for the social control of women. The cognitive fusion of the threat of sexual violence with outdoor space not only limits girls' mobility and, consequently, their social development, it also prevents them from engaging with their communities to participate in constructing and developing their community's culture.

In Colleen Clayton's *What Happens Next* (2013), the outdoors is represented as a rape space, as Sid's sense of freedom in the outdoors is juxtaposed with demonstrations of her vulnerability. Sid narrates, "I'm grounded, of course, and being indoors is unbearable. Every moment feels like the roof and walls are caving in on me, and the only thing that gives me any real relief is stepping outside into the cold air" (Clayton 48). Sid cannot bear the oppressive limitations of the domestic space and desperately wants to be outside. She also recognises that she is safer outdoors rather than indoors: "The last time I was truly safe, I was outside and moving" (50). For Sid, outdoor space offers freedom and safety. However, the novel juxtaposes her sense of freedom with an awareness that she puts herself at risk by going outside: "My mother has no idea I run at night, sometimes for two or three hours at a time. If she knew, she'd freaking kill me … *What sane female jogs at night, Sid?*" (107). Sid's judgment and assessment of the security of outdoor space is overridden by her mother's fears, and the danger of the outdoors is reiterated by an internalised voice of authority. This fear is further legitimised when Sid encounters a group of drunken men as she returns home from breakfast with her boyfriend: "[T]heir lecherous whistles and gawking send my high-flying

mood diving straight into the dirt. I can't cross the street until the light changes, so I'm stuck listening to the catcalls" (157). The outdoor space is presented as in alliance with the men who harass Sid: the traffic lights keep her captive and vulnerable, suggesting that the physical space is agentically aligned with male sexual predators against their female victims. Sid narrates, "As the light changes, I start to cross. Peacoat heads back to his crew and one of them gets vulgar. … 'Shake those humps, baby! Magically delicious!'" (158). Sid's attempt to leave the space is met with an escalation of the harassment. Despite her being raped in a domestic space, a true reflection of the statistically more common rape setting, fear is located outside. The novel thus not only displaces the geography of fear and violence, it also illustrates for the reader that while the outdoors may seem to be a space of freedom, it is inherently unsafe for a female: it is rape space. This conflict, like Sid's bulimia, remains unresolved, as Sid's recovery takes place beyond the action of the novel. The novel thus suggests that she must adapt to the world in which she lives and learn to cope with the rape culture represented by the lecherous men, or retreat indoors, as her mother advises.

The physical construction of public space is presented as similarly hostile to girls and women in Louise O'Neill's *Asking for It* (2015). As the group of friends are walking to a party, Emma narrates, "Ali and I struggle to walk over the cattle grid, our heels getting stuck between the metal bars, Maggie and Jamie looking on and laughing with the boys" (O'Neill 76). Like the traffic lights which trap Sid in a threatening situation, the physical space and girls' footwear are in a hostile alliance against them. Public space is represented as a masculine space which is not only hostile to girls, but divisive among girls, as the girls wearing flat shoes position themselves in alliance with the boys who are above such concerns, and therefore superior. Public space is also defined as male-dominated through boys' impunity to harass the girls when they go to visit a local hang-out after school:

"Hey Sexy." A boy in a baseball cap leans out of the window of a car parked at the entrance to the gardens, his friend in the passenger seat throwing his head back in laughter. We keep walking, pretending we didn't hear. I look back over my shoulder, and of course he's pointing at me.

"What's wrong?" he calls.

"Nothing's wrong."

"Then smile a little. I bet you're even more beautiful when you smile."

"Christ," I say, when there is enough distance between us. "Why is it always me?"

"Maybe because you were the only one who looked back and made eye contact with them?" Jamie says, and Maggie starts laughing. (19-20)

The scene critiques the sexist social imperative in which girls and women are expected to smile in public spaces, particularly in response to and despite harassment, and by extension the gendered neoliberal cult of positivity discussed in my third chapter. Public space is not only girl-hostile, but also divides the girls, as lines are drawn not only between those being harassed, but between those who enjoy the attention and those who do not. Physical spaces are thus presented as destructive to girls' friendships, and therefore to girl community.

Domestic space is represented as an unpleasant but necessary safe retreat for the victim, and Emma is confined to the family home as a consequence of her rape. She narrates, "I never thought this would be my life, the small, small world of this house, and my parents and Bryan taking care of me, wrapping me up in their words and kind gestures, tying me down to this life, *this existence*. There is no escape" (310). Her confinement in domestic space is presented as necessary because of the hostility of public space. When Emma leaves the house to go to the store, she runs into a group of friends of her rapists: "'Whoops,' one of

his friends had said as he banged into me hard. My fingers released involuntarily and the plastic bag fell to the ground, a smash as a bottle hit the concrete. 'Careful, Timmy, she'll probably say you raped her too'" (195). Public space is conceptualised as rape space, as Emma's body is vulnerable to physical attack with impunity, and the validity and credibility of her accusation is mocked. Emma's only ally is her brother, and the wider community is presented as wholly hostile to the rape victim, who is left isolated, with no demonstrated room for recourse.

This representation of the victim behaving in ways which typically invite victim-blaming is an intentional strategy on the part of the author to assert that, as the novel's title indicates, she is not 'asking for it.' The novel doubtlessly intends to critique sexist discourses by setting the victim up to be blamed for styling herself according to social codes which require restrictive footwear, and for deriving pleasure from male attention. However, this strategy is unsuccessful because of the novel's generic context: it employs too many of the tropes of victim-blaming novels, and does not model any alternative ideology. This failure to move beyond victim-blaming discourses is a consequence of the construction of public space as a rape space and the domestic as the safe space to which the victim must retreat, despite Emma's rape having occurred in a home. While the critique of rape culture and attempt to reject victim-blaming may be commendable, the critique unfortunately ends there; the novel retains generically normative messages which put the onus on girls to limit their freedom and change their behaviour if they want to avoid being raped.

In contrast, Jenny Downham's *You Against Me* (2012) avoids constructing public space as rape space by emphasising that the rape has occurred in domestic space. At a party held at the family home to celebrate Tom's release on bail, when Mikey finds Ellie wandering away from the groups and into the backyard, he tells her, "You should be careful … wandering about on your own," to which she answers, "Is that supposed to be funny?"

(Downham 60). While he obliviously parrots the rape prevention discourse which constructs outdoor space as rape space, Ellie recognises the logical disjunction inherent in the rape victim's brother admonishing her for wandering out of the house in which his sister was raped. The party itself is an attempt to redeem the house in which the rape occurred by inviting the public to celebrate Tom's bail release: "Dad beamed at him. 'We've invited everyone who matters. We need to show the world you've got nothing to hide'" (40). By bringing the public into the domestic space, Ellie's father hopes to demonstrate its innocuousness and redeem the space. Later on, like Mikey, he scolds Ellie for leaving: "You can't go trotting about assuming the world is a safe place to be. Anything could have happened to you" (300). The male characters attempt to confine her by pointing to the vulnerability of the female in outdoor space, an irony which allows the novel to demonstrate that the masculine domination of outdoor space is a patriarchal tool to control girls and women by restricting their mobility.

The novel also uses the dichotomy of private and public space to foster an understanding of the potential for female alliances to empower women to reclaim public space. Karyn refuses to leave the house after her rape not because of a fear of sexual violence, but of judgement: "If I go back to school everyone will stare at me … They'll look at me as if I deserved it. Tom Parker invited me to his house and I went, so how can anything be his fault?" (13). Karyn knows that the rape has made her into the object of scrutiny and her only means of rejecting this critical gaze is to hide at home. While the threat of masculine domination is located in domestic space, this fear of being blamed ironically confines her indoors. Karyn's predictions of judgement are accurate, as girls at school tell Ellie, "If you turn up uninvited to a boy's house dressed like a ho, it's not a total surprise when he jumps you, is it?" (87). Domestic space is established as a rape space in the novel, and the threat posed by public space remains purely discursive; it is words and judgement symptomatic of

rape culture which cause the damage and fear, rather than an actual threat of rape or dangerous men. However, unlike *Asking for It*, not only does the victim constantly critique the rape culture rhetoric, she is also liberated from the domestic space through the alliance of another girl, Ellie.

Her recognition of the victim-hostility of public space is part of the catalyst which impels Ellie to speak out against her brother. She recognises the irony of men trying to control her movement in outdoor spaces when she is living in the actual space where rape has occurred, and celebrates her freedom and her physicality outdoors: "She ran down the front steps and across the lawn. It was brilliant – both her legs worked, she didn't get caught in a cyclone or struck by lightning, there were no crowds waiting at the gate with fists full of stones" (249). However, Ellie's enjoyment of the outdoor space is interrupted by thoughts of Karyn hiding out at home and her inability to also enjoy the freedom of the outdoors: "*Imagine being Karyn. Imagine being out here and…*" (252). When Ellie finally does decide to speak to the police, their alliance allows Karyn to escape imprisonment and move into public space: "She was outside! She was outside the flat and she wasn't hiding under a duvet or a pile of jumpers. She was wearing leggings and a T-shirt and she was sitting on the balcony in the spring sunshine!" (375). *You Against Me* reverses generic scripts which characterise public space as rape space and domestic space as a safe retreat, repeatedly critiquing the "mismatch between the geography of violence and the geography of fear" which Valentine describes ("Images of Danger" 22). In doing so, public spaces are redefined as a space of freedom from imposed gender roles for girls. The novel also highlights the importance of community by demonstrating how rape culture can be undermined through alliances between girls which reclaim public space.

