We Were Not Designed to Ask Questions:

The Owned Female Body in Posthuman Young Adult Literature

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Contents

Author's Statement

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Research at Macquarie University. This thesis is entirely my own work, and where I have utilised the work of others this has been duly and thoroughly referenced. This thesis has not previously, in part or whole, been submitted for assessment in any other course of study.

Signed,

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the subjective agency of posthuman female characters within young adult fiction is influenced by the knowledge that they are owned by someone or something else. It focuses on five young adult novels with posthuman themes: *Eva* by Peter Dickinson, *Cinder* by Marissa Meyer, *The Lost Girl* by Sangu Mandanna, *Starters* by Lissa Price, and *Only Ever Yours* by Louise O'Neill. This thesis employs a theoretical framework that draws on posthumanism, feminism, children's literature criticism and girlhood studies. It investigates the ways in which these owned young women utilise their subjugated bodies as forms of rebellion, by employing performativity and in the act of escape. It also suggests that the repression of these young women foreshadows a new kind of exploitation in which thinking and feeling posthumans are denied the right to agency and identity. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that these texts fail to uphold the feminist outlooks they purport to endorse. Instead, they perpetuate patriarchal power structures that exist in the real world. Given young adult fiction's socialising ideological agenda, this thesis suggests that these texts ultimately reinforce dominant social power dynamics and reinscribe patriarchal power structures that teenage readers experience in their own lives.

Introduction

My intention in this thesis is to interrogate how the subjective agency of adolescent female posthuman characters is influenced by the power dynamics that arise as a consequence of the colonisation of their bodies. I also intend to question whether these narratives subsequently empower or disempower their protagonists by interrogating the texts' adherence to the feminist ideologies they purport to uphold. This investigation focuses on five specifically-selected young adult (YA) texts, each of which depicts a female protagonist whose body is owned by someone (or something) else: Peter Dickinson's *Eva* (1988), Sangu Mandanna's *The Lost Girl* (2012), Lissa Price's *Starters* (2012), Marissa Meyer's *Cinder* (2012) and Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours* (2014). I contend that these narratives provide particularly fertile ground for the study of notions of power and embodiment, as the protagonists of my primary corpus are viewed by their owners as little more than objects, designed and created for profit and exploitation. It must be noted that this corpus is not intended to be entirely representative of posthuman trends currently evident in YA literature. Rather, this investigation is intended to give a close reading of a selection of texts that are particularly useful in examining notions of power, embodiment and commodification as they are played out in YA fiction. The investigation will take the form of a close, textual analysis of the primary corpus novels, informed by a theoretical framework that combines posthumanism, feminism, children's literary criticism and girlhood studies.

By design, the protagonists of my primary corpus each inhabit a different posthuman body, but each is corporeal. This was a deliberate choice, as the protagonists' embodiment is a particular field of interrogation for this investigation and the variety of bodies they inhabit invite a number of enquiries regarding embodiment and subjectivity. However, this is just one of the criteria I employed when selecting the primary corpus. As I intend to interrogate the ways in which these texts highlight the intersection of posthumanism and feminism, I also purposefully chose texts with only female

adolescent protagonists who are posthuman but have previously self-identified as human. This ensures that my primary corpus is well placed for both a feminist and a posthumanist interrogation. Additionally, I chose texts depicting posthuman bodies that I considered to be underrepresented in YA scholarship. Much of the field of posthuman YA scholarship examines virtual reality narratives and those depicting non-corporeal existences (for example, narratives that take place within the world of online computer games). My primary corpus, however, features a clone, a cyborg, a human-animal hybrid, a genetically-engineered girl and a teenage girl who allows an elderly woman to inhabit her body via neural transfer.

Only Ever Yours presents freida[1], a genetically-engineered young woman who has been trained by the School for sixteen years to fulfil one of three roles authorised for women in her society: wife, prostitute, or nun. *Starters* follows Callie, who reluctantly consents to allow her body to be temporarily inhabited by wealthy elderly people via neural transfer in return for a large sum of money. Callie agrees to this process because she needs the money to purchase medicine for her sick younger brother. *Eva* depicts a teenage girl of the same name who awakens after a car accident to discover that her brain has been transplanted into the body of a chimpanzee, whilst *Cinder* offers a reversion of the Cinderella story in which the titular character is a teenage cyborg mechanic who falls in love with a Prince and must save him from the matrimonial designs of an evil Lunar Queen. *The Lost Girl*, the only text among the primary corpus that does not take place in an obviously dystopian future, follows the newly self-named clone, Eva, as she is forced to occupy the identity of her Other, Amarra, following Amarra's death. Each of these girls has been designed and created for a specific purpose, but, as this investigation will show, each strives for her own subjective agency, resisting this purpose and seeking to escape from those that own her. This resistance and escape establishes the texts'

[1] In keeping with the style of the original text, the names of all female characters in O'Neill's novel are presented without capital letters.

feminist ideologies. However, I intend to question whether these feminist ideologies endure, or whether these texts merely reinscribe their underlying patriarchal ideologies.

The people, companies and governments that own these girls view them as little more than objects. This thesis will examine the ways in which this ownership affects the protagonists' attainment of subjective agency. As each of the protagonists is designed as female, with a specific role and purpose in mind, this investigation will furthermore examine the ways in which these young women employ performativity as a tool for resistance and/or survival. Finally, it will explore the ways in which reclaiming their owned bodies from those who seek to subjugate them enables these protagonists to attain a sense of subjective agency.

Jessica Laureltree Willis (108) states that literary texts encourage girls to explore thoughts and ideas that may not be easily discussed in their real worlds. The owned and subjugated protagonists of the texts discussed in this thesis encourage implied readers to engage with complex ideas about commodification, power, embodiment and the impact of the increasingly entangled relationship between biotechnological innovation and capitalism. Maree Kimberley (126) asserts that the combination of realistic and fantastical elements of posthuman YA fiction enables adolescent readers to examine the real world implications of ethics and power as they relate to biotechnical advancement. The subjugation of others based solely on their classification as posthuman and female is one such implication. Thomas J. Morrisey (189) suggests that fictive representations of reality encourage implied readers to reflect upon and interrogate the way these ideas impact their real worlds. As previously mentioned, all but one of the primary corpus texts take place in futuristic dystopias, which have been created in part by a plausible extrapolation of the real-world relationship between biotechnological development and capitalism. Therefore, it is conceivable that these texts invite adolescent readers to contemplate the implications of the decisions they make now and in the future.

If adolescents utilise "imaginary characters as symbolic resources" (Willis 109), then it follows that reading about such issues may encourage them to challenge normative social paradigms (such as those regarding the construction of female subjectivity, for example) (107) under which they exist in the real world. Indeed, this investigation will examine the ways in which the aforementioned dystopian futures have affected notions of female subjectivity. It will also question the subsequent conceptions about this subjectivity that adolescent readers may absorb from these texts.

Victoria Flanagan observes that "[a]n important consideration in children's literature that offers representations of technology is therefore whether such technology acts to empower or disenfranchise child subjects." (*Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject* 6). I intend to examine the ways in which the primary corpus simultaneously empowers and disempowers its adolescent female protagonists. Indeed, Kimberley (137) has also noted that in select posthuman narratives the protagonists' status as posthumans contributes to both their strength and their powerlessness. Arguably, the teenage protagonists of the primary corpus model resistance to power structures, such as schools, the government and parents, that teenagers face in the real world. However, although Chapter Two (The Owned Body), Chapter Three (Performativity as Resistance, Performativity as Survival) and Chapter Four (Reclaiming the Owned Body) examine the ways in which these teenagers resist societal power imbalances, Chapter Four also questions the seemingly empowering messages these texts offer their implied readers. These texts establish feminist ideologies with their depictions of strong, female characters who rebel against the patriarchies who seek to control them. However, I argue that the way in which this subjective agency is achieved ultimately undermines the feminist ideology the texts purport to uphold. Indeed, I suggest that these texts simultaneously empower and disempower their protagonists and deliver conflicting messages about resistance and agency.

Flanagan notes that in posthuman narratives, female bodies, which have been traditionally "othered", are resignified, becoming the means by which female subjects achieve empowerment and agency (*Technology and Identity* 5). She suggests that posthumanism encourages a revaluation of agency (*Technology and Identity* 5) and, indeed, my primary corpus encourages a rethinking of both feminine and posthuman subjectivity. Posthuman and feminine bodies both frequently serve as signs of otherness (Flanagan, "Girl Parts: The Female Body, Subjectivity and Technology in Posthuman Young Adult Fiction" 41) in YA literature and this investigation aims to examine the effect of power and powerlessness on the subject-formation of othered female protagonists.

Posthumanism lends itself readily to examinations of power and the commodification of embodiment because posthuman characters are frequently considered non-human. Indeed, were this not the case, this thesis would consider notions of slavery rather than commercialism and commodification (see Chapter Two). The texts of my primary corpus encourage an investigation of concepts of power and dominance as they relate to teenagers, who exist in the liminal space between the obedience of childhood and the independence of adulthood. These texts also foreshadow a new kind of power relationship in which thinking and feeling individuals are, as a consequence of their creation, classified as non-human and, as a result, denied basic rights and agency.

As the following examination of the current research climate will demonstrate, there is an increasing amount of research which focuses on the intersections between posthumanism and YA literature. However, the following chapter also identifies the research gap into which this thesis attempts to insert itself. Much current scholarship examines posthuman YA texts with both male and female characters, whilst I have chosen to focus solely on narratives that depict embodied female protagonists who employ either first-person narration or an omniscient narrator. In this way, readers develop a meaningful awareness of the protagonists' evolving sense of subjective agency as they resist

the restrictions set down by their owners. Furthermore, this insight allows readers to intimately experience the protagonists' experience of being owned.

Toward an Integrated Theoretical Framework

The following investigation will be informed by a critical framework based on posthumanism and feminism, and influenced by children's literature criticism and girlhood studies. Most contemporary discussions about posthumanism begin similarly to this one, with an attempt to clarify the discussion's use of the term 'posthumanism'. My own concept owes much to the assertions of Victoria Flanagan, Richard Gooding, Pramod Nayar and Clare Bradford, John Stephens, Robyn McCallum and Kerry Mallan. However, an exploration of the evolution of the term and its applications, particularly in the context of feminism and children's literature, is essential at this juncture.

N. Katherine Hayles' now-seminal text, *How We Became Posthuman*, published in 1999, investigates the intersection of posthumanism and feminism and seeks to develop a definition of the term by studying the evolution of cybernetics. Hayles interrogates the intersection of posthumanism and literature, cybernetics, informatics and subjectivity, concluding that "[t]he posthuman subject is an amalgam … a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction." (3). This understanding of the posthuman subject as a fluid, ever-changing entity has been widely adopted by scholars of posthumanism and greatly informs the investigations of posthuman subjectivity that make up this thesis. Hayles' observations about the intersection of posthumanism, literature and embodied subjectivity are of particular interest to this thesis and, importantly to this analysis, she suggests that literary texts are not merely prescriptive. She posits that they are not only influenced by advances in technology but that they, in turn, exert influence on the world (21). She notes further that, "the literary corpus is at once a physical object and a space of representation, a body and a message." (29). This is particularly true of texts for adolescents, which, along with texts for young children, often seek to perform a socialising function. Indeed, in the chapters that follow I seek to question the influence of the primary corpus on its implied adolescent

readers. The texts initiate but ultimately fail to uphold a feminist outlook, and I argue that they also seek to socialise adolescent readers by encouraging them to question the decisions they make now and into the future. The texts under examination in this thesis are not only influenced by real world advances in technology, but they themselves also have the potential to influence their readers' creation of, and relationship with, technology.

The critical discourse of posthumanism is diverse. While there have been several integral examinations of the application of posthumanism to adult fiction, investigations of YA literature in the context of posthumanism and feminism are limited. Furthermore, much current scholarship concerning posthumanism and YA literature interrogates posthuman bodies in relation to how 'human' or 'technical' they are (see, for example, Kimberley; Flanagan; Gooding). In contrast, I investigate how power and commodification (rather than the technicality that is implicit in posthuman bodies) affect the process of subjectification. Flanagan notes that the anti-technology paradigm that prevailed in children's literature for the past three decades appears to be shifting and "[a] small but continually increasing number of children's authors are beginning to produce narratives about technology in much more life-affirming and positive ways." (*Technology and Identity* 2). Richard Gooding concurs, enthusiastically claiming that, "for better or worse, the posthuman condition has arrived and is demanding new modes of literary expression." (320). One such mode of expression is manifest in the YA narratives that constitute my primary corpus. As I will demonstrate below, these texts present their protagonists' relationships with technology as both helpful and harmful.

Following Hayles, Flanagan, Gooding and Bradford et al. note that a common trait of posthuman YA fiction is its rejection of the Cartesian mind/body dualism common to the liberal humanist subject. The Cartesian mind/body dualism is the belief that the body and the mind are separate entities and that the mind can maintain an independent existence, separate from the body. Gooding observes that

posthumanism presents an opportunity to "trouble liberal humanist definitions of the self as coherent, autonomous, and rational" (310), thereby suggesting that the posthuman 'self' is divided, irrational and disjointed. Bradford et al. agree with both Hayles and Gooding, remarking that "[i]n general, posthuman subjectivity is represented as fragmented, decentred, tenuous, constructed, hybridised, and enacted or performed." (158). These notions ultimately reaffirm those posited by Donna Haraway, who claims that, "[a] concept of a coherent inner self, achieved (cultural) or innate (biological), is a regulatory fiction that is unnecessary - indeed, inhibitory - for feminist projects of producing and affirming complex agency and responsibility." (135). Thus, posthumanism and feminism each endorse a fractured sense of subjectivity. This mirrors the process of maturation undergone by teenagers in the real world, who seek to exert subjective agency whilst existing in the liminal space between childhood and adulthood.

In an attempt to further develop a working definition of posthumanism as it relates to YA literary criticism, it is useful here to examine the scholarship of Pramod Nayar and to further explore the work of Bradford et al. Nayar posits that posthumanism is two things; an "*ontological condition*" (13 emphasis in original) under which many humans live now (having received stem cell or organ transplants, for example) and "a new *conceptualization* of the human" (13 emphasis in original) which he terms "*critical posthumanism*" (11 emphasis in original). He expounds, "*critical posthumanism* seeks to … treat the human itself as an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology." (13 emphasis in original). This notion of critical posthumanism as a theoretical framework, rather than posthumanism as a state of being, informs much of the critical approach of this thesis. Drawing on the theorists discussed above, I will employ a theoretical framework that views posthuman and feminist subjectivity as emergent and fractured.

Additionally, Bradford et al. (160) conclude that within YA literature, texts with posthuman themes tend to fall roughly into three narrative groups: those featuring robots and artificial intelligence, those featuring genetic engineering, and those featuring virtual reality. Critical interrogations of posthuman themes in YA literature seem to unevenly favour the former and latter categories. This thesis aims to rectify this oversight. Furthermore, much early work (for example, Hayles; Gooding; Haraway) interrogates the posthuman as it relates to more technical bodies such as cyborgs, or, rather, posthuman embodiment in which an obvious technicality can be *seen*. This leaves cloning and genetic engineering, as depicted in *The Lost Girl* and *Only Ever Yours*, underrepresented.

An exception to this is Elaine Ostry's "*Is He Still Human? Are You?": Young Adult Science Fiction in the Posthuman Age*. Although Flanagan (*Technology and Identity* 24) notes several problems with Ostry's article, including her conflation of the terms "posthuman" and "posthumanism" and her narrow application of posthumanism's extensive ideology, Ostry's observations regarding cloned bodies, teenage subjectivity and commodification are of particular interest to this thesis[2]. Indeed, Flanagan (*Technology and Identity* 23) notes that it was Ostry who first used the term posthumanism in relation to children's literature. As such, her contribution to the field cannot be overlooked. Ostry (238) observes that, much like teenagers in the real world, clones and genetically engineered characters must come to terms with their own identities, accept their difference to others and assimilate into society. She remarks that posthuman bodies function as a metaphor for the peculiarity of adolescence, during which time "adolescents must discover themselves and reintegrate into their society." (238). She notes further that adolescents in YA literature feel alienated from their parents and society, but also from themselves (238). Ostry (225) suggests that, for posthuman YA characters, finding one's identity becomes even more complex when influenced by the fact that one is a clone, for example. For the protagonists of the primary corpus these problems are further complicated by the knowledge

[2] For further application of Ostry's observations to the primary corpus, please see Chapter Two.

that they are owned by another. Their attempts to attain subjective agency are not only complicated by the social condemnation attached to their posthuman embodiment, but also by the knowledge that they do not always have control over their own bodies. Ostry observes that, "[a]t a time when teenagers are themselves commodified and used to sell products, and are urged to consume them, these books resonate for their audience." (230). As the examination in Chapter Two will demonstrate, the adolescent protagonists of my primary corpus are themselves commodities; owned, controlled and in some cases sold, by an external force.

Ostry makes several further pertinent assertions about YA literature as a genre. She notes the "perceived need in young adult literature to provide a clear moral structure and a hopeful, if not happy, ending" (243), observing that most contemporary YA writers "ultimately play it safe by showing the posthuman body as comfortingly familiar, despite human appearances." (243). She claims that to do otherwise would remove the cautionary aspect from the texts and minimise the didacticism that is customary in YA literature (243). It is here that Ostry's opinion and my own deviate somewhat, as it is evident that a great number of contemporary writers of novels for adolescents are not afraid to stray from the "hopeful, if not happy" ending. Indeed, we need only to look to the devastating conclusion of this own thesis' primary text, *Only Ever Yours*, for confirmation. The closure of this text upsets Ostry's implication, as it foreshadows freida's desperate and tragic end. However, I will interrogate the socialising implications of the ideologies espoused by the remaining primary corpus texts further in Chapter Four. In their reinforcement of patriarchal power structures, these texts seem to uphold the implied moralising agenda that Ostry ascribes to YA narratives.

My supposition that writers of YA literature are beginning to embrace the narrative possibilities offered by posthuman themes is supported by Flanagan, who charts the increase in techno-friendly

narratives for children and young adults. Flanagan suggests that the profound recodification of human subjectivity expounded by posthumanism has resulted in children's literature's reluctance to adopt it readily (*Technology and Identity* 5). However, she claims that a growing cohort of "writers of young adult fiction have become increasingly eager to discard the established model of dystopian representations of technofuturistic worlds" (*Technology and Identity* 5) and embrace notions of posthuman subjectivity. Like Ostry, Flanagan notes the socialising nature of children's literature, observing that children's literature "actively seeks to intervene in children's perceptions of self and their relationship to the world around them" (*Technology and Identity* 6) and that literature can assist readers to come to terms with social changes (*Technology and Identity* 5). She suggests that children's and YA literature intentionally "attempts to socialise and enculturate child readers, advocates particular forms of subjectivity and identity formation (by granting subjective agency to select characters) and endorses specific forms of social organisation (through the effects of thematic significance and narrative closure)." (*Technology and Identity* 6). Thus, Flanagan (*Technology and Identity* 35) attributes the rise in positive depictions of technology to two factors: an increasingly tech-savvy audience, and, further, this audience developing into tech-savvy, tech-friendly writers. As Ostry humorously notes, "[i]n a sense, we are all clones, especially when teenagers, fighting against a conformist society and our parents' conditioning." (240). It cannot be disputed that this socialising agenda must evolve with an ever-changing YA genre. Similarly, children's literature criticism must move to embrace these posthuman and technological narratives.

Further to this, Gooding (310) comments on the inevitability that science fiction narratives within YA literature should provide an opportunity for concerns about posthumanism to play out. Posthuman narratives in YA fiction usually (but not exclusively) take place in dystopian environments. As mentioned previously, of the five texts that constitute my primary corpus, only *The Lost Girl* takes place in a non-dystopian society that is closely aligned with our own. Bradford et al. (165) note that

this is not uncommon, as children's fictions that depict genetic engineering or cybernetics rarely do so positively. It is Gooding who most succinctly suggests that ,"YA novels with posthuman concerns tend to present dystopias emerging out of biomedical and cybernetic advances" (310) and, indeed, *Only Ever Yours* presents this exact scenario. In O'Neill's dystopian future female infanticide and selective abortion became a symptom of society's increasing preference for male babies and have led to a circumstance in which female babies are unable to be conceived at all. The genetically-engineered, utterly subjugated female young women (eves) in O'Neill's text are created to ensure that male babies continue to be born, whilst at the same time ensuring that patriarchal social values endure.

Kimberley suggests that posthuman narratives for young adults encourage investigation "into the psychological space occupied by adolescents, who must conceptualise their future while not knowing exactly what they might become." (135). As discussed in the following chapter, the protagonists of the primary corpus have each been created for a specific purpose. Yet, each endeavours to attain her own sense of subjectivity, separate from the purpose for which she has been created. Although these girls are aware of exactly what they are expected to become, they nonetheless attempt to resist these prescribed roles and take command of their own futures. Furthermore, Flanagan notes that,

> "there are obvious parallels between the "otherness" of robot and cyborg characters and the liminality of adolescence as a category of identity, making narratives about the development of "othered" subjects appealing to young adult readers who see themselves as falling outside the constructs of either adulthood or childhood." (*Technology and Identity* 20).

These tech-friendly, other-inclusive narratives give voice and agency to previously overlooked subjects. As I have formerly asserted, it is particularly important to present such narratives to adolescents who exist in an othered state themselves, situated between childhood and adulthood but inhabiting neither category. For this reason, the narratives' implied adolescent audience should

certainly identify with the protagonists' sense of being disregarded as they attempt to attain subjective agency.