Families

The family is also key to understanding the victim's relationship to domestic space, because family functions as a microcosm of patriarchal society and, in fiction, is a symbolic arena in which gender roles are articulated or challenged. Many second-wave feminists critiqued the confinement of women to the domestic world; some argued that the division between the feminised private sphere and the masculinised public sphere should be dismantled by fathers engaging more actively with childrearing, which would allow more women to enter the public sphere by working outside the home. In *Postfeminism and Paternity in Contemporary U.S. Film* (2013), Hannah Hamad describes a backlash against this principle of second-wave feminism:

> Fatherhood in the 1980s and 1990s was equally prominently characterized by a hysterical counter-discourse led by right-wing family values advocates that second wave feminism had caused a crisis of values in the American family, and that the most damaging manifestation of this was the rampant fatherlessness by which they claimed households were beset. (10)

According to Hamad, this alarmist discourse gave rise to a range of conservative organisations, often publicly supported by politicians such as George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, who "lamented the feminist devaluation of traditional fathers and the decline in father-led households" (10). This anti-feminist discourse also led to the rise of the men's movement, which focused upon "the supposed devastating effects of fatherlessness on the masculine psyche in striking accord with family values proponents' valorization of fathers as the lynchpins of American families" (10-11). The issue of major concern in these discourses is not the plight and struggle of the single mother, but the potentially devastating impact on both masculinity and the family supposedly wrought by feminism. This concern is reflected in young adult rape fiction in the common trope of single mothers and absent fathers. As the

family is a form of small-scale community, this trope suggests that the absence of traditional patriarchy is disadvantageous for the female subject, as she is left vulnerable without paternal protection; it suggests that girls from single-mother families are at a greater risk of being raped.

The vulnerability of the female subject without a father figure and her exclusion from community is exemplified in K. M. Walton's *Empty* (2013), in which Dell's parents' separation is presented as the catalyst for her social exclusion. Dell narrates, "Before my father cheated on my mom and blew up our lives, I was proud of him. … He's the one who got me into softball. He told me I was a natural. He even coached my team when I was little" (Walton 4-5). Dell's father was involved, supportive, and provided and nourished her connection to community by encouraging her athleticism. Dell explains that it was her father's departure that caused her obesity: "my father left a hole when he moved out, and this hole needed filling. I filled it with food. Lots and lots of food" (21). Dell substitutes food for love, which sabotages both her athletic career and her connection to community. When she is kicked off the softball team for being out of shape, Dell perceives her entire future as falling apart: "Softball scholarship to college – poof. Degree in communications – poof. ESPN sportscaster job – poof. The only things connecting me to my shithead father – poof" (12). Dell's father is described as providing her entire connection to community, and without him she is incapable of maintaining these connections, largely due to an inability to regulate her body.

Dell's father is also positioned as responsible for her alienation from her mother, who also loses control of her body as a result of his departure, developing a drug addiction as a coping mechanism for both her demanding work schedule and her depression. Dell narrates, "My mother wasn't like this until my father left. She used to cut the crusts off my PB&Js and sing me to sleep and bake cookies and help me with my homework and smile. It's as if

someone erased her and drew me a new mom who hides in her bedroom, gobbles pills, falls asleep at the dinner table, and cries a lot" (126). Dell admits that she does not tell her mother about the rape because she perceives her ability to parent as being defective in the wake of her father's departure: "Apparently I'm not telling my mother anything anymore. I don't think she's capable of producing any normal motherly reactions: concern, empathy, pride. And I can't handle her dead stare" (131). Dell's father's departure is described as the cause for the breakdowns of both Dell and her mother, and their relationship, creating a sense of misery in which Dell's rape is seen simply as the final step in a long list of degradations proving her lack of worth, and leading ultimately to her suicide. While it is difficult to read any of the characters in the novel as sympathetic, nor to discern with whom the writer intends for the implied reader to align herself, the reader is discouraged from sympathising with Dell's mother because of Dell's assessment of her failure at mothering. The novel instead preoccupies itself with the absence of the father, the consequential inability of any of the family members to function, and the resulting alienation from community.

The trope of victims with single mothers also has class implications, as families headed by single mothers are disproportionately poor. Of the eight novels in this chapter's corpus, six involve single mothers under significant financial duress, a fairly representative sample of the subgenre. This tendency to depict protagonists from financially disadvantaged families is a deviation from the conventions of postfeminism, in which the typical female subject is middle-class. This focus on financially stressed families provides further evidence of how narrative conventions within the subgenre reinforce a reading of the victim as a non-ideal, failed neoliberal subject. Despite the actual financial realities of readers, middle-class female protagonists are the generic norm with which young adult fictions typically invite readers to align themselves. By breaking with that model, these novels encourage a reader positioning which does not encourage identification with the victim, but instead facilitate a

perspective of her as a less fortunate other. Readers are encouraged to read the victim not as a typical subject, and therefore not as one to which they should aspire and relate. Instead they are positioned to view her as a Reviving Ophelia type, and a cautionary tale of the failure to live up to the precepts of ideal neoliberal citizenship.

This trope of depicting the economic and social impact of having an absent father also occurs in *Empty*, and is connected to the misery of the domestic space. Part of Dell's mother's unhappiness stems from the financial crisis caused by her father's not paying child support, resulting in her selling the family home. Dell describes the deterioration of their living space: "Our two-bedroom apartment is in a multibuilding complex off a major road. It has stained carpets, a permanent ring around the toilet, and you can hear the traffic all day and night. Just outside the door to our building, there's this tiny patch of grass that's usually filled with cigarette butts and chewed gum – that's our yard" (41). Dell's fatherlessness is the cause of her misery in public space, in her isolation at school, and in domestic space, and is manifested in her sub-standard accommodations and miserable mother. As both the domestic and public spaces are hostile to the victim, retreat and resolution is presented as an impossibility, and she is disposed of through her suicide.

What Happens Next also exemplifies the trope of financially stressed single mothers as Sid's father's absence and the family's resulting financial difficulty is causally linked to her rape. On the bus on the way to the ski resort, Sid narrates, "times like these, I'm happy I have a deadbeat dad. No time to chaperone when there's only one parent and she's busting her hump to feed the kiddies" (Clayton 7). Unlike Dell's mother, Sid's mother is concerned and supportive. However, she is unable to supervise her on the school trip as she must work to support the family, and her daughter is raped on the trip. The recurrence of this trope may indicate a gesture at suggesting that fathers should be more involved with their families, or take more responsibility for rape prevention. However, the repeated absence of fathers in the

subgenre, and the causal linking of this absence to their daughters' rapes, suggests that it is either this reversion of traditional gender roles, or the dismantling of the nuclear family, that actually causes rape. These novels suggest either that fathers are naturally the protectors of their families who presence prevents rape, or that when mothers are preoccupied with being the breadwinners of the family, their attention will be diverted from their children, and their ability to protect their daughters from rape is compromised.

While in Courtney Summers' *All the Rage* (2016), Romy's father leaves the family after her rape because he cannot stand to be ostracised from the hostile community, he is still linked causally to both her rape and her subsequent exclusion. When her rapist's father, the sheriff, wrongly pulls Romy over for drunk driving, his other son says, "Like father, like daughter, right? Meanwhile *my* dad had to waste his time seeing you home, make sure you didn't kill anyone" (Summers 83). Romy's father's alcoholism facilitates the community's victim-blaming: she is scapegoated by the community because of her association with deviant behaviours. Romy's father is absent from the narrative, and has been replaced by a superior father figure, in the form of her mother's boyfriend: "Todd is different from my father. Dad was thirsty, not given to great displays of affection, like his father and his father's father before him. A long line of self-indulgent men who couldn't give love but lived to take it, which isn't the same as receiving it. They were all in so much pain and that's always the perfect excuse" (195). Romy's criticism of her father is a critique of patriarchy. She condemns traditional hegemonic masculinity, not only for its coldness and selfishness, but also for how it takes advantage of women.