Flanagan suggests that, perhaps owing to the ever-changing nature of posthumanism itself, much of the current critical scholarship "offers a limited view of how posthumanism might assist in the interpretation of children's fiction." (*Technology and Identity* 22). Flanagan's excellent treatise on the intersection of posthumanism, subjectivity and YA fiction does much to address this deficiency. Although her work centres on the intersection of technology and embodiment in YA fiction, and this thesis aims to examine notions of commodification and embodiment in the same, several of her observations, noted throughout this chapter, are of particular interest to this thesis. Maree Kimberley also makes several salient observations on the intersection of posthumanism, power and YA literature. She observes that power structures within YA novels situate children and teenagers as dependent on the adult world (131). As the following chapters will make evident, the young women depicted in the primary corpus are certainly at the mercy of the adults who claim to own them. Kimberley further suggests that, within YA narratives, adolescent characters' posthumanism is often defined by simultaneous conflicts between power and powerlessness, and agency and the inability to act (132). She observes that for the adolescent characters in these narratives, their posthumanism "simultaneously contribute[s] to both their powerlessness and their strength" (137). Cinder, freida, Callie and both Evas are empowered and hindered by their posthumanism. Whilst it is often the root cause of their subjugation, in some cases their posthumanism is also the catalyst for their emancipation.

Further to this, Flanagan observes that posthuman bodily modifications performed on adolescent subjects in YA narratives are rarely depicted as voluntary (*Technology and Identity* 17). Indeed, as I will

discuss in detail in Chapter Two, each of the protagonists examined by this thesis are involuntarily posthuman. They have been designed and created by someone else for a specific purpose and this contributes significantly to their inability to exert subjective agency. For example, the clone Eva in *The Lost Girl* is created solely to replace her Other, Amarra, if Amarra dies. Eva is consequently forced to learn, eat and read only those subjects, foods and novels consumed by her original. Similarly, the food, clothes, speech and education of the eves of *Only Ever Yours* are strictly dictated and administered by the supervising chastities and, thus, by the ruling government. These girls are designed to serve one purpose only and, as a result, exert no control over their own lives. Indeed, as Haraway observes, "[n]ot to have property in the self is not to be a subject, and so not to have agency." (135). Much like Nayar posits that posthuman subjectivity co-evolves with one's environment, Gooding (315) suggests that the development of agency occurs as a result of one's circumstances. Indeed, the agency these protagonists establish depends significantly on their material circumstance and varies greatly, ranging from Callie's complete sense of freedom to freida's transformation into a laboratory subject.

Flanagan (*Technology and Identity* 103) notes Bradford et al.'s incorrect presumption that the posthuman subject is disembodied, leading to their supposition that the physical body is of no significance in regards to posthuman subjectivity. While Flanagan's investigation rectifies this oversight, I intend to rectify it further in the following chapter's examination of the effect of commodification on the corporeal bodies of posthuman subjects. As Flanagan observes, much of the existing critical work regarding posthumanism, embodiment and subjectivity focuses on the disembodied, for example cyber-consciousnesses and virtual avatars that exist only in online worlds. Conversely, this thesis examines only embodied posthuman characters. Each character examined inhabits a physical posthuman body. However, each has previously self-identified as human. Consequently, this thesis aims to bridge the gap in existing children's literature criticism by undertaking an extensive textual analysis of embodied, female posthuman subjects. As the following chapter illustrates, the effect of ownership on the subjectivity of these posthuman characters is

significant. This analysis will rectify the common assumption in posthuman literary criticism that posthuman bodies are *dis*embodied and will offer insight into the intersection of feminism, embodiment, commodification and YA literature. In addition to expounding the ways in which the protagonists' subjectification is affected by the knowledge of their ownership, I intend to argue that several of the protagonists employ performativity for the purposes of resistance and of survival. I also intend to argue that each protagonist, with the exception of freida, attempts to exert subjective agency by reclaiming her body in the act of escape. Finally, I intend to investigate the potential socialising impact of my primary corpus on the implied audience of adolescent readers. In doing so, I will question whether these texts, in which the protagonist is aided in their attainment of agency by the implicit representation of the patriarchy (that is, wealthy older men) ultimately empower or disempower their female protagonists. These texts set up feminist ideologies in their depictions of strong, female heroines. However, I argue that they reinscribe patriarchal dominance by requiring their heroines to seek assistance or permission from men with power in order to achieve subjective agency. In doing so, these texts ultimately fail to uphold the feminist ideologies they promulgate.

The Owned Body

A crucial issue within scholarly discussions of posthumanism is how to define and articulate notions of agency (Hayles; Bradford et al.), precisely because posthumanism often asks us to speculate about the agency of non-human beings. Bradford et al. (159) note that YA literature, which as a genre is overtly concerned with the self-society relationship, provides a fertile ground for examining posthuman concepts, which often pose ethical conundrums. One such conundrum - the struggle for subjective agency undergone by posthuman protagonists who are owned by someone else - is the focus of this chapter. In order to demonstrate this struggle, I will employ Pramod Nayar's salient observation that posthuman subjectivity is emergent, resulting from a dynamic interaction between living things and their environment (21). This subjectivity manifests differently for Eva (*Eva*), freida (*Only Ever Yours*), and Callie (*Starters*), who are the focus of this chapter. However, for each it involves attaining a sense of bodily autonomy and subjective agency: that is, exercising the ability to act of their own accord and to make and enact decisions about their bodies. The girls' bodies are strictly regulated, and by rebelling against these regulations they achieve, at least in part, a sense of subjective agency. In doing so, they also establish the texts' feminist outlook. As Roberta Seelinger Trites suggests, "the social power that constructs [teenagers] bestows upon them a power from which they generate their own sense of subjectivity." (*Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* 7). It is through an interaction with, and rebellion against, the powers by which they are subjugated that these girls attain subjectivity and, subsequently, agency (Trites, *Disturbing the Universe* 5). Furthermore, Trites (*Disturbing the Universe* 6) observes that, within YA fiction, adolescent characters are often denied agency in power struggles that allow and deny, engage and disengage their power in much the same way that teenagers negotiate their place within society in the real world. Thus, in small yet relatable ways, as they struggle for subjective agency against power

structures in their imagined worlds, the protagonists I examine in this chapter model resistance to social institutions that teenagers encounter in the real world.

Although the concept of ownership carries with it connotations of slavery, it is important to note that this is not the spirit in which I intend to employ the term. Rather, given that each of the protagonists is viewed by their owner (and, indeed, their society) as a non-human entity, I contend that they are instead colonised by market forces (Guerra 285; Trites, *Disturbing the Universe* 4). This, in turn, constrains their power as individuals and limits their subjective agency. Stephanie Guerra suggests that posthuman YA narratives like those under examination here relate and expand upon "the old story in which wealth defines power and the powerful are licensed to exploit the minds and bodies of others for profit." (284). Notions of bodily colonisation are common in YA narratives with posthuman themes (Guerra 285), as genetically altered adolescents within these narratives sometimes become commodities themselves (Ostry 230). I contend that the posthuman protagonists examined here, regarded by their owners in terms of the profit they represent, are commodified objects. Their owners perceive them as non-human, thereby reducing them to commodities that can be transacted upon. The protagonists are effectively stripped of their personhood (Guerra 285) and serve as profit-generating bodies to be created and then sold or loaned. I argue that narratives such as these are particularly relevant to contemporary adolescent readers who are themselves increasingly constructed as the ultimate consumers (see, for example, Cook).

Eva, Callie and freida are each owned by a company or government, who exploit their posthuman bodies for their own purposes. Eva's hybrid body becomes a spectacle, ensuring significant financial benefit for the companies that utilise her in their commercials; Prime Directions, the company to which Callie signs over her body, derives an enormous profit from their neural transfer rentals; and freida is created, designed and produced at the behest of the government to maintain their strict patriarchal social order. The knowledge that their bodies are not their own clearly undermines

feminist narratives of identity, wherein identity is explicitly located in the body (see, for example, Phillips 40; Flanagan, *Technology and Identity* 108–109; Vint 8–9). As discussed below, Eva, Callie and freida explicitly locate their identities within their bodies. As a result, their attempts to construct their own identity and develop a sense of subjective agency are significantly problematic.

Each girl is conspicuously aware of, and particularly self-reflexive about, the extent to which she is the commodified property of a powerful, exploitative other. Eva is horrified to discover that she is obligated to perform in commercials as a result of a deal struck to fund her life-saving surgery. "You mean I'm *sponsored*!" (Dickinson 41 emphasis in original) Eva shouts incredulously. Her mother confirms, "you aren't allowed to advertise anyone else's products" (41–42). Callie's financial and social vulnerability is exploited by both the corporation with which she signs her bodily rental contract and the wealthy elderly renters (Enders) who take advantage of these rentals: "technically, [my] body now belongs to an Ender named Helena Winterhill, because she paid for it" (Price 96), Callie observes. The eves in O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours* are created by and remain the property of the government, and its leader the Father, until their ownership is transferred to an adolescent male Inheritant. Shrewdly remarking upon her place in this society, freida reflects on the brutal, but rarely violent, punishments for rule infractions meted out by the chastities, the Father's representatives in the School in which she is raised: "[t]he chastities are not allowed to damage the Father's investments." (O'Neill 86). Indeed, the eves themselves debate ownership of their bodies, given the strict appearance, behaviour and nutrition regime to which they must adhere. "[I]t's my body … isn't it?' [freida's best friend isabel asks her] Neither of us moves. The silence is heavy, weighted with fear." (139). With their identities intrinsically linked to their bodies, the girls want to believe that they have control over both. Their silent fear conveys their comprehension that, ultimately, neither belongs to them. Indeed, as O'Neill explains, the eves' very purpose for existing is utilitarian. In their patriarchal society, they have been created solely to serve the male population's needs for procreation and pleasure: "[a]ccording to how many sons are born in a given year, three times as many eves are designed to accommodate demand

for companions and concubines." (129). Eva, Callie and freida come to understand that as a result of their ownership, their bodies are nothing more than commodities, to be traded and sold in much the same way as livestock. As discussed below, this significantly affects their process of identity formation. Furthermore, I suggest that the subjugation of these protagonists portends a new kind of exploitation in which posthuman beings are categorically oppressed and denied the right to subjectivity, agency and their own identities.

The language used by these protagonists also implies the extent to which they are aware of the commercial exploitation of their embodiment. Eva's indignant use of the word "sponsored" evokes images of sporting heroes proudly spruiking the latest sports drink in exchange for a hefty payout, and, indeed, this is exactly what is expected of Eva. Eva's payment, however, has already been received in the form of her new hybrid body. For this procedure, which was enacted upon her without her consent, she is forced to reimburse her corporate sponsors in the form of advertisements similar to those described above. Callie acknowledges that Helena Winterhill has paid to use her body and thus has a legitimate claim to ownership. In disguise as a young person in an old person's body, Callie gains insight into the callous and indifferent way the Enders refer to their rental bodies. Much as though they are speaking about a rental car, rather than an actual living person, an elderly renter advises Callie, "[d]on't let anything happen to that body, because the fines are simply atrocious." (Price 75). Another renter is aggrieved that her holiday is terminated when the truth behind Prime Directions is revealed, indignantly claiming, "I didn't pay this much to have my youth adventure cut short" (307). These observations make it clear that the Enders view these young bodies as simply products to be consumed. Callie observes that, "I always figured renting was technically outside the law, but I'd always assumed that vast quantities of money in the right palms could solve anything." (177). In Callie's society wealth defines power and, problematically, she has neither. Her body is not her own and she has no recourse to amend the situation. Finally, freida is aware that she is expected to repay both the time and money invested in her upbringing by becoming the perfect compliant companion.