In contrast, her mother's new boyfriend Todd exemplifies a postfeminist masculinity, with echoes of the New Age Boyfriend, and exemplifies Hamad's suggestion that "postfeminist fatherhood is the new hegemonic masculinity" (1). One of these echoes is the way in which he displaces female agency through a superior ability to negotiate the world, as

Todd is better able to advocate for the victim than either she or her mother. After Romy gets into a fight at school her mother says, "If you don't tell me, how can I help you?" and Romy responds, "What could you do to help me?" and narrates, "She looks like I've slapped her. The truth is, I don't really believe she could and I know she really wants to believe she could and I know she wants me to come to her believing it too" (Summers 207). As supportive as Romy's mother tries to be, she is powerless within the community to protect her daughter and they both know it. It is Todd who finally does so, as when the sheriff comes into their home and bullies Romy, Todd stands up to him: "You can't just come in here and do this to my family" (301). Like the New Age Boyfriend, the demonstration of Todd's support merely displaces female agency and demonstrates that the male figure is more competent than the female. This father character type conforms to a growing trend which Hamad identifies in twenty-first century films which "privilege the paternal at the expense of marginalized mothers" (18). While the novel can also be read as critiquing patriarchy because Todd's advocacy is better respected by the sheriff, which Romy's mother is ignored, ultimately, patriarchy is represented as vital to the health and thriving of the family unit: Romy and her mother begin to recover because of the protection of a man.

This restoration of the family unit as key to female thriving is also evidenced in the domestic space. Just as the family home is degraded because of the father's absence in *Empty*, Todd allows for the recreation of a positive domestic environment by having Romy and her mother move into his family home: "Mom unpacked my things even though I told her she didn't have to. My bed is beneath the window, looking out over the street below. The sun will rise on me. Shelves full of my books line all four walls, boxing the room in. She's even alphabetized them by author" (Summers 21). Romy's mother's ability to mother is restored by her relationship with Todd; his inviting them to move into his home allows her to thoughtfully curate a comfortable domestic space for her child to retreat, suggesting that

retreat to the domestic space will facilitate the victim's recovery, and reaffirming the idea that girls are vulnerable without father figures.

School communities

In young adult fiction, school functions as a microcosm for the broader society with which young people will engage as they become adults. As such, it is primarily represented as a space for socialisation and community-creation rather than academic learning. According to Roberta Seelinger Trites, "School serves as the metaphorical representation of the many institutions that will influence adolescents throughout their lives," and therefore "School settings exist in adolescent literature to socialize teenagers into accepting the inevitable power social institutions have over individuals in every aspect of their lives" (*Disturbing the Universe* 33). Young adult rape novels tend to present schools as intensely hostile environments which are extensions of the rape culture of the broader society and community in which the victim lives.

In *All the Rage*, school functions as a microcosm which mirrors the same victim-hostile values as Romy's broader society. After showering in the school locker room, Romy finds that the other girls have stolen her underwear: "When I get back to the change room, my locker is open and my clothes are on the floor. My bra and underwear are gone. … I think of myself naked in that shower, think of the water running over me while someone moved around in the next room and took the things that touched the most intimate parts of my body" (Summers 18). The theft of her underwear is characterised as so invasive that it is presented as rape-like. Later, Romy find her clothes positioned on mannequins near the entrance of the school, meant to encourage school spirit:

> Jane. It's so funny what's been done to her. It's funny that her cheerleading outfit is in a crumpled heap at her feet, exposing her body, all those years of wear and tear to

anyone who wants to look, except for this small allowance of modesty – She's

wearing my bra. … Her mouth is a perfect, startled O. John's hands are raised

triumphantly over his head. My underwear is draped over his fingers. (73)

Romy's school setting is so hostile that her rape is a public joke, and an act which is

replicated in the theft of her clothing, and again in the dressing of the mannequin. The bullies

serve as vehicles for their community to punish the victim within the adolescent-sized scale

of the school environment.

School is a similarly victim-hostile space in Aaron Hartzler's *What We Saw* (2015),

however the novel stresses that the school is not representative of the broader community, but

rather that it retains the vestiges of outmoded victim-hostile perceptions of gender relations.

After the rapists are arrested, both boys and girls attack the character of the victim: "Kyle

kept drumming on Stacey: *liar, slut, liar, slut*. Phoebe and the Tracies were there too,

nodding and tapping their nails on the table: *Bitch'll be sorry. Bitch'll be sorry*" (Hartzler

102). The students' perspective is also shared by the principal and coach, the most powerful

figures within the school. At a pep rally, the coach says, "There have been some vicious

rumours, and a lot of stupid stuff said on the news. … I want to ask you all to send some

good thoughts to the players who aren't here with us this afternoon," encouraging the

students to chant the team slogan, "Tough as BUCC" (129). Kate narrates, "Dooney is absent

and everywhere at once. His presence looms large even though his seat is empty. A bunch of

guys from the basketball team have started wearing his jersey number, 12, emblazoned on

armbands with Sharpies. Some of the cheerleaders have made buttons – royal blue with a

yellow twelve – and are handing them out before school" (230). The school is cult-like in its

support for the rapist athletes and hostility towards the victim. However, the victim-hostility

of the school space is not shared by the outside world, and the public begins to intervene and

encroach on the school space, as the case gets more media attention and becomes subject to

online campaigns for justice: "In addition to the satellite trucks, there are now a handful of protestors standing fifty feet from the front doors of the school. Several of them are wearing pink masks. Most are holding signs" (Hartzler 284). By representing this divide between the school's cult-like support for the rapist and broader society's support for the victim, the novel suggests that schools have the potential to be dysfunctional spaces which are not necessarily representative of social values outside of the school institution. It offers an optimistic 'it gets better' message to young readers, suggesting that, though hostile school environments may appear to students within them to be microcosms of society, their informing ideologies may be localised and antiquated.

The disjuncture of values between the school space and the broader community highlights both the constructedness and relativity of ideologies. Ideological relativity is also emphasised through the presence of the science teacher, who serves as a subversive voice within the school community, teaching the students about consent. When a student says that he will not risk attending a field trip in case a girl throws herself at him on the bus and he is accused of rape, the teacher rebuts, "What exactly are you 'just saying,' Mr. Grant? That if a drunk girl approached you on a school bus, you'd take advantage of her?" (281). He continues, "I have a hypothesis that there may be other choices to make if you come into contact with a young woman who is 'wasted' and 'throwing herself at you,' Mr. Grant. What else might you do in that situation – besides have sex with her? … I just want to hear from the guys" (282). Kate narrates: "Guys all over the rooms started speaking up – some of whom I've never heard say a word during class before. *Find her friends. Call her parents. Get her a pillow. Some Advil. Make sure she has a safe place to sleep. Don't let her drive*" (282-283). The novel shows that dissenting voices exist even within the intensely victim-hostile construction of the school space, resisting the sexist ideology which informs these social institutions, which is emphasised through articulating Kate's surprise at both the number and

source of some of the voices. It also, notably, does so while foregrounding both the presence and importance of male solidarity with female victims.

Girl friends and Mean Girls

Peer behaviour-monitoring is an essential aspect of how schools socialise young people, and in young adult rape fiction, girls tend to be responsible for the majority of the victim's torment. According to Rosalind Gill, social monitoring is characteristically postfeminist, as "celebrations of 'girl power' and female success sat side-by-side with the intense, hostile scrutiny of women in the public eye," with the result that "the affective, cultural and psychic features of postfeminism exert a powerful regulatory force on women in contemporary life" ("Affective" 607, 610). Despite an enthusiastic rhetoric of female empowerment, girls and women garner an inordinate amount of social monitoring, even sheer visibility, which translates to a control that manifests itself through internalised psychological regulation and need to conform to social expectations. In *Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhoods* (2013), Alison Winch contends that this scrutiny of girls and women is largely the purview of other girls and women: "In a neoliberal postfeminist culture, women mutually control each other through policing networks. The desire for intimacy, normativity and belonging often means submitting oneself to regimes of looking by the girlfriend gaze" (5). According to Winch, girls and women function as agents of postfeminism, not only measuring, but also enforcing patriarchal standards of feminine behaviour on their peers. Winch argues that "hegemonic power structures are both perpetuated and obfuscated through girlfriend culture where women are complicit in the regulation and policing of female bodies":

> They do this through a "gynaeopticon" – a gendered, neoliberal variation on
>
> Bentham's panopticon – where the many girlfriends watch the many girlfriends. My

argument is that girlfriend culture revolves around homosocial forms of control where women bond through the bodies of other women. This element is significant because the male gaze is veiled as benign, and instead it is women who are represented as looking at other women's bodies. (5)

Winch describes a social system by which girls' friendships function as behaviour monitoring networks. Her "girlfriend gaze" focuses upon girl friendships in which girls ostensibly support one another by watching and checking behaviour which does not conform to patriarchal social codes, to ensure that social normativity is maintained, so that the individual may be socially acceptable.

As a majority of victims are Reviving Ophelia characters, the antithesis of female success, the girlfriend gaze typically manifests in young adult rape fiction through the victim's keen awareness of social exclusion, of being unworthy of even being looked at, and thus enhancing her sense of her own abjection. This is the case in *Empty*, in which, despite her efforts to ingratiate herself with the popular kids through self-deprecating humour, Dell is thoroughly excluded and isolated from her peer group because she is overweight. Her isolation is evident early in the novel, when she struggles to fit in with her softball team: "I look around as the huddle breaks apart and no one catches my eye. They're all talking and bantering among themselves as they make their way out of the locker room. Not one girl looks back to see if I'm coming or where I am. I'm by myself. Maybe *I* have disappeared" (Walton 3-4). If Winch's girlfriend gaze confers intimacy and belonging, Dell's perception of her invisibility suggests that she is so deficient that she has failed to be worthwhile as a subject of that gaze. Team sports are small-scale communities, and here the team is metonymic for her broader society. Dell's perception that she has disappeared contrasts with her obesity, suggesting that her teammates use exclusion as a social power to discipline her for being overweight. This representation of fatness as a punishable offense plays into

neoliberal conceptualisations of fatness as a personal failure, as discussed in Chapter Two, and is here also a failure that warrants exclusion from the community, as girls implement their social power to punish and exclude the struggling individual. Dell uses self-deprecating humour to cope with her torment, to try and maintain the one friendship she has, and to try and ingratiate herself with the popular kids to make Cara happy. However, her use of humour does not improve her attempts to fit in with the group, because after she makes one degrading joke, she narrates, "None of the girls look at me. They're having a moment *together*. Even though I'm standing right there with them, I'm not included" (23). Again, even as they mock her, by refusing to look at her, Dell is excluded from the group of girl friends. When she is finally kicked off of the team, her former teammates mock her: "Amy slurs, 'Leave her alone, Jacob. She got cut from softball 'cause she's toofattoplay,' All four girls' eyes bulge. They crumble into laughter, grasping the sides of the table, and then slump into piles on the wet floor" (68). Dell is an object of ridicule, so isolated from her peer group that she is alternately invisible and the prime target of jokes aimed at her size. The girls are shocked by the rudeness of what has been said, but Dell's ostracism allows it to be seen as funny rather than a social transgression, because she is seen as having failed her community, and therefore can be disrespected and devalued.

In *Asking for It*, Emma enforces the gynaeopticon as she leads the popular girls' social group by monitoring the behaviour and appearances of the girls around her. Emma greets girls as she walks into school, narrating, "I imagine them whispering to themselves once I'm out of earshot about how nice I am, how genuine, how I always seem to have time for everybody, how it's amazing that I can still be so down to earth when I look the way I do" (O'Neill 13). Emma imagines herself being gazed at, aware that she is as much an object of the gynaeopticon as she is an agent of it. Her self-perception is distorted through a lens of superficiality which confuses gestures at kindness for kindness; what matters is not that she is

nice to other girls, but that she appears to be nice to other girls. Ultimately, her statement concludes with a preoccupation with her appearance, conveying her conviction that the most important end is that she looks better than other girls. This passage reflects postfeminist ideology, as it is the superficial appearance of Girl Power that matters. The disjunction in Emma's self-perception is highlighted a page later, when Emma snubs a classmate: "It's Chloe Hegarty, her hair standing up in a halo of frizz at her hairline, breakouts all around her jaw and chin, one patch of acne crusted over with yellow pus. I wish she would go and see a dermatologist. I turn away, pretending I need to get something from my bag. 'Ouch,' Ali says as Chloe slinks off" (14). Emma evaluates Chloe's physical appearance and decides to withdraw her gaze, communicating Chloe's unworthiness and her social exclusion. Emma's aggressive monitoring of her peers' behaviour positions her as an agent of patriarchy, enforcing normative expectations on other girls in exchange for belonging. After Emma is raped, her position on the social echelon falls and the tables are turned, and she recognises the hostility of the girlfriend gaze when it is turned against her: "Did I enjoy this once, being the centre of attention?" (157). The author problematises the destructive impact of the girlfriend gaze, by demonstrating its destructiveness to female relationships and to individual female psyches.

Emma is also a typical representation of the figure of the Mean Girl, who might be understood as the ultimate agent of the gynaeopticon. The Mean Girl is a character type popularised by Tina Fey in the film *Mean Girls* (2004), which depicts a high school in which girls are nasty and malicious in their competition for popularity and boys, while boys are mostly naïve, sweet, and happy-go-lucky. In young adult rape fiction, Mean Girls are a natural complement to the New Age Boyfriends discussed in the previous chapter. New Age Boyfriends help their victim girlfriend recover by sharing their common sense insights on both overcoming trauma and navigating social situations. These characters prove themselves

to be more adept at navigating a distinctly female experience than girls themselves, as they re-induct their victims into a patriarchal society through the process of guiding their disclosure, and (usually implied and off-page), recovery or social reintegration. Novels which create these characters present New Age Boyfriends as a new and desirable model of masculinity which provides an antidote to rape culture, obscuring his maintenance of hegemony over the female. While the rapist is the logical site at which to locate the cause of rape, to which the New Age Boyfriend is the anecdote, the rapist is typically absent and therefore not a very useful plot element. Rape culture is thus often relocated to hostile peer groups, primarily spearheaded by Mean Girls. Mean Girls are thus presented as being the malicious gate-keepers and enforcers of rape culture, and are near omnipotent in their ability to torment and deride the victim.

One problem with the focus on brutal girl bullying, especially via the Mean Girl type, is that girls are characterised as viciously hostile agents for patriarchy. In their feminist analysis of schemas of girlhood in popular culture, Deirdre M. Kelly and Shauna Pomerantz argue that these representations "become a mode by which our thoughts about girls are formed, organized, and solidified," together creating "a narrative that is seen as symptomatic of girlhood itself" (3). The Mean Girl type can be understood as critical of postfeminism, as it exposes the detrimental effects of individualising ideology to female community. However, in so doing it also represents girls as dysfunctional nasty and girl-hostile. Female community is positioned as the actual source of female misery, rather than patriarchy. In their analysis of *Mean Girls*, Kelly and Pomerantz write, "The film is at pains to reveal the 'mean girl problem' as a closed loop that does not implicate boys or men in any way, never hinting at a sexual double standard or the 'patriarchal dividend' that accrues to all men, even those not practicing a hegemonic form of masculinity" (6). Characters which enact the Mean Girl type thereby acts as an agent for patriarchy, while also distracting from an interrogation of it, or

from any male responsibility for female disenfranchisement. Similarly, in young adult fiction, the persistence of the New Age Boyfriend trope, and the absence of the rapist himself, distracts from attempts to critique patriarchal systems.

This erasure of male responsibility is particularly egregious when it comes to representing rape culture, as the responsibility for it is relocated to interpersonal dynamics between girls. Rather than interrogate society, rapists, or male behaviour, girls are made responsible for rape culture, both for enforcing it, and for ending it. Kelly and Pomerantz conclude that the films they analyse do offer "heroines various modes for expressing control, anger, and agency," yet "these forms of power are surprisingly disconnected from any overt politics or critique of larger power structures, depositing girls directly into a postfeminist landscape without recourse or remedy – except their own sheer willpower" (4). Again, novels try to teach by negative example; rather than representing supportive communities, they condemn non-supportive girl communities without modelling any alternative, suggesting that this type of viciousness is not only ubiquitous, but also an innate aspect of girlhood. This representation suggest that girls might end rape culture simply by being nicer to each other.

Emma's character in *Asking for It* exemplifies the dynamic in which Mean Girl types function as enforcers for rape culture, particularly as she controls and suppresses the voice of her friend, Jamie, who has been raped. When Jamie is upset before a party that her rapist is also attending, Emma dismisses her, saying that she is "looking for attention," while a male friend of the rapist laughs, saying, "You girls are such bitches to each other" (O'Neill 67). The boys are able to draw amusement from the girls' nastiness, as Emma acts to enforce their power for them. Her involvement allows the boys to seem uninvolved in the mechanics which sustain their dominance and their privilege. Before she is raped herself, Emma encourages her friend, Jamie, to keep silent about her own rape. Emma tells her,

Jamie, come on. We talked it through and we agreed, didn't we? We agreed it would

be easier not to make a big deal of it, especially when everyone there was underage

and there'd be so much shit if it got out. It would just mean that people would be

pissed off with you for getting them in trouble, and you'd miss out on all of the parties

because Dylan's friends wouldn't want you there any more. … Listen … I think you

should go home. (94)

Emma attempts to manipulate Jamie by suggesting that by disclosing her rape, Jamie would

be responsible for the punishment of their entire peer group, who would punish Jamie by

excluding her socially. Her suggestion that Jamie would no longer be invited to parties

conveys the gendered alliances of the Mean Girl; she functions as an agent of patriarchy,

adopting and removing male responsibility for controlling girls by reminding girls of the

consequences of transgressive behaviours. She does not specifically threaten to withdraw her

friendship, but suggests that the rapist's friends would withdraw theirs, resulting in her

exclusion from the social group. This threat is enhanced by Emma's suggestion that Jamie

should go home, hinting at the confinement to the domestic which Emma will later

experience.

The Mean Girl type is also invoked in *All the Rage*, however the character type is

subverted when the two main bullies are later redeemed by their recognition of how they

have participated in supporting rape culture, and they subsequently ally themselves with the

victim. Romy narrates, "Penny Young is the most perfect girl you know and those kinds of

girls, they're put on this earth to break you. Peel back her skin and you can see her poison.