By referring to herself and her fellow eves as “investments”, freida indicates that she is intricately aware of her status as a product belonging to the Father, upon which he expects a return. The fear-laden silence she and isabel share when isabel questions the ownership of her body is telling. Raised in the knowledge that she was designed and created solely for the men of their society, isabel is frightened by the understanding that her body (and therefore her identity) is not her own. As freida is the focaliser of her narrative, her previous observations about isabel combine with this silence to convey that she is concerned that someone will discover isabel’s burgeoning subjectivity which, of course, is strictly forbidden. Not only is freida oppressed by the government that owns her, the fearful silence she shares with isabel indicates that she believes in her subjugation so utterly that she is frightened by the idea of any eve developing a sense of subjectivity. I argue that freida’s experiences epitomise the potential effect of unchecked patriarchal dominance. They also foreshadow potential consequences of the increasingly complex relationship between biotechnology and capitalism in contemporary society, which I suggest could perceivably lead to the disempowerment and exploitation of thinking and feeling non-human individuals.

Each of the protagonists in question is the focaliser of her own narrative. Consequently, readers experience firsthand the constrained subjectivity these characters experience as a consequence of their ownership. We experience Eva’s horror as she realises that her body may not be her own property. Indeed, she finds herself the subject of a potential court battle to determine who, in fact, owns her physical body. “Do you know who I belong to?” (Dickinson 69) Eva asks her lawyer. Callie’s and freida’s first-person narration ensures that readers have a clear understanding of their feelings about being owned, as we are granted access to their innermost thoughts. As discussed above, Callie muses about her ownership, comprehending that her status as a posthuman renders her powerless and unable to exert agency, for “[i]f I hadn’t needed this money so much, I might have been tempted to give up … [but] … I had a [tracking] chip in my head. I couldn’t just walk away.” (Price 130). Callie also discovers that the process that made her posthuman is irreversible. Her tracking chip cannot be

removed. Prime Directions has enabled themselves to retain control over her for the rest of her life. Evoking imagery of automata, freida observes that, "[w]e are wound up and wound down, like mechanical dolls." (O'Neill 46). O'Neill's use of symbolism here is particularly evocative. Like automata, the eves are machines built in imitation of human beings, with no subjective agency of their own and utterly at the mercy of those who control them. As noted previously, such dichotomies of power/powerlessness and agency/inability to exert agency are, for some scholars, a particular characteristic of the posthuman condition in YA texts (Kimberley 132). *Starters, Eva* and *Only Ever Yours* reiterate these dichotomies in their representation of powerless owned protagonists who are unable to exert agency. These dichotomies also serve as a site for feminist interrogation as they are played out on bodies that are not only posthuman, but also female. However, as Trites observes, YA narratives are particularly concerned with characters who "initially feel disempowered but grow into an increased awareness of what exactly agency entails" (*Disturbing the Universe* 159). Indeed, as Eva, freida and Callie rebel against the patriarchal power structures that constrain them, their sense of agency increases and they attain a sense of control over their lives. Their resistance to these structures also serves to further their texts' feminist outlook.

Day suggests that the desire to constrain young women's considerations of their own subjective agency is particularly common in texts that depict adolescents (75). This becomes especially problematic when we consider that, as mentioned earlier, many young women directly correlate their body with their identity (Phillips 40). For the young female characters discussed in this chapter, this correlation between body and identity is further complicated by the ownership of their bodies. Indeed, their attempts to form an identity and attain subjective agency are undertaken with the knowledge that a significant part of their identity is outside of their control, under ownership by someone else. As Callie observes,"[i]t was scary when you didn't know what your body had been doing without you." (Price 108). Dickinson neatly exemplifies this in Eva's exchange with a TV personality:

> ""But inside there you're really a young woman?" he said. "I'm Eva, okay." He didn't seem to notice her answer wasn't the same as Yes. He wouldn't" (Dickinson 51), ""But you're supposed to be a young woman." "I'm a chimp too. And I like it."" (53).

As Eva comes to accept that her new body results in a hybrid identity and, thus, a hybrid subjectivity, she begins to embrace a more embodied existence as she learns to become an animal. Indeed, her behaviour becomes more simian than human as the narrative progresses and as McCallum observes, "Eva's literal stripping [of human clothes during a televised press conference] is a metaphoric stripping away of her human, external and socially constructed (clothed) self and display of her animal, natural and inner self." (124). McCallum contends that Eva's stripping represents her refusal to inhabit "the subject position constructed for her by humans as either human or as chimp." (125). By rebelling in such a way, Eva asserts her own, hybrid, subject position. Not only is she rebelling against those that seek to control her, she is also slowly rejecting human society. Dickinson succinctly demonstrates Eva's ultimate transformation from mostly-human to mostly-chimp when he depicts her as nonchalant and unconcerned as to the identity of the father of her children. Her attitude contrasts strongly to those of her human visitors:

> "Few of the humans who'd visited over the years had really come to terms with the idea of Eva's having children. Chimp kids. In their minds there were images of white women being carried away into the jungle by giant apes … when someone had asked about … who the father was, Eva had laughed and said she didn't know." (Dickinson 211).

Although I would question the authenticity of an older, male writer taking on the voice of an adolescent girl who is nonchalant about having a child with a chimpanzee, Eva's lack of concern regarding her children's parentage nevertheless suggests that she has embraced her hybridity.

However, for freida and her sister-eves, their body quite literally *is* their identity. These perfectly-engineered girls are assigned design numbers (freida is eve #630) rather than names. This corroborates my contention that to name an object grants it selfhood. Indeed, the eves name

themselves while observing that their guardian chastity-ruth "thinks about us in terms of design numbers" (O'Neill 29). However, the eves are so fundamentally dehumanised that the names they assign themselves are not proper nouns with capital letters (freida, isabel and megan as opposed to the Inheritants Darwin, Socrates and Abraham). This connotes that they view *themselves* as objects. In accordance with their equation of their body with their self, they see only that they are objects to be owned. This self-naming is an act of agency that is overlooked by their guardians, although their strict control on all other aspects of the eves lives is maintained. The eves are created and educated solely to become either companions or concubines (wives or prostitutes) to the male population. As the Father instructs them as they enter their final year of schooling, "[i]t is time for you to make a contribution to the society that has created each of you, whether it be as a companion or a concubine." (38). "[I]t is your duty to provide value for your existence" (38–39), the eves are told. Feelings, personal desires and aspirations for the future are strictly forbidden and harshly punished. Indeed, O'Neill sets up a patriarchal dystopia in which women are so utterly subjugated that they believe in the righteousness of their own subjugation[3]. In this way, I argue, the eves exemplify the new kind of exploitation I gestured towards earlier. Despite being capable of thinking and feeling, they are expressly forbidden from doing either and are valued only for their usefulness as prostitutes and procreators.

Christine Wilkie-Stibbs (71) contends that as the body is a crucial element in the attainment of subjectivity, it follows that the suppression of one's voice inhibits access to this agency. Eva's transformation from human to human-chimp hybrid severely inhibits her ability to communicate. Robyn McCallum observes that "[a]s both a chimp and a woman, Eva is situated on the margins of both human and chimpanzee society" (123). She inhabits a liminal space. She is at once human-and-chimp, and at the same time neither human or chimp. Although she is provided with a device that

[3] For more on this, please see Chapter Three.

enables her to verbally communicate with the humans around her, the process is laborious and requires patience on the part of the listener. Nor is she able to communicate easily with her new chimp community. She must learn the language of the chimp colony to which she is introduced: "[o]n the whole … chimps didn't "talk" with their voices. Most of that sort of noise was used for calls – "Danger!" "Hurry!" "Food!" Their language when they were resting peaceably was grimace and gesture and touch. Touch especially." (Dickinson 90). Eva's subjectivity is inhibited as, in order for her to form connections and exert any agency within her human and chimp communities, she must overcome the suppression of her natural voice and re-learn to communicate.

The illegality of Prime Directions' rental procedure, coupled with the illegal status of the unclaimed minors whose bodies are rented, ensures that these minors are unable to ask for help when it is needed. Furthermore, Prime Directions' ultimate goal is to provide permanent teenage body rentals, without the consent of the teenage participants, to wealthy Ender clients, using the bodies of unclaimed minors detained in institutions. As Callie observes, "they're separating your body from your brain and then shutting down your brain forever" (Price 275), and that, "if you or I are permanently in someone's body, it means that girl will never get a break … her brain will be asleep – forever … It's murder." (209). Callie faces the prospect of being both literally and figuratively silenced. If she reveals herself to be a teenager impersonating an Ender she will be sent to an institution. If she is institutionalised, she will be targeted for permanent rental. This will silence her forever. As such, she is rendered powerless by her lack of agency, while her inability to exert her own subject position further compounds her situation. She becomes posthuman because of her powerlessness as a teenager, and she is exploited as a direct result of her status as a posthuman.

At freida's trial, which occurs as a result of her demonstration of subjective agency by professing her love for Darwin and begging him to choose her as his companion, she is not permitted defend herself against the allegations levelled against her. As an eve who has dared to exhibit forbidden subjectivity

she has broken the law and, as a result, freida is administered a soporific drug to ensure that her subjectivity does not re-emerge during the trial. The Judge, Darwin's father, informs her, "'#630, an eve may only love a man that has chosen her to be his companion. This is because men have the necessary experience and intelligence to choose better for you than you could choose for yourself.'" (O'Neill 348). As a result of her occupation of a body designated as both posthuman and female, freida has no rights, no status and no recourse to defend herself. She silenced by the rules of her society and, further, by her own sense of herself as an object to be acted upon rather than a being with subjectivity. She narrates her own silencing, stating: "I have no words" (346), "[my] head lolls on [my] shoulders, as silent as if they had cut out [my] tongue" (349), "there is nothing left to say." (353). The silencing and subsequent mistreatment of these young women, solely based on their classification as posthuman and female, foreshadows a dangerous new type of exploitation. As a result of their embodiment, Eva, freida and Callie are denied permission to construct their own identities and formulate their own subjective agency. This echoes the plight of many young women in contemporary society who are forced into positions of powerlessness as a direct result of their biological classification as female. For Eva, freida and Callie, the men in charge of their bodies dictate their identities and I argue that in this way these texts reproduce patriarchal power structures at play in the real world.

Starters, Only Ever Yours and *Eva* set up feminist ideologies because it is precisely these exploited and silenced bodies that Callie, freida and Eva utilise in their quest for agency and subjectivity. The girls push back against the patriarchal values that bind them, which instils these texts with a feminist outlook. Their emergent subjectivity develops as they become increasingly determined to exercise control over their subjugated and heavily restricted bodies. Indeed, Trites (*Disturbing the Universe* 144) indicates that this tension between protagonists and the institutions that seek to control them is an important characteristic of the YA novel. It follows, then, that as adolescent subjectivity emerges in an interaction between body and environment, exemplified by the protagonists resisting the control

exerted over them by institutions, these texts serve as a metaphor for many real life social contexts. McCallum observes that in order to accept her new hybridity and "to become a person, Eva must repress or displace her own (human) unconscious associated with her old body and allow [the chimp] Kelly's unconscious or instinctive emotions expression." (85). Eva utilises her uniquely posthuman traits (her human brain and her chimp dexterity) to escape from the captivity in which she is placed by the corporation exploiting her. Furthermore, she employs her posthuman hybridity to teach her chimp offspring skills to ensure their longevity:

> "Firemaking … Knots. Making and using a bone needle so that leathery palm leaves could be sewed into a shelter and your baby stay dry from summer downpours … If you could make a litter, perhaps one day you would experiment with a raft." (Dickinson 218).