Peel back mine, you can still see traces of where her poison's been" (Summers 1). In this

perfectly vivid description of a Mean Girl, Romy explains that Penny's only goal is to destroy

other girls, embodying an essential evil which is described as a poison, so innate within

Penny that it is located under her skin. Romy also identifies Penny as a "perfect girl"

suggesting her perception that such evil is both a natural and ideal feature of girlhood. Penny is a double for Romy, as they both go missing on the same night after a big party. However, Romy is found, but Penny is not, until her corpse is found close to the end of the novel. Romy learns that a classmate was going to rape her, and when Penny found out and went to intervene, he killed her. Romy realises and tells the sheriff, "She saved me" (304). The essential evil of the Mean Girl is debunked; while she has been complicit in perpetuating rape culture by covering up Romy's rape, in a disturbing act of self-sacrifice, Penny dies to prevent it from happening again, indicating a shift of allegiance from protecting the patriarchy to protecting the victim.

Penny's alliance also inspires other girl-bullies to instead become allies, as the discovery of the terms of her death encourages the other dominant Mean Girl, Tina, to also ally with Romy. Tina is a lead instigator of nastiness against Romy throughout the narrative, especially when Romy is found and Penny is not, telling Romy, "The girl who cries rape and half the department was out looking for her Saturday morning. They brought Grey home. Not Penny. … Better hope that wasn't the half that would have made a difference" (135). Tina's speech places girls in opposition to each other, as she not only suggests that Romy is worth less than Penny, because of a rape allegation which the entire community rejects, but also positions her as an antagonist in the situation. At the end of the novel, when Tina learns the extent of her support for rape culture, as she has been unknowingly providing an alibi for the would-be rapist and Penny's murderer, she apologises to Romy. She explains that she chose not to believe the rape allegation, "Because it was easier," and tells her, "I'm so sorry. I can't… I know I can't make it right but I just wanted to say that to you because – I don't think anyone else here would" (313). The essential evil of Tina's Mean Girlness is refuted when she chooses to approach Romy herself and apologise, while acknowledging that her behaviour has been instrumental in excluding Romy from a community that still will not

accept her. Her explanation that "it was easier" to bully Romy also offers insight into the psychology of the Mean Girl: the alliance with the patriarchy confers protection, an insight which is reinforced by Penny's death when she deviated from her role as its agent. The novel suggests that a fear of male violence undergirds the experiences of all the girls in the novel, bullies and victims alike. A new alliance is formed between the girls, and Romy suggests that they go together to find another of her rapist's victims whom Penny had told her about before her death, in the hopes that she might be believed: "Tina … You want to help me find a girl in Godwit?" (314). The novel which commences with two especially nasty Mean Girls attacking a rape victim concludes with an alliance in which four girls, one dead and one an as-yet-anonymous victim, ally together to credibly identify a rapist.

The victim in *What We Saw* is similarly isolated, as her community of peers is hostile and does not believe her rape accusation, despite many having witnessed it first-hand. While the victim, Stacey, is an ultra-visible target because of the school and local community's hostility and therefore hides in her home, the narrator, Kate, witnesses, negotiates, and reports the hostility of their peer group. Kate serves as a double for Stacey. While their peers constantly demean and deride Stacey as a "slutty" girl with bad judgement for drinking and wearing skimpy clothes, Kate asserts their sameness, pointing to the inherent injustice in Stacey's targeting: "But we *are* like her. We go to this school. We're in the same class. We're the same age. I was just as drunk as she was" (Hartzler 122). The novel insists on the importance of girls supporting instead of deriding each other, as they belong to a community of shared experience. Ultimately, isolation from peer social groups is treated as a possible consequence of insisting upon supporting the victim within a hostile community. After Kate finds the evidence to prosecute the rapists and gives it to the police, she narrates, "By lunch on Monday, I had become persona non grata, as invisible as Phoebe and as despised as Stacey – a pariah" (314). Yet this isolation is not complete: while Kate becomes an invisible and

despised pariah, her abjection excluding her from the society of the popular girls, she joins a small community of three outcasts – the victim, the rapist's ex-girlfriend, and the girl who gets the rapist convicted – all of whom who refuse to participate in supporting the small town's rape culture.

Also named Stacey, the rape victim in Anne Cassidy's *No Virgin* (2016) and *No Shame* (2017), is unusual in that those in her community do not know she has been raped. Her peer group is small, yet her best friend is supportive, and encourages her to call the rape crisis centre and press charges. The first novel begins with her doubt and anxiety about the friendship, which she feels that Patrice does not value as much as she does. However, the rape brings them closer together. The novel suggests that female friendship is the strongest weapon in rape trauma recovery, as Stacey tells the reader, "My friend, Patrice, told me to write this story. She's strong and probably the only person who can persuade me to do things I don't want to do" (*No Virgin* 3). This statement comes shortly after Stacey's disclosure that she was raped, another instance of being forced to do something she does not want to do. This juxtaposition highlights the difference between support and coercion, positioning friendship and solidarity as key to rape recovery. Stacey also expands her peer group by connecting with other victims: "It felt like we were old friends. Although we'd only just met, we had more in common than most people" (167). The girls are able to bond over shared experience, creating a community around recognitions of shared experiences of trauma. Rather than depict the victim as isolated and stigmatised, girls are depicted as allies with victims and against rapists, as the rape becomes a backdrop for forming bonds with other girls.

The internet: rape space or feminist space?

The internet has the capacity to collapse the boundaries that define spaces. It collapses distinctions of the scale of community, between local and global. It has the capacity to reach from the individual into the immediate community, or into broader society, and to project the community and broader society to the individual. Thus the internet breaks down the traditional dichotomy of gendered spaces, in which the public is male and the private is female. As a logical extension of adults' reservations about girls manoeuvring in public space, girls' use of the internet is often treated with suspicion in the popular media, which tends to focus on cyberbullying and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Hayley Crooks writes, "Over the past few years, mainstream news media representations of adolescent girls' use of technology have fallen into two distinct categories: 1) girls are in constant danger from online predators; and 2) girls are dangerous 'loose cannons' when it comes to technology" (67). While both of these gendered discourses identify the internet as a dangerous space for girls, the girl types they envision fall into two major camps: the victim and the Mean Girl.

Yet these common negative representations of the internet are atypical of girls' experiences. Feminist theorists recognise the internet as fertile ground for feminist organising, activism, and community and peer support, as it provides the space for female voices to talk back to traditionally male-dominated institutions. In "Rape Culture and the Politics of Social Media," Rentschler explains, "Today feminist bloggers utilize social media in order to respond to rape culture, and hold accountable those responsible for its practices when mainstream news media, police and school authorities do not" (67). Feminist mobilisation in online spaces is especially effective for anti-rape activism and rhetoric, as the free access space of the internet provides an arena to reject and resist the rape supportive culture created by male domination of public space.

Disappointingly, the internet is typically vilified in young adult rape fiction as a space through which victim-hostile rhetoric is channelled into public space to further antagonise and attack the victim. While courtroom testimony has been described by feminist observers as a 'second rape,' in many young adult rape novels it is the trial via a localised social media that seems to play this role. In a world in which the internet is increasingly understood as a medium for connection and community, the potential social detriment of suggesting that girls be isolated from the internet cannot be overstated. Crooks writes, "Digital space is now more commonly recognized as a public sphere, a site for leisure, commerce, and sociality, as well as political and civic participation. The exclusion of girls from online spaces perpetuates the marginalization and silencing of girls in public space" (66). The internet has proven its potential to be a medium for community formation; in the isolating and hostile small-town context of many of these novels, the infinite reaches of the internet could provide a source of solidarity and community for the victim.

Novels which vilify the internet seem more likely to do so in contexts which treat the internet as a local space, rather than a global one. In *What Happens Next*, Sid's Mean Girl bully, the fabulously named Starsha Lexington, creates a website called gingerbitch.com, which contains embarrassing pictures dating from Sid's childhood to her joining the cheerleading squad, one of which Sid describes, "I must have been getting changed in a locker room at an away football game. She and her minions must have taken it with a phone then laughed all winter about Ginger Bitch Murphy's double-D rack" (Clayton 95). Far from acting as a space for creating feminist communities, the website gives the novel another chance to foreground the chivalry of Corey, the New Age Boyfriend, and to reaffirm the importance of patriarchy in protecting girls, as Corey poses as Sid's father in an email to the site's host, convincing them to remove the webpage or be sued. The internet is represented not as a space for community-creation and global networking, but for local community

bullying, and as a medium for violating the privacy of the victim by forcing her body into public space, subjecting it to mob-violence cyberbullying.

The internet is similarly conceptualised as an invasive space, both confined to the local community and hostile towards the victim, in *All the Rage*. Romy's email to her best friend before the rape, "Penny, I want him. I dream about him," is leveraged against her as evidence, and Romy regrets ever having communicated via a medium that lacks temporality and privacy (Summers 97). Later, after she is given GHB, a date rape drug, Romy looks to social media to fill in the blanks for the night she disappeared and does not remember. There, she finds photos of herself alongside her classmates' comments: "who invited grey #WakeUp," "how does a girl get that wasted in an hour #damn #talent #WakeUp," "wow sloppy drunk mess by the bonfire #WakeUp" (137). Romy narrates her response: "I stare at the exchange, trying to will it into nonexistence, either it or myself, because I don't want to be in a world where I'm those words. And what's behind them? What does that mean? What was I doing?" (138). The novel offers a good example of how the internet is often represented as the site of a second rape, the victim being confronted by the hostility of her peers within an environment where she has no control over her image, just as she had no control of her body during the attack.

In *No Virgin*, by way of contrast, the internet is depicted as a supportive space which allows the victim to reach beyond her immediate community for specialised and anonymous advice, information, and support. When she is deciding what to do about her rape, Stacey goes online: "I opened my laptop and searched for *Rape Crisis* on the web. The website was very professional and was full of important and reassuring statements" (Cassidy, *No Virgin* 138). These statements are articulated in the novel, thereby not only encouraging readers to go online to reach out for a similarly supportive community, but sharing these messages of support directly with them. The novel ends with Stacey calling the rape crisis centre, reaching

out into the public space from her home to seek out support. When she struggles to speak, the woman on the line tells her, "I will be here to listen to you and help you to do what it is you want to do. I can be your friend here. You are not alone. That's what we want you to know" (183). While guaranteeing her full agency, the woman asserts that Stacey is not alone; the institution of the rape crisis centre, a traditionally feminist space, is a supportive one, which respects Stacey's individualising experience and agency, but also assures her that she is not isolated.

Unfortunately, the sequel, *No Shame*, shifts its treatment of the internet from potentially liberating and community-building to dangerous and hostile. After the rape is made public and is being tried in court, Stacey focuses on the news media, especially the comments sections on news websites. The police officer assigned to Stacey's case assures her that technically she is anonymous, but also warns her, "[Y]ou are *Girl X*. But as well as the papers and TV the story will spread on social media which, as you know, can be a cruel place" (Cassidy, *No Shame* 50). After the trial ends with a 'not guilty' verdict, Stacey reads upsetting headlines about her case which are specified as being from feminist sites, such as, "*Brainless Girls Who Give Feminism a Bad Name*" (182). The choice to represent self-described feminist websites as expressly hostile to the victim is a curious and disappointing one. Stacey also fixates on the comments: "That morning I had gone onto the internet and found some more posts about Taxi Girl. *She should stop asking men to shag her, then accusing them of rape!* It had riled me and I'd been tempted to make a comment but I knew that was pointless and was only going to give these people what they wanted – attention" (204). The online cruelty impels Stacey to move on with her life and prepare for her exams, suggesting that the novel is deploying the nastiness of the internet as a motivator to re-engage with the physical, 'real world' community. This motivational impetus is supported by the dramatic contrast between the first novel, before Stacey has disclosed to her community and

when she turns to the anonymity and infinite reaches of the internet for support, and the second novel, in which she has disclosed and those around her are immensely supportive, while the global space of the internet judges her. While real-world community engagement is important, it unfortunately is advocated at the expense of representing the internet as a space for the potential empowerment of girls and of victims.

In *Asking for It*, the internet's potential to be a feminist space is raised, only to be undermined through assertions of the importance of local community. Emma narrates, "The Ballinatoom Girl. Her story told and retold until it's not her story anymore. She alleges. She claims. She says. I don't have anything to say, but they want to hear it anyway. Journalists from Jezebel, from xoJane, from the *Guardian*, from the *New York Times*" (O'Neill 187). Unlike Stacey, the erasure of Emma's name does not offer anonymity, since those in her community already know who she is, but rather effaces her identity, adding to a perception that she has been removed from her own story as it has been appropriated on a global scale. Rather, it is community and society who are given anonymity in the media, through their online comments: "I read all the articles on Jezebel and xoJane and the Journal and the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*. And then I scroll down to the comments. *She went into that room. She drank too much. She took drugs. No one else knows what happened except the people who were in that room*" (205-206). Feminist websites are discussed in the same voice as the more mainstream news media. However, again, Emma is only preoccupied with the comments sections. Emma connects the anonymous individuals who make up a large and hostile community via these comments sections to public space, and it curtails her ability to function outside of her home:

> Some of those commenting claimed to be from Ballinatoom, to know me, to know my family, that they'd always thought I was a little slut who was just asking for trouble, that I had been easy with my favours and had regretted it in the morning and decided

to yell rape, and that I was ruining these boys' futures, that I was an attention seeker, that I was embarrassing the town, that I deserved it, that they hoped I got AIDS and died, that I was a dirty slut. I look around at the people walking around the market, buying groceries, throwing a euro coin into the open guitar case, the busker smiling his thanks. Did any of these people write the comments? Did all of them?" (206-207)

Asking for It mentions online feminist news sources, but the political utility and capacity of these to support individual victims and create feminist networks is dismissed in favour of a preoccupation with hostile comments sections which impede the victim's ability to leave her home.

The novel is so preoccupied with local community that Emma explicitly states that the type of networked support which is offered to her online is of no value to her. After her brother protests her dropping her case, Emma narrates, "I am supposed to set an example. I am supposed to tell my story to the feminist blogs, to feel encouraged by the support on Twitter from people that I have never met, who wouldn't even be able to point out Ireland on a map, let alone Ballinatoom. I would like it if this happened to someone else. I would like it if someone else was ruined too. I wouldn't be alone" (324). Rather than acknowledge the potential for the internet to connect isolated victims, the novel prioritises the community of her small town. Emma suggests that the community which the internet can offer is irrelevant to her, as the global scale is too large to be relevant, and the ability to connect her with other victims is dismissed. When she decides to drop the charges against her rapists, Emma narrates, "I have to stand up and be counted. I have to set a good example. I have to be brave for other victims. #IBelieveBallinatoomGirl. I don't want to be their champion. I don't want to be brave. I don't want to be a hero" (305). While the novel does at least acknowledge an online feminist community that tries to reach out and support Emma, the opportunity to model victim empowerment is, unfortunately, foregone. Instead, the novel highlights how the

internet can transcend spaces and connect individuals in a negative way, as Emma narrates, "I think of all the people I know, and all the people in Ballinatoom, and all their friends on Facebook, and friends of friends of friends, looking at me (pink flesh) (legs spread) and reading all those comments, and calling me a *slut, bitch, whore*" (175). Emma does not see the empowering potential of creating supportive networks on a global scale, but only the potential of creating networks of cyberbullies.

Social media is also of crucial importance in the novel, as *Asking for It* is largely inspired by the highly publicised 2012 Steubenville rape case, in which two boys raped an unconscious female classmate and posted pictures online. After overhearing schoolmates gossiping, Emma finds a Facebook profile that has been created under her identity: "It's a page that I've never seen before, but it has a photo of me as the profile picture. … The page has hundreds of likes, and five little stars lined up under the name. 'Easy Emma.' I'm tagged in all the photos" (145). Emma describes some of the photos: "Another photo. Dylan is standing above her, his dick in his hand, a thin yellow stream flowing from him on to her head. Someone has commented under the photo: 'Some people deserve to get pissed on.' Five people have liked it. Six. No, ten, twelve, fifteen. Twenty. Twenty-five" (148-149). The scene is a reference to a former Steubenville High School student's tweet: "Some girls deserve to be peed on" (Rentschler 66). The quickly mounting numbers of Likes which Emma observes are indicative of the mob violence of her cyberbullying.

A disappointing key difference from the Steubenville narrative in the novel is that Emma decides to drop the charges against her rapists. The novel concludes with the suggestion that the boys will not be prosecuted, as their lawyer tells Emma's mother that the photos may not be admitted in evidence: "This is all unprecedented, Nora. It's a whole new world, all these camera phones and Facebook pages and whatnot" (228). In his *Time* article, "Steubenville Rape Guilty Verdict: The Case that Social Media Won," Adam Cohen argues

that the evidence collected from the extensive social media exchanges between the Steubenville High School students led to the conviction. The potential impact the new technology of social media can have on rape trials is massive, he explains, given the notoriously difficult to prosecute rape cases, which usually rely on hearsay and lack evidence (Cohen). As Rentschler writes, "In addition to exposing the cultural, and specifically communicative, supports for rape in cases like Steubenville, social media enable the broad distribution of feminist reporting on rape culture and critiques of slut shaming that constitute current feminist discourse on rape, particularly among younger feminists aged between 15 and 22 years" (68). This feminist community support and anti-rape discourse is, sadly, rejected in *Asking for It*, as Emma is preoccupied with her local community, and the activism of outsiders is dismissed. The internet's potential political subversiveness and capacity to empower the victim is thus devalued.