Escaping the confines of her owned existence allows Eva to utilise her posthuman body to her own benefit. Not only does she attain subjective agency for herself, she also equips her chimpanzee colony (including her own offspring) with human tools and skills to ensure that they in turn attain an agency not available to normal chimpanzees. Thus, *Eva* presents a resistance to the exploitation of non-human beings and, I argue, advocates for the agency of posthumans and animals.

Callie utilises her posthuman body to influence those around her. Masquerading as an elderly renter pretending to be a wealthy teenager causes Callie's sense of her own identity to grow. Her access to societal trappings to which she is not exposed as her teenage self enables her to ruminate on her position in society and awards her increased agency. Her posthuman skills (she can communicate with her renter, Helena, using the chip implanted in her head to allow the neural transfer) enable her to uncover Prime Directions' endgame. Using this knowledge, she achieves agency and subjectivity as she fights to save her brother and friends. Callie's subjectivity emerges as she rejects the more sinister possibilities associated with her posthuman nature and begins to feel a sense of control over her life. Presented with an opportunity use her posthuman capabilities to inhabit a new identity and live as someone wealthy and powerful like those who have exploited her, Callie's subjectivity fully emerges:

""No," I said. "I don't want to be anyone else, I just want to be me."" (Price 330). Here, Callie's agency and power come from her linguistic and conscious choice (Trites, *Disturbing the Universe* 5) to determinedly refuse to be subordinated to another, and, further, to choose to exercise her own agency. Callie's language here is a marker of her power. It also represents her opposition to the patriarchal dominance under which she exists. By choosing to remain in her adolescent female body, Callie represents a feminist push back against patriarchal power structures that seek to assimilate and control her.

For freida, agency comes in the ability to control the only thing she can: her body. To attain a sense of self-control and, therefore, a sense of agency, freida deliberately abstains from eating, sleeping and bathing. She intentionally becomes everything that an eve is not permitted to be. As noted previously, freida's identity is entirely located in her body. The abuse to which she subjects herself makes this body and, thus, her self unrecognisable. Indeed, she describes her appearance as if she is describing someone else:

> "The body in the mirror is thin, so thin you can see her ribs through her dirty tank top. Her hair is in a matted ponytail, dark circles under sunken eyes that look as if they have been smudged in with charcoal. *That's me, that's me, that's me*." (O'Neill 144–145 emphasis in original).

This passage presents the shift in which freida, initially describing herself as if from the outside, snaps back into self-awareness and reconciles her fragmented sense of subjectivity. Her repeated declaration that the body in the mirror is herself signifies her reluctance to believe that this body represents her identity. This transgression of the laws that dictate that eves must be well-behaved and beautiful at all times is the only way that freida can achieve a sense of her own identity. These same laws tell her that she must adhere to her strictly governed diet and exercise regime in which purging is encouraged and criticism of other eves' appearances is mandatory. Here, O'Neill underscores the oppressive discourses about feminine appearance and behaviour that are an

everyday occurrence in the real world[4]. Dickinson also encourages readers to question the value society places on appearances, as, despite Eva being alive and well in the body of a chimp, Eva's mother openly grieves the loss of her beautiful daughter. Furthermore, in a reiteration of the makeover trope common in YA literature, Callie is forced to undergo a full-body beautification process before her body is deemed appropriate to be rented out. Nevertheless, Callie, Eva and freida each use their heavily subjugated body as a site of rebellion against this subjugation. Exercising control over their bodies brings them a sense of subjectivity and represents a push back against the patriarchal power structures that seek to control them.

In a reiteration of the patriarchal power structures found in contemporary society, the corporations and government that claim ownership over Eva, freida and Callie are fronted by powerful male representatives. As such, as the girls resist their ownership, their bodies become sites of contested power, between owner and owned, adolescent and adult, male and female. Indeed, the resistance these protagonists demonstrate to patriarchal power structures in their societies underpins the feminist ideology established by each of these texts. Kim Toffoletti suggests that, "the posthuman can … be a useful model for understanding women's existence in an age of biotechnical manipulation, digital networks and genetic alterations." (10). Indeed, the owned posthuman protagonists discussed here, as an amalgam of the female and the biotechnical, provide particularly fertile ground for discussing these issues. They represent the subjugation of not only women's bodies, but also those that are viewed as non-human, or othered. However, they also present a resistance to this subjugation.

[4] See, for example, the policing of tween-age and teenage girls' clothing in American schools, where girls are often sent home for wearing clothing deemed "distracting" to male classmates, or the hundreds of pages of gossip magazines dedicated daily to unflattering photos of female celebrities.

Scholars have suggested that adolescent women find themselves, "particularly vulnerable to cultural claims and expectations about their bodies" (Day 78) and that a dominant tradition in studies of young women and their embodiment is the feminist alignment of the female body as a site upon which patriarchal social ideas play out (Budgeon 249). The posthuman female bodies examined here align these feminist ideas with posthuman theories, presenting posthuman female bodies as sites on which not only patriarchal ideas, but also ideas about othered bodies, play out. By rebelling against their owners, exercising bodily autonomy, and achieving agentic subjectivity from such transgressions, these posthuman young women model resistance to patriarchal social structures within their societies.

I argue that narratives such as those examined in this chapter resonate with adolescent readers because they themselves are increasingly commodified, urged to consume and become consumers (Ostry 230; Cook). These YA narratives navigate potential futures arising from the increasingly entangled fields of biotechnology and business. As a result, they present implied readers with an opportunity to reflect on these possible futures (Guerra 276). Scholars have argued that such narratives often also interrogate the social flow-on effects of the current and future relationship between biotechnological advancement and capitalism (Bullen and Parsons 128). I suggest that adolescence inherently necessitates an increasing awareness of one's position as a potential decision-maker of the future. As such, it is imperative that adolescents begin to engage with ideas, such as those discussed here, about which they will have to make decisions in the future. Narratives such as those under examination in this chapter encourage adolescent readers to contemplate the impact of the increasingly intertwined relationship of biotechnology and capitalism. Furthermore, I propose that these narratives encourage readers to perceive the damaging potential for this relationship to create a new type of non-human being who may be easily exploited.

Performativity as Resistance, Performativity as Survival

Day contends that that adolescent female bodies have the potential to unsettle the boundaries that dictate gender roles (75). I argue that posthuman bodies have the potential to do the same. Adolescent and posthuman bodies exist in liminal states between child and adult, and human and technological. They are at once both and neither. Existing in these liminal spaces gives the protagonists of my primary corpus the potential to disrupt the boundaries of these spaces by conforming to or resisting the expectations of either state. As posthuman young women, O'Neill's freida, Mandanna's Eva and Meyer's Cinder exist in both adolescent and posthuman liminal states. As a result of and in response to their subjugation they simultaneously emulate and resist the traditional gender roles to which they are expected to adhere. Given that they are each designed and created with a specific purpose (and, consequently, specific gender roles) in mind, I contend that their resistance to these prescribed roles encourages an investigation into how performativity is employed a mechanism of resistance or survival.

The concept of performativity, proposed by Judith Butler in order to distinguish between social reality and performance, "consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performers "will" or "choice"" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* 234). Performativity involves a reinscription of social norms that precede and influence subject formation wherein "recognition is not conferred on a subject, but *forms* that subject." (*Bodies That Matter* 226 emphasis added). Thus, performativity involves the often unconscious reiteration of social norms and expectations and should not be confused with performance, which occurs as a result of a subject's will or choice. In other words, performativity is a process that is already going on before a subject enters a scene (Stephens 6). Thus, performativity creates a *social* reality that differs from a subject's *lived* or *embodied* reality (for

example, Cinder is a cyborg but pretends to be human in front of Prince Kai; Mandanna's Eva has a life and personality of her own, but must perform as her Other, Amarra, in public). It is important to note here John Stephens' observations about performativity and performance as they relate to YA narratives. Stephens (5) writes that it is imperative to keep understandings of performativity and performance separate, particularly with regards to literature. However, he makes an exception that is particularly pertinent to this discussion. Stephens states that, when "self-consciously conforming to behaviour protocols" (5) that differ from their usual behaviour, subjects exhibit performativity rather than performance. For example, Eva self-consciously conforms to Amarra's behaviour protocols in public, whilst remaining true to her own personality in private. This self-conscious conforming to societal behavioural expectations is exhibited by freida, Eva and Cinder as both a tool of rebellion and a mechanism of survival. It is demonstrative of their rebellion against the patriarchal power structures under which they live and the exploitation they experience as a result of their status as posthumans.

Cinder and Mandanna's Eva exhibit what I will term bodily performativity (that is, they perform humanity when in fact that are non-human). In other words, they create social realities in which their bodies are not posthuman. For example, when meeting Prince Kai Cinder disguises the fact that she is a cyborg. She covers her metal arm; "she felt more comfortable with the gloves on, hiding the plating of her left hand" (Meyer 5), and hides her missing foot, "glad that he couldn't see her empty ankle behind the tablecloth." (7). Consequently, Cinder presents herself to the Prince as an ordinary, human girl. Her focalisation allows readers insight into her reasoning for performing humanity, as she muses inwardly, "[t]he fewer people who knew she was cyborg, the better. She was sure she'd go mad if *all* the market shopkeepers looked at her with the same disdain as Chang Sacha did." (10 emphasis in original). In doing so, Cinder also unconsciously exhibits gender performativity, mirroring the exacting beauty and behaviour standards expected of young women in the real world. Cinder unconsciously wants to appear 'normal' and 'perfect' for the Prince, though her efforts are undone when she is informed that she has grease on her face. "What does it matter?" (14) Cinder then asks, though

immediately wonders whether the Prince has been fooled into thinking she is human. Her feigned nonchalance and simultaneous concern about her appearance mirrors the expectations placed on young women in the real world. Adolescent girls especially are pressured to be impeccably presented while at the same time ridiculed for appearing to take any pride in their appearance. This double standard is representative of the oppressive patriarchal values that govern women's lives in contemporary society.

On the other hand, Mandanna's Eva inhabits her Other's identity, creating a social reality in which she *is* Amarra by inhabiting Amarra's subject position. She attends school and interacts with Amarra's friends and family in accordance with her lifelong studies of Amarra. Eva narrates, "I study a girl far away. She's the original to my copy … Everything I do depends on her … I learn what she learns. I eat what she eats." (Mandanna 7). Her performance of this social reality is at least in some part convincing, as Amarra's brother tells her, "'Mom believes you're Amarra … she really, truly sees Amarra when she looks at you. She says she's still here.'" (141). However, Eva retains her own sense of identity separate from Amarra's. Consequently, her sense of agency develops as she gradually asserts her own subject position, allowing others to see her and refer to her as Eva, rather than Amarra. Indeed, as her own identity begins to exert itself over Amarra's, she has the following exchange with Amarra's boyfriend, Ray:

> "'Are they real?' [Ray asks]. I blink at him. 'Are what real?' 'Your thoughts and feelings? Or do you just react to things the way you've been told or taught to?' 'Of course they're real,' I say indignantly. The cheek of him. 'Are *your* feelings real?'" (249 emphasis in original).

Eva's subjectivity is clear in her indignant declaration that her own feelings are real. Likening her own feelings to Ray's indicates that Eva views herself as an agential subject with the inherent right to the same experiences as humans. Those responsible for Eva's creation demand, however, that she must *be* Amarra. This dictates that the processes of subject-formation that Eva later undergoes are inherently transgressive. In a society in which she is viewed as merely a facsimile of a dead girl, Eva's

likening of her own feelings to Ray's succinctly demonstrates that she sees herself as a real entity, separate from Amarra. Although she is expected to inhabit Amarra's subject position, Eva refers to Amarra as "she" and to herself as a separate "I": "[s]he was just a girl who did sweet, silly normal things like scratch her boyfriend's name into wood" (135) and "I flip through my memories to find [Amarra's friends'] names." (134). Following Amarra's death, Eva refers to her in the past tense and herself in the present tense: "[Ray is] searching for her in me and I'm terrified that if he looks for long enough he'll realize she's not there." (142). It is clear that, regardless of the laws that govern her existence, Eva conceptualises herself and Amarra as separate identities. Therefore, her performance of Amarra's identity is a display of performativity. It is also a push back against the exploitation to which she, as a posthuman young woman, is subjected. Her rejection of the subject position she was created to inhabit demonstrates Eva's refusal to be exploited.

The repercussions are severe for Cinder and Eva if they fail to perform humanity convincingly. Cinder faces losing the admiration of her crush, Prince Kai, because of the discrimination to which she is subjected as a cyborg. "Chang Sacha [the baker] didn't serve cyborgs" (Meyer 19), Cinder observes, and it is clear that she fears the same rejection from Prince Kai. Although the consequences for Cinder are largely emotional, Mandanna's Eva faces death if her posthuman identity is discovered. Failing to perform convincingly as Amarra will result in Eva being killed by those who created her. She must also contend with the evangelical Hunters, who seek out and kill echoes, who they see as soulless abominations. Furthermore, as echoes are illegal in Amarra's native India, Eva's discovery by authorities will lead to her death and the jailing of Amarra's family. This concerns Eva, who is torn between inhabiting her own subject position and that expected by her owners. Therefore, because it occurs as a deliberate undertaking and does not reflect the normal experience of inhabiting their bodies, I argue that Eva's and Cinder's creation of these social realities should be considered performativity. Furthermore, as they are non-human and are enacting subject positions in which they are human, I argue that this type of performativity should be termed bodily performativity. Texts with

posthuman themes, in which tension between a character's human and technical existence is often a key motif, are particularly ripe for such investigations of bodily performativity.

The female protagonists of *Cinder*, *Eva*, and *Only Ever Yours* also exhibit gender performativity. This is demonstrated by their adherence to social expectations imposed upon them based on the biological classification of their bodies as female (Willis 101). Each young woman employs gender performativity to construct a social identity that aligns with the gender roles dictated by her society. These created personalities reflect Bradford et al.'s observation noted earlier regarding the fragmented, constructed and performed nature of posthuman subjectivity. In other words, the girls perform traditional female gender roles, as dictated by their society. In doing so, they reinscribe patriarchal notions of femininity and upset the feminist outlook the texts have previously established. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a complete analysis of the gender performativity exhibited by Cinder, Eva and freida. Rather, as a case study, I will examine the ways in which they exhibit gender performativity in relation to sexual and romantic relationships.

In a dystopian parody of the archetypally feminine beauty pageant, the perfectly-designed eves of *Only Ever Yours* are forced to parade in front of the Inheritants before completing various tasks to demonstrate their suitability as companions. They are required to perform traditionally feminine endeavours, such as baking cakes, cooking meals and sewing buttons. These, freida observes, are "all pointless tasks as we have machines to do them now, but apparently it will give [the Inheritants] clues to 'our nature'" (O'Neill 169). O'Neill grounds the eve's desirability in their ability to conform to contemporarily outdated modes of femininity. From freida's narration, readers understand that it is absurd for the eves to perform such tasks, given the existence of machines built for the same purposes. In a narrative based in the distant future, this serves to highlight both the oppressive patriarchal values of O'Neill's dystopian society and to encourage readers to question the desirability of those traits as markers of femininity in contemporary society.

During the beauty pageant, the eves' dehumanisation is once again emphasised as chastity-ruth introduces the girls to the Inheritants solely by their design numbers, much like catalogue numbers used at a cattle sale. As the eves stride "up the catwalk, sashes perfectly in place across their pneumatic chests" (154), O'Neill juxtaposes chastity-ruth's use of the girls' design numbers with freida's inner monologue, in which she refers to the girls by their names: "*christy, cindy, cintia, daria*" (155 emphasis in original). Viewed alongside freida's affirmation that the traditionally feminine tasks they are required to perform for the Inheritants are pointless, this is a strong indication of freida's growing sense of unease with her situation. Indeed, I argue that these small internal transgressions signal freida's emerging subjectivity and foreground the feminist ideology present in the text.

The particular kind of femininity expected of the eves is also strongly connected to their physical bodies and their sexuality. As discussed in the previous chapter, the eves are conditioned to adhere to very specific ideals about their embodiment. They must always be perfectly groomed and impeccably dressed and are conditioned to believe that "*[f]at girls should be made obsolete."* (119 emphasis in original). Clearly indicating their indoctrination into this way of thinking, megan states, "I would kill myself if I got that fat" (64) in response to isabel's weight gain. Furthermore, companions and concubines have a compulsory "Termination Date appointed to preserve [their] beauty." (51). O'Neill foreshadows a dystopian future in which the word "feminist" is considered profanity (84) and in which exploitation of women and posthumans is inherent. Women in O'Neill's society are victims of repressive patriarchal values, perpetuated for generations by their status as non-human beings. I argue, then, that in representing such a horrific future, *Only Ever Yours* offers the potential for adolescent readers to contemplate the trajectory of contemporary governmental policies affecting women[5].

[5] See, for example, the continued illegality of abortion in Queensland; the closure of Planned Parenthood centres across America; the current abortion rights campaign in the Republic of Ireland; and the push to list rape and pregnancy as pre-existing conditions for the purpose of disqualifying women from obtaining health insurance in America.

The sexist and patriarchal society in which the eves exist has very clear expectations about a woman's role in sex. These are explicitly laid out for the girls in specially-designed lessons in which they are shown videos of a man having sex first with a companion and then a concubine. The companion instructs the eves that, "[t]he role of the companion is simple … She must follow her husband's lead at all times. You must always be willing." (214). The girls are instructed to ensure that sex is enjoyable for their husband, "[y]ou may experience some pain the first time … It is best to maintain a neutral expression." (214–215). The role of the concubine is explicitly laid out in much the same way, as the concubine explains: "It's nice to make eye contact … Always be willing … Make noise. Make sure that you look like you're really enjoying it." (216). The companion's and concubine's facial expressions are an important part of the lesson and the videos depict close-ups of each to demonstrate the expectations of each particular role. The man's face, however, is "pixellated to ensure his privacy." (214). Furthermore, no mention is made of the companion's or concubine's enjoyment, as the girls are instructed that as companions "[t]he conception and birth of sons will be your primary function." (215). These narratological choices serve to highlight the ways in which the eves function only as tools for the perpetuation of patriarchal dominance. Anne Summers observes,

> "[t]he manner in which [ideologies of gender] are upheld even by those who are themselves oppressed and exploited is a measure of the intricate nexus of repression which occurs … and which prevent the massed opposition … of all oppressed groups." (70).

Indeed, when we consider that the lessons given to the eves are instructed by a companion and a concubine and overseen by a chastity, it is clear that these oppressed women serve as a crucial tool to reinforce the nexus of repression created by this sexist and patriarchal society. Furthermore, O'Neill's patriarchal dystopia foreshadows a potential future that is at once abhorrent and terrifyingly conceivable.

Moreover, O'Neill's use of the term "function" to explain the eve's primary purpose connotes the utilitarian nature of their existence. Indeed, as Summers argues, "[t]he object of colonization is to

ensure that women reproduce" (266). I argue that freida performs the gender roles expected of her in order to survive in a society in which women have been thoroughly colonised. From the moment they meet the Inheritants, the girls are instructed that they are "not allowed to say no to them. chastity-ruth said that we were to accommodate their every need." (O'Neill 185). However, engaging in sexual acts with the Inheritants before marriage immediately disqualifies an eve from becoming a companion. Therein, the eves are not permitted the agency to say 'no' and yet they are punished for not doing so. This illustrates an inherent paradox in patriarchal notions of femininity. This may be, as Summers (268) suggests, a result of men's fear that sexually aroused women may refuse to comply with the submissive, domestic roles expected of them in patriarchal societies. This is further implied by the depiction of the compulsory daily "Organized Recreation" (O'Neill 44). As freida explains matter-of-factly, this process is "devised to combat female hysteria syndrome: any hysterical, overemotional girl behaviour is deliberately induced in a controlled environment until the urges dissipate." (43). The procedure consists of a drug-induced orgasm: "[a] wave of rapture surges and I am engulfed by it" (44) which the eves are then unable to recollect. "I won't remember any of this tomorrow" (45), freida narrates. The extent to which freida is indoctrinated into believing in her own oppression is signified by the matter-of-fact tone in which she describes the necessity of this process. She believes that women's emotions should be controlled. In this way, freida upholds the ideologies of gender imposed by her society, reinforcing Summers' observation that the oppressed often perpetuate their own oppression. As a result of the power imbalance in their society and the colonisation of their bodies, the eves' expected gender roles are strict and unforgiving. They are viewed as utilitarian objects, useful only in their capacity to serve men and produce male heirs. As such, O'Neill's text raises significant concerns about the potential futures arising from increased biotechnological experimentation. As the majority of people currently in positions to make decisions leading to such a future (for example, CEOs of biotech companies) are male, and with the increasingly draconian directives about women's health, the creation of these potential anti-feminist futures is not inconceivable.

Although freida conforms to the expectations assigned to her gender, her narration signifies to readers that she is, in fact, exhibiting performativity. As described above, O'Neill establishes that the eves exist solely as a function of male desire and the necessity to perpetuate patriarchal society. Therefore, when freida declares to herself, "I want security. I want to know exactly what the future holds" (O'Neill 213), readers understand that she is committing a significant transgression. Her desire for subjective agency is forbidden, and these internal desires are juxtaposed with the subliminal messages to which the eves are subjected as they sleep: "*I am a good girl. I am appealing to others. I am always agreeable.*" (4 italics in original). The discord between freida's internal "I" statements and the indoctrinating "I" statements projected in the subliminal messages indicate that freida's adherence to society's expectations is, in fact, an act of performativity. This act of performativity ensures that freida conforms to the expectations of her patriarchal society, while at the same time demonstrating her rebellion against them. In this way, freida challenges patriarchal notions of femininity and opens up the text to feminist enquiry.