The rape in *What We Saw* also draws inspiration from the Steubenville case. It involves a gang-rape of an unconscious girl at a party that is witnessed by many of her classmates, and video of which is posted online. The victim is subsequently viciously mocked by her classmates on and offline. The novel, however, offers a far more optimistic perspective on the internet as a feminist space. When the girls all pull out their phones at lunchtime, Kate refers to them as, "our blinking handheld portals to Anywhere But Here" (Hartzler 64). Acknowledging the potentially global scale of networking, the girls' phones are tools of escapism which allow the girls to connect to a community outside of their own. When Rachel tells Kate that, "Feminists are women who believe in evolution and just don't want anybody to tell them what to do. They want to be able to abort their unborn babies," Kate does an internet search for 'feminism' on her laptop and shows Rachel the result: "The advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men" (227). The internet is demonstrated to be a medium capable of transcending the local

community. It is characterised as a potentially feminist space, and is also a space for girls to learn about feminism, as, like in *No Virgin*, the girls turn to the internet for feminist resources.

Unlike the way *Asking for It* deviates from the Steubenville case to omit the contribution of social media evidence in prosecuting the rapists, in *What We Saw*, the case is won because of evidence found online. In a replication of the actions of the hacker group Anonymous in the Steubenville case, *What We Saw* includes an anonymous feminist hacker group who ally with the victim, as is described in a news report chapter:

> Meanwhile, amid increased national scrutiny, self-described hacker collective, UltraFEM (identified in their website as "the anonymous hacker protest collective dedicated to full prosecution of crimes against women") has posted a statement on its website that they are in possession of the video in question and demand those charged in the Coral Sands rape case change their pleas to guilty. If this demand is not met, the group promises to release the video to the media and public at large one week from Monday. (215)

Like Steubenville, the video of the rape is assumed to have been deleted, but in *What We Saw*, Kate finds the video on Reddit and it is used to prosecute the rapists, echoing the role of the blogger who managed to save and build evidence by collecting social media postings from the Steubenville High School students. The novel suggests that while the internet can be a space for local communities to torment victims, it can also be a repository of evidence with which rapists can be convicted.

What We Saw draws upon the Steubenville case to invoke a much more positive perspective on the potential for feminist community-building to fight rape culture via the internet than *Asking for It*. This more optimistic perspective on the online sharing of rape

evidence is facilitated because it is not the victim who is the focalising character, but an onlooker. Yet, in contrast to *Asking for It*, the capacity of online support networks to empower the victim is valued. Despite her relative absence throughout the novel, Stacey emerges from her home to join the protesters outside of the football game which the rapists' team, which includes many idle witnesses to the rape, have just won: "The handful of protestors from the school parking lot has quintupled in size, their faces covered in pink masks, their voices raised in a chant: *Not a victory for the victim! Not a victory for the victim!* … Here in the parking lot, beneath the glare of the camera lights, Stacey Stallard is the main attraction" (292-293). The victim is empowered by the growing network of supporters to leave her home and go out into public space, joining anti-rape protesters outside of the space of the stadium, as they voice their anger at the lack of justice.

Conclusion

Cultural ideology is created by exchanges between individuals within a community and therefore the most effective way in which novels can demonstrate recourse against rape culture ideology is by representing victims who engage with communities, and form supportive relationships with those around them. By foregrounding these exchanges, novels can demonstrate the process of shaping culture, and of dismantling rape culture. Too often this goal of deconstruction is compromised by representations which focus upon the individual's isolation and psychology. While these novels rightly represent the brutality, insensitivity, and wrongness of rape culture, their bleak constructions of community represent rape culture, but offer no avenue for deconstructing or destabilising it.

One way in which authors frequently choose to represent rape culture is through the characterisation of public and outdoor spaces as rape spaces. Public space is treated as a rape space with victims being disproportionately fearful and vulnerable within those spaces.

Despite rape typically occurring in domestic space in the novels, victims often retreat to domestic space, which offers sanctuary and safety. While this representation attempts to represent the victim's alienation from her victim-hostile society, it recites and reinforces gendered schemas of private space as feminine and public space as masculine, and discourages girls from engaging in both community-creation and cultural formation. The construction of public space as rape space also supports Valentine's "mismatch between the geography of violence and the geography of fear," by suggesting that girls and women are safer in domestic spaces and more vulnerable in public spaces, despite statistical evidence to the contrary ("Images of Danger" 22). It suggests that rape culture is limited to public spaces, and 'others' rape-supportive beliefs by suggesting that they are not held by those who occupy the domestic space, such as friends and family members. The construction of public space as rape space discourages girls from engaging with and influencing their community, discouraging the interrogation of patriarchy as a dominant cultural regime and encouraging male voices to continue to dominate cultural discourse.

Also contributing to gendered schemas of public space as male and private space as female, novels disproportionately offer victims from single-mother homes. This representation suggests that fathers are necessary to domestic thriving, as they act as the public agents for the family and protect daughters and mothers from exterior influences, while allowing them domestic happiness. By glorifying the role of fathers, novels evoke conservative neoliberal discourses which position feminism as destructive and suggest that patriarchy is necessary for the safety of daughters and the happiness of mothers. The family is a small-scale patriarchy, and by demonstrating the devastating effect of fatherlessness to daughters, novels suggest that the absence of fathers makes the daughter vulnerable to rape, and, as a result, that single-mother homes contribute to causing rape.

Schools similarly serve as scaled-down communities, and typically function in young adult fiction as microcosmic societies with which protagonists learn to engage before they reach adulthood and engage with broader society. These are often depicted as either representative of broader society, and sharing the same oppressive rape culture ideologies, as the students act as young proxies for their parents to bully victims in a socially acceptable way. However, rather than act as a microcosm for an oppressive society, the representation of schools can function more productively when they are deployed to represent ideological diversity and differing social ideologies, rather than a single oppressive rape supportive community ideology.

The bullies within school settings are typically girls, and often Mean Girls. Too often, girls are represented as monitoring and regulating other girls' behaviour through the girlfriend gaze, or the gynaeopticon. This is especially common with Mean Girl characters, a postfeminist character type who frequently acts in complement to the New Age Boyfriend. While New Age Boyfriends support their victimised girlfriends and guide their recovery, Mean Girls act as omnipotent oppressor-proxy figures who torment girl-victims, attempting to encourage conformity to patriarchal expectations, particularly to repress, ignore, or forget the rape, and avoid destabilising the oppressive regime in which the Mean Girl allies herself. This representational choice positions girls as responsible for rape culture and suggests that rape culture could be defeated simply by girls being nicer to each other. When girls are represented as agents and guardians of patriarchy, political critique of systemic female disempowerment is suppressed. In contrast, novels can represent supportive female communities and positive girl friendships or, perhaps even more productively, depict girls overcoming naturalised sexist ideology to recognise shared oppression and form supportive communities.

Mean Girls also thrive in representations of the internet, which, despite its proven efficacy in creating feminist community, is predominantly treated as a localised space in which victims are tormented by the same bullies who torment them at school. In so doing, novels maintain sexist perceptions of the internet as a dangerous and male-dominated public space in which the female is either vulnerable or in which her fully meanness can be realised. Failing to appreciate either its vastness or its proven potential to create feminist communities and to encourage the thriving of feminist discourse, the internet is primarily treated as a local community. This is despite its potential to collapse distinctions of global and local, public and private, and masculine and feminine space. When novels represent the internet as a space for localised bullying, they fail to recognise the transformative impact of the internet to collapse distinctions of gendered spaces and boundaries of local community and global society.

It is crucial that young adult fiction begins to represent victims who engage with their community to highlight the constructed nature of cultural ideologies, and how these might be confronted and changed through citizen engagement. Instead of abject others, victims should be represented as members of their communities, whose experiences of victimisation should serve to highlight weaknesses that must be addressed through cultural change. Buchwald et al. explain that, "In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes. This violence, however, is neither biologically nor divinely ordained. Much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change" (vii). As culture is created by communities, novels which engage with the relationship between the victim and her community and society expose the mechanics of culture-creation. These novels thereby contribute to destabilising a conceptualisation of rape culture as natural and immutable, and invite readers to complicate their own cultural context.

Conclusion

I've thought about rape before. I pictured it happening to me. A dark alley, some rough guy I don't know who's five times my size grabs me and forces me to my knees, a knife to my throat. Sometimes I'd picture it happening in my house when everyone was asleep. He'd come in through my window and hover over me. I'd be startled awake, pinned down in my own bed, everything I know that's right ripped out of my chest.

<u>That</u> is rape.

I know rape is something else too. It's just I always thought of it in a very specific way – with a very specific kind of attacker – not in a way I'd have to defend, not in a way I'd have to preface everything with "I was drunk, really drunk." (Whitney 103)

Rape is a pervasive subject in both popular media and in young adult fiction. While rape has always been a popular topic in the overwhelmingly pedagogical genre of children's fiction, there has been an increasing number of novels about rape published within the last fifteen years. However, as is true throughout popular media forms, the limited diversity of representation in these novels is troubling, as they are overwhelmingly reliant on problematic rape scripts and schemas. This thesis has examined several of these, including the schema of the female body as a rape space, the silent victim script, the New Age Boyfriend character schema, as well as schemas and scripts involving absent rapist characters, Mean Girl schemas, and schemas which portray the internet as a localised community space. Novels' reliance on scripts and schemas within young adult rape fiction is reflective not only of the conservatism of the genre of young adult fiction, but of the problematic nature of popular rape prevention discourse, which too often avoids discussion of rape in favour of a focus upon its effects – the victim's traumatised reaction. In so doing, rape prevention discourse

reinforces victim-blaming ideology by holding female subjects responsible for rape

prevention and cognitively constructs rape as an inalienable aspect of female experience.

As troubling as this construction of girlhood which dominates young adult rape fiction

is, it is also evidence of authors' awareness that they are writing from within a rape culture.

Authors are limited by the realities of low prosecution statistics, the frequency of public

victim-blaming, shaming, and bullying, and the suppression of victims' voices. What is most

palpable in these texts, and what emerges particularly in their paratexts, is an overwhelming

sense of defeat, and an ambivalence between wanting to empower victims on the one hand,

by stating that victims are not to blame, and succumbing to the dominant representational

paradigm which reinforces blame. While the representation of the victim's abjection may be a

realistic depiction of life within a rape culture, or at least a descriptive representation, it can

also function as prescriptive, perpetuating the ideology of female disempowerment which it

seeks to represent. As Rachel Hall comments on popular rape prevention rhetoric, "Much to

feminists' disappointment, the strategy of appealing to the horrors of rape through

representations of female suffering has not stopped men from raping women. Instead, it has

naturalized the violent practices of men and the suffering of women" (14). This thesis

suggests that in order to break from rape culture ideology, authors of young adult rape fiction

should revive a second-wave conceptualisation of victimhood as the most powerful tool for

dismantling patriarchy, and reject a false characterisation of victimisation and empowerment

as antithetical concepts.

This thesis has discussed how young adult rape fiction frequently contributes to the

construction of rape space, both in physical spaces, and in girls' bodies. This creation of a

rape space occurs in texts which align sexual harassment, violence and puberty, naturalising

rape as an unavoidable consequence of movement into adulthood, and presenting rape as

inherent to the female body. The conservatism of young adult rape fiction is also evident in

the frequency with which novels condemn sexual desire by punishing it with rape. Novels frequently begin with victims who embody the Girl Power type, a confidence which is aligned with their expressions of sexual desire. Their subsequent rape, which causes the victim to become a Reviving Ophelia type, exemplifies the victim-blaming ideology of neoliberal self-determination. The importance of the body as a site for controlling girls is also evident in the tensions surrounding girls' eating and clothing, highlighting the confused ambivalence of an ideology which promotes consumption, and yet simultaneously seeks to regulate and control what is consumed, and how, and by whom. These trends in young adult rape fiction highlight the tension around the female body, and its regulation and control, in rape prevention discourse, and the novels which participate in this discourse.

The trend of regulation is extended in my analysis of the role of voice in young adult rape fiction. The pedagogical imperative of young adult fiction emerges in perhaps its most bizarre manifestation in the silent victim script. Texts employ dramatic irony in an attempt to teach by negative example, modelling how not to react to rape instead of how to react to it. The silent victim script involves depicting victims as isolated, overwhelmed by their internal turmoil, and incapable of intersubjective interaction or community creation. The whole of the rape story is focused upon individual girls' pathology and social dysfunction, which not only blames victims, but also distracts from the responsibility of the rapist and of society to confront rape. Instead, the victim's anger is directed inward instead of being deployed as potentially constructive; a formulation which is legitimised by the victims' eventual confessions and the novels' swift resolutions, indicating that these novels are not problematising rape, but problematising victims. These novels contribute to the unspeakability of rape as their political quietism is literal. They recount rape stories as a gesture at feminist critique, but this critique is compromised by their neoliberal inflections,

which instead suppress and pathologise negative feelings such as anger, locating blame in the failed individual instead of in society.

The impact of postfeminism on young adult rape novels also inheres in the character of the New Age Boyfriend, who is presented as the exemplar of a kinder, more sensitive masculinity. The New Age Boyfriend operates in contrast to other boys and men whose outdated masculinity is aligned with rape culture, and in starkest contrast to the rapist, who is the absolutely evil perpetrator of the rape. As such, the New Age Boyfriend is constructed as an antidote to rape and to the toxic masculinity of rape culture. This construction, however, fails to account for his persistence as a hegemonic masculinity which obscures the continued disempowerment of girls and women, as is evident in his ability to better negotiate the victim's trauma, manage her body, and engage with society on her behalf. The antiquated toxic masculinity to which the New Age Boyfriend is supposedly antidote is most potently embodied by the rapist, who is usually absent and undeveloped beyond descriptions of his act as abstractly monstrous and evil. This formulation not only leaves novels to the generally victim-blaming tropes which emerge from a focus upon the victim, but also does disappointingly little to interrogate the cause and motives for rape. Novels which characterise the rapist, especially those which create Everyman rapists, tend to abstract the rapist type, pointing to the insidiousness of rape culture within society, and also allowing for a juxtaposition between motivation and consent which allows for a careful articulation of the nature of consent.

The representation of the victim's relationship to her community and society is paramount to interrogating the role of rape culture. Many novels tend to critique rape culture by demonstrating the absolute abjection of the victim, positioning her not only as a victim of rape but also as of victim of oppressive social structures in which she has no place. While this critique of rape culture may be valid, it neglects to model any room for productive recourse

for girls and women, nor any depiction of how community may be formed to change cultural ideology. The dysfunction of such a representation of the victim as abject is in her generically typical confinement to domestic space and fear of the outdoors, which merely prevents her from engaging with community and reaffirms sexist conceptualisations of the domestic space as female and public as male. Such a representation limits the definition of rape to one which is non-reflective of the majority of actual rapes, which more often occur in domestic space. Female community is further condemned through the characterisation of female peers as hostile. These hostile peers are often characterised as Mean Girls, who act as agents of patriarchy and distract from the male role in female disempowerment. Opportunities for feminist community creation through such space as the internet are often overlooked in favour of moral panic discourses about the threat of the internet to girls. The discourse of moral panic around the internet fails to recognise its potential to collapse traditional repressive definitions of gendered public and private space; a particular failure when read alongside the #MeToo movement's use of the internet for feminist consciousness raising.

The ways in which novels represent the victim and her relationship to her community and society not only describe, but also prescribe cultural ideology. Laurie Vickroy argues that fiction is particularly apt at constructing the parameters of understanding trauma, because of its capacity to represent both complex internal processes and how these are situated in and interact with interpersonal dynamics: "Fiction provides readers with a wealth of thick description of the conditions and characteristics of traumatic experience. With its unique capacity to represent the interweaving of the environment and human responses, fiction illustrates the creation of emotional and cognitive patterns arising out of trauma that in turn shape social attitudes and structures of living" (137). Fiction, as with any media, not only reflects the society in which it is created and consumed, but also constructs that society. Rather than attempt to reflect rape culture by reciting its problematic clichés, novels should

complicate its ideologies by rejecting the linguistic redefinition of victim which attaches meanings of powerlessness, isolation, and pathological defect to the victim. Instead, novels can redefine the meanings that this postfeminist moment has attached to girlhood to reassert that rape is not a personal issue, but a political one, and one which must therefore be tackled by acknowledging a female community of shared experience.

This redefinition can be achieved simply by rejecting the tropes which predominate in the subgenre. Novels should avoid victim-blaming treatments of girls' bodies by highlighting sexual harassment not as a natural consequence of puberty to which the girl must reconcile herself, but as a social injustice which should provoke ire. Rape should never be deployed as a consequence of a victim's bad decisions, especially not her sexual desire or self-sexualisation. Novels should not suppress voice, nor stigmatise negative emotional reactions to rape by attempting to teach by negative example, which effectively blames the victim for reacting wrongly and hopes that the reader will recognise the intended lesson rather than model the behaviours which are repeated over and over again throughout young adult rape novels. Rather than using the silent victim script, novels which instead encourage righteous female anger are better able to represent empowered victims whose voices enable them to develop supportive communities. Such empowered victims remove the need for New Age Boyfriend characters, because victims are allowed to navigate their worlds without mediation and counselling from a male figure. They are often empowered to confront their rapists, juxtaposing an articulation of consent with an articulation of the rapist's motivations, which in turn facilitates a representation of the rapist as an Everyman figure, and not as a vague and unknowable essential evil. While most novels are extremely apt at representation rape culture, those which foreground the victim's community and social engagement avoid confining her to domestic spaces and treating the outdoor or public space as a rape space,

discouraging her from social interaction. These instead model active citizen engagement and foreground the possibilities for complicating rape culture ideology.

An increasing number of novels are beginning to reject victim-blaming tropes, many of which suggest a conscious effort to write against the scripts and schemas which have dominated the subgenre. This conscious effort is symptomatic of the current atmosphere of revived feminist protest. This current moment of feminist political revitalisation is not only focused upon sexual harassment and assault, but is also well-informed through an unprecedented access to technologies of community-building and knowledge-sharing. It is imperative that literature for girls and young women is involved in this ideological shift and rejects the hegemony of a rape culture and its ideological dictates which are incompatible with female thriving. Novels should instead participate by empowering young female readers to view their oppression not as natural and inevitable, but as a social problem which demands redress.

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