In much the same way that freida is expected to perform a societally-dictated sexual role, Mandanna's Eva is required to continue to perform Amarra's relationship with her boyfriend, Ray, in *The Lost Girl*. Herein, the performative nature of Eva's existence is foregrounded. Eva's narration highlights her fragmented sense of self, as she struggles to reconcile her owners' expectations with her own subjective desires. She is the focaliser of her narrative and this allows readers to experience her performativity firsthand. Before meeting Ray, Eva ponders, "'I could learn to like him, or pretend to, if I had to … maybe I don't want to. Maybe I don't want him and won't *ever* want him.'" (Mandanna 87 emphasis in original). However, when Ray asks her on a date, Eva yields to the laws that govern her life: "[t]his is it. This is why I came here. This is what I was woven to be. [Amarra] loved him and I must give that a chance." (143). Eva's owned and subjugated existence forces her to pretend to love someone she does not love and to perform a relationship in which she does not want to participate. This forced relationship invokes images of arranged marriages. I argue that it also prompts readers to

question whether Mandanna's text aligns with the feminist ideology that it has so far apparently promoted[6] in its depiction of an emotionally strong, smart young woman who rebels against her intrinsic subjugation.

Cinder develops romantic feelings for the Prince and harbours a secret desire to go to the ball with him. However, Cinder's status as a posthuman, and its attendant inferiority, ensures that her step-mother will not allow her to attend. Cinder's focalisation reveals that she has internalised this subordination, as she reasons to herself that, "[s]he was a cyborg, and she would never go to the ball." (Meyer 33). The novel's narration signals the tension between Cinder's internal thoughts and external actions. Cinder protests that she does not want to go to the ball, citing pragmatism: "I just spent my life savings on a new foot. But even if I did have money, why would I spend it on a dress or shoes or gloves? What a waste." (31). However, her sorrow at the deliberate ruination of a pair of ball gloves gifted to her by Prince Kai indicates that this pragmatism is simply a performance:

> "[The gloves] were caked with dirt and dust, but it was the bits of smeared grease that made her heart sink. Cinder draped them over her knee and tried to smooth the wrinkles from the silk, only smearing the oil. They were beautiful. The most beautiful things she'd ever owned. But if there was one thing she knew from years as a mechanic, it was that some stains never came out." (301).

In addition to demonstrating that Cinder's disinclination to engage in a traditionally feminine pastime and attend the ball is an act of performativity, this passage serves as an allegory for Cinder's feelings about existing as an other in society. Although she may try to smooth her passage through life by performing humanity, she can never alter her true (wrinkled) nature. Cinder's observation that "some stains never came out" (301) serves a twofold purpose. On one hand, it simply reveals her sorrow at the ruination of a beautiful gift and serves to highlight the performative nature of her prior

[6] For more on this, please see Chapter Four.

protestations about ball gowns and shoes. On the other hand, it signifies that for Cinder, the stain of inhabiting a second-class, hybrid, owned body can never be erased.

The penalties faced by the girls for failing to convincingly conform to their society's expected gender roles are harsh. Therefore, it follows that the girls' gender and bodily performativity should be recognised as mechanisms of resistance and of survival. As suggested in the previous chapter, notions of female subjectivity become complicated when the reader comes to understand that, for these girls, their subjective agency is intricately intertwined with their physical bodies and, consequently, the social expectations placed upon these bodies. The role that embodiment plays in the construction of freida's and Eva's subjectivities is foregrounded, because this subjectivity is constructed solely through first-person narration (Flanagan, *Technology and Identity* 125–126). Cinder acts as the only character focaliser in her narrative, so despite the use of third-person narration the story is told primarily from her point-of-view. As discussed above, this narration foregrounds the tension between the girls' true desires and the roles that they were created to perform. As Mallan notes, "[w]hen characters are presented as first-person narrators, readers are generally positioned to accept their words and viewpoints as "truth" unless the narrative shows them to be unreliable." ("On Secrets, Lies, and Fiction: Girls Learning the Art of Survival" 37). As a result of these narrative techniques, readers are encouraged to align their empathy with these characters. These techniques also allow readers to access the protagonists' authentic viewpoints about their embodiment and posthumanism. It is in the juxtaposition of their authentic viewpoints (often offered as internal narration) and the viewpoints they present to the world that their performativity is revealed. I argue that readers can assume that the protagonists' internal or unspoken sentiments reflect their personal truth, and that their divergent outward demonstrations reflect their performativity. Furthermore, I argue that these acts of performativity demonstrate the girls' attempts to negotiate the social discourses surrounding their occupation of a body designated as female. In their struggle to push back against the patriarchal control of their society, the girls attempt to display subjective agency.

Willis suggests that girls establish a sense of subjectivity by absorbing multiple complex and often contrary discourses about gender (113), and that inhabiting a body designated as female impacts the roles that girls take with them into womanhood (101). Scholars have also argued that, particularly within literature, children's experiences and social worlds are at least partly responsible for shaping their personalities and gender expressions (Willis 114; Stephens 12). Therefore, if we are to ascribe to Butler's understanding of femininity as "the forcible citation of a norm" (*Bodies That Matter* 232), it follows, then, that femininity, like performativity, creates a social reality. In other words, I argue that simply by consequence of inhabiting a female body these girls absorb particular discourses of femininity. Furthermore, these discourses are responsible for shaping their identities. As Cinder, Eva and freida are created in bodies designated as female, they are created to perform particular gender roles. These gender roles and discourses of femininity are reinforced by society, their owners and their educators.

In addition to being created as perfect specimens of girls, the eves are instructed to adhere to a very precise version of femininity. Every aspect of freida's outward personality is the result of sixteen years of merciless dictation by the chastities, under orders from the Father. The eves are trained to be agreeable and amenable, and freida conforms to these strict requirements. They are forbidden to show any emotion other than happiness; "[*c*]*rying is ugly*, the chastities yelled when as children we fell and scraped our knees. *Crying makes your skin blotchy. No man wants a girl who cries. You must be happy and light-hearted at all times.*" (O'Neill 291 emphasis in original). They are also subjected to continuous subliminal messages as they sleep, which reinforce their expected performance of femininity: "*I am a good girl. I am pretty. I am always happy-go-lucky.*" (4 emphasis in original). *Only Ever Yours* mirrors and, I argue, satirises the immense pressure placed on young women in contemporary society to present themselves as perfectly groomed, well-behaved and always desirable, while at the same time being chastised and ridiculed for doing so. O'Neill's depiction of the eves simply follows this trend to a logical but terrifying eventuality.

By creating performative personalities, these protagonists create a social reality that enables them to hide their authentic selves, which, if discovered, would result in punishment. As Butler notes, femininity brings with it a "complex historicity [which] is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation [and] punishment." (*Bodies That Matter* 232). It is precisely by performing their society's expectations of femininity that these girls seek to evade punishment. As established above, their narration and focalisation allows readers to gain insight into their fragmented subjectivity and informs us of the consequences should they fail to uphold societal expectations. That is not to say that their subjectivity should be seen as a performance, but rather, as Stephens notes above, a self-conscious conformation to expected behaviour protocols that do not necessarily reflect their usual behaviours. Mandanna's Eva eloquently articulates the struggle faced by these girls as they attempt to reconcile their authentic and performative lives when she says, "I promised to be Amarra … But I don't want Eva to disappear." (Mandanna 127).

These girls exercise rebellious agency when they refuse to conform to their prescribed identity and, indeed, Cinder, Eva and freida exemplify Butler's assertion that performativity is a push back against a discursively created "I" (*Bodies That Matter* 225). In these cases, their performativity can be read as a form of rebellion against a societally created "I", which is imposed upon them by their owners. They are assigned identities that come with expected modes of behaviour. By rejecting these expected forms of behaviour, Cinder, Eva and freida rebel against those that seek to own and control them. Though she complies with the directives set down by society, freida has a rebellious inner voice. She tells readers, "I want to hide, fold into the shadows and become invisible so no one can *look* at me any more." (O'Neill 15 emphasis in original). In a society in which her identity is firmly located in her body, freida's desire to hide and become invisible, thereby negating her identity, signifies her rebellion against the regulations under which she exists. Furthermore, her subjectivity emerges as her sense of self-worth improves. Though she outwardly makes every effort to perform the part of the perfect eve, her inner voice exposes her true feelings. "I am just an imprint of a real person" (141), freida claims

early on in the narrative. This suggests that she does not view her existence as legitimate and that she has accepted society's indoctrination. She feels as worthless as her society deems her to be. However, as Darwin's attention toward her increases her popularity with her fellow eves, her sense of worthlessness lessens and her subjectivity increases. Her internal transgressions become more marked. She frequently contemplates breaking the rules and this transgressive desire signifies her emerging agency. For example, she considers the consequences of speaking to one of the Inheritants in the manner in which they speak to the eves:

> "*What about your weight, fatass?* A nervous thrill runs through me. I wonder what would happen if I said it, if I stood up right now and screamed FATASS at him, grabbed the chocco bar off him and smushed it into his face?" (174 emphasis in original).

Of course, like freida's other transgressions up until this point, this interaction happens solely inside her own head. She is too afraid of the very real and potentially fatal consequences of speaking to a man in this way. This directly echoes the fear many women in the real world have of criticising men or retaliating when catcalled. Like freida, for many women the consequences of demonstrating agency are real and frightening. However, as freida's subjectivity continues to grow, so do the extent of her rebellious thoughts. "We must be inspected for flaws before purchase" (285), freida opines (accidentally doing so aloud) during a task in which the eves are forced to stand in their underwear before the Inheritants. This statement also demonstrates the evolution of freida's subjective agency, as she no longer thinks of herself and her fellow eves as investments, but products. I suggest that, in this way, freida's emergent subjective agency can be charted by the fluctuations in her performativity as her initial internalised resistance becomes externalised. However, freida ultimately reverts to the subjugated role for which she was designed as she fights for Darwin to choose her as his companion. All trace of the subjectivity she has fostered is lost as she silently begs him, "[w]ho do you want me to be? … Just tell me who you want me to be." (319). In contrast to the height of freida's subjective agency in which she expresses her rebellious opinion aloud, here freida is once again silent as she expresses her desire to conform to the expectations of her society and surrender to the control of a

man. I argue that the ending of O'Neill's text, in which freida is finally sent Underground and sees the inert bodies of other rebellious eves in suspended animation as laboratory subjects, is a cause of concern between the feminist reaction the narrative evokes and the lack of resolution of this tension[7].

Cinder eschews traditional feminine gender roles as she supports her household as her city's youngest mechanic, a profession made possible by her cybernetic implants. Prince Kai is disbelieving when he first engages her services:

> ""They say you're the best mechanic in New Beijing. I was expecting an old man." … He wasn't the first to voice surprise. Most of her customers couldn't fathom how a teenage girl could be the best mechanic in the city, and she never broadcast the reason for her talent." (Meyer 10).

Prince Kai's sexist assumption that a talented mechanic must be an old man reflects contemporary assumptions that designate occupations as traditionally 'male' or 'female'. By inhabiting a traditionally 'male' role, Cinder inverts this assumption. However, given that she performs humanity in the presence of Prince Kai, revealing the reason for her talent would negate this performativity. As discussed above, Cinder also believes that Prince Kai would reject her romantically if she reveals herself to be a cyborg.

Similarly, although Mandanna's Eva has a well-developed sense of her own subjectivity when she is forced to inhabit Amarra's life, she must nevertheless pretend to be Amarra. However, she does so with some reluctance, observing that, "[Amarra's] life is a relentless wave coming at me, crashing against the shore, again and again and again." (Mandanna 85). Eva's sense of the overwhelming inevitability of her future mirrors the experiences of teenagers in the real world, who often feel forced into lives and career paths that they do not want. Indeed, it is this reluctance to perform Amarra that

[7] For an investigation into the way in which the other primary corpus texts resolve their feminist ideologies, please see Chapter Four.

is the catalyst for Eva's rebellion and the development of her own identity, despite the risk to her life if these are uncovered. Eva narrates,

> "I don't think I'm much like [Amarra]. I threw her favourite food on the floor when I was five … I secretly made sculptures of birds out of wet paper and candle wax … These are small things – risky, but not dangerous. I've learned the difference." (5).

Here, again, Eva's use of the words "I" and "her" to distinguish between herself and Amarra signals that she continues to view their identities separately. From these small transgressions, Eva's sense of her own identity grows. I argue that her subjectivity is complete when she clearly elucidates her selfhood to Amarra's boyfriend, with whom she has been pretending to be Amarra. Eva emphatically states, "Amarra's dead, Ray. You can't *wake her up*. I know you want her back, but I'm *me*." (250 emphasis in original). Eva's definitive description of Amarra as "her" and herself as "me" clearly demonstrates her push back against Butler's discursively-created "I". This utterance is arguably also the catalyst for Eva's first agential escape, as she subsequently flees the Hunter that Ray has contracted in the mistaken belief that killing Eva will revive Amarra. Ray's willingness to facilitate Eva's murder also establishes that he considers her non-human and, therefore, expendable and exploitable.

Of course, the idea that these characters are able to separate their authentic personalities from those they perform seems to suggest that these narratives in fact repudiate posthumanism's intrinsic rejection of the Cartesian mind/body split. However, Kerry Mallan suggests that, despite posthumanism's traditional rejection of the Cartesian mind/body split, YA narratives with posthuman themes can often slip into this conception of the subject as a separate mind and body (*Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction* 107). O'Neill, for example, has freida observe, "[m]y mind is wired but lethargy is sucking at my body, the two parts of me cracking apart." (45). I argue, however, that this does not disqualify these narratives from the type of analysis undertaken here. Rather, it evokes an understanding that YA authors who create these narratives do not necessarily do so in accordance with a strict posthuman theoretical framework. In other words, as Morrissey (190) suggests, the novels

employ a posthuman outlook, rather than a posthuman form. Indeed, it cannot be assumed that authors who create narratives with posthuman themes possess any knowledge of critical posthumanism at all. As such, investigations such as this one must be undertaken with this in mind. Rather than rejecting novels such as these for their perceived transgressions of strict posthuman form, I argue that these texts should be embraced for the opportunities they offer. Indeed, as I continuously argue, my primary corpus itself offers substantial opportunity to gain insight into the intersection of posthumanism and feminism within YA literature. In support of this, Butler further notes that, "any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized." (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 12). I argue that Mandanna, O'Neill and Dickinson in fact deliberately employ these mind/body splits to convey the fractured and disconnected nature of their protagonists' gendered subjectivity. In this way, these texts both engage with and counter the key ideological tenents of critical posthumanism.

Reclaiming the Owned Body

The protagonists of *Cinder*, *Eva*, *The Lost Girl* and *Starters* reclaim their owned bodies by escaping their subjugated situations. These escapes also signify the culmination of the agency developed throughout their narratives. Furthermore, I argue that in the act of escape these owned young women transfer their ownership to themselves. For these posthuman characters, removing themselves from the influence of their owners is in itself an act of self-determination. Indeed, as Trites succinctly argues, "the YA novel teaches adolescents how to exist within the (capitalistically bound) institutions that necessarily define teenagers' existence." (*Disturbing the Universe* 19). For Cinder, Callie and both Evas, removing themselves from the people and institutions that profit from their existence is their ultimate act of rebellion. However, this chapter will demonstrate that the agency these young women attain by exerting control over their bodies is achieved only by the intervention of those who hold power in their society; namely, wealthy men. If, as many scholars believe (and as also discussed in Chapter One), YA texts seek to perform an enculturating function for their readers, we must then question the lessons being taught by narratives that appear to reinforce patriarchal power structures. As Bradford et al. (159) have previously noted, YA texts with posthuman themes are often grounded in ethical considerations brought about by the genre's engagement with social concerns. The texts under examination in this chapter certainly invite an investigation of a number of ethical considerations and I intend to interrogate the ways in which they function as socialising tools that ultimately invalidate the feminist ideologies they purport to endorse.

By reclaiming themselves as subjects, the female protagonists of these YA fictions reject their categorisation as objects or products. They push back against the commercial forces controlling their existence and, in doing so, achieve a sense of subjective agency. Furthermore, if, as discussed previously, we understand that feminist narratives of identity locate identity within the body, the

reclamation of said body can be read as a feminist action. As Mallan observes, YA fiction is a genre that often positions "survival as a complex activity that negotiates silence, subjugation, and subjectivity." ("On Secrets, Lies, and Fiction" 36). Flanagan (*Technology and Identity* 14) further suggests that concepts of agency built on action, autonomy and the power of the individual underpin much of the literature written for children and young adults. The texts examined in this chapter offer considerable opportunities to examine how the emergent subjective agency of their protagonists facilitates their escape from subjugation. For each of these girls, the reclamation of their strictly controlled and regulated bodies is brought about by their escape from the subjugation of those who own them. Accordingly, they exert their agency as both action and an expression of their power as individuals. Flanagan suggests that such narratives of heroic quests for freedom are particularly common in YA fiction, "where an individualistic construction of agency prevails in narratives that frequently revolve around the adolescent character's acquisition of independence" (*Technology and Identity* 14). By extricating themselves from the oppression of those who own them, these girls seek to acquire a sense of self, independent from that which their owners prescribe them. In doing so, they also push back against the patriarchal ideologies of those who seek to control them.

Robyn McCallum suggests that possibilities for transgression and resistance presume a dialogical construction of subjectivity. This entails a sense of one's identity as a subject, "who is thus positioned in a relation of compliance or conflict to social and discursive practice" (119), and a sense of one's identity as an agent, "who thereby occupies a place or position from which resistance to or transgression of social boundaries can be produced." (119). Cinder, Callie and both Evas exist in conflict with societal power structures and their sense of agency develops as they resist the power structures that bind them. For example, Mandanna's Eva flees from India to England to escape the deadly Sleep Order Amarra has issued, knowing that her capture means her death. As she contemplates the potential consequences of her escape, Eva's subjectivity emerges as she resolves to take control of her life and, very possibly, her death. She muses, "at least [if I escaped and was caught]

I'd have lost [my life] by choice because I chose to take my chances with the unknown. It would have been on my terms. Not Amarra's." (Mandanna 293). Here, Eva becomes aware of her own subjectivity when she escapes. She chooses to stop pretending to inhabit someone else's subject position and chooses to inhabit her own.

Cinder's omniscient narrator informs us early in the narrative that Cinder dreams of escape: "somehow, someday, she would leave New Beijing. She would find a place where no one knew who she was—or what she was." (Meyer 48). Although her escape from prison and, consequently, New Beijing, does not occur until the second novel in the series, the text's narration clearly indicates her intention:

> "Soon, the whole world would be searching for her – Linh Cinder. A deformed cyborg with a missing foot. A Lunar with a stolen identity. A mechanic with no one to run to, nowhere to go. But they would be looking for a ghost." (387).

Cinder has previously shown herself to be capable of exercising agency over her body under impossible circumstances during her confrontation with Queen Levana. As the Queen attempts to use her mind-control to have Cinder shoot herself, Cinder takes back control of her mind and body, calling forth "every nanobyte of strength she possessed in order to stand, and pointed the gun at the queen. She pulled the trigger." (364). Callie's reclamation of her body begins with her reinhabiting her body in the middle of a rental and has at its climax the liberation of a hundred teens whose bodies have been rented out and exploited for profit. Price positions Callie as agentic not only because she is the first-person focaliser of her narrative, but also because the periods in which her renter is in control of Callie's body are not depicted in the narrative. Readers are positioned to align their empathies with Callie and to view her renter, Helena, with a degree of suspicion as Callie does. Dickinson's Eva demonstrates agency by embracing her animal subjectivity and escaping the specially-built enclosure constructed by her sponsors.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Eva utilises her human-chimp hybridity, enacting an escape plan that requires the combination of her human intelligence and chimp dexterity. Eva is positioned as the leader of this chimp rebellion. As she is the focaliser of her escape, readers are positioned to align their sympathies with the chimps against the humans and, certainly, by this point in the narrative it is clear that Eva has begun to think of *herself* as separate from humans. This is evident in the way in which she refers to her father and others as "humans" rather than a more self-inclusive term. Indeed, Eva also instils a fear of the once-trusted humans into the escaped chimps to ensure that they have the best chance of maintaining their freedom. As the narrator explains: "[the chimps] were all, in any case, by now infected with Eva's wariness of humans" (Dickinson 191). Considering that the narrator is disclosing Eva's innermost thoughts, it is clear that Eva now sees "human" as a classification of identity into which she does not fit. Indeed, by the time the narrative closes with Eva's death, Eva views herself as a chimp, referring to the other chimps as her family. On her deathbed, after living as a chimp for twenty-four years, Eva also reflects on her human existence: "[t]he pang of ancient loss, a child with long black hair ice-skating in a yellow tracksuit. Me, whispered the ghost, the real Eva." (210). In this way, it is clear that Dickinson (a committed humanist) is reluctant to allow Eva to fully commit to her chimp identity.

At first glance, it may appear that these young women exercise agency and attain a sense of subjectivity as the result of their own actions. That is, these narratives appear to establish feminist ideologies. Upon further consideration, however, it becomes apparent that Cinder, Callie and both Evas are assisted in gaining their freedom by an older human. Furthermore, the main source of support for each of these protagonists is an older man. Thus, their achievement of agency is facilitated by one who carries power within their society and is not a direct result of their own actions. Accordingly, we can read their attainment of subjective agency as achieved with permission from those in power, reinforcing what Angela McRobbie suggests is the "current global and still patriarchal system of economic power and domination." (2). Therefore, the closure these texts offer ultimately invalidates

the feminist ideologies they espouse. The protagonists are simultaneously empowered (by their escape and the freedom and agency it brings) and disempowered (by the way in which their narratives reinscribe dominant patriarchal social power dynamics). The following examination of the ways in which the girls are assisted in their escapes by human men highlights the way in which the surface ideologies of feminism produced by the texts exist in tension with the underlying patriarchal ideologies. The texts present as feminist tales of strong, othered females achieving agency and freeing themselves from their patriarchal rulers. However, as discussed below, they undermine themselves in their closures by reinforcing the patriarchal power structures they purport to oppose.

Cinder is assisted in her escape by the elderly Doctor Erland. It is *he* who provides her with the truth about her identity, only doing so in an attempt to further his own endeavours. He also furnishes her with a brand-new cyborg foot and an arm replete with "a hidden flashlight, a stiletto knife, a projectile gun, a screwdriver, and a universal connector cable." (Meyer 377). Although this seems to be an altruistic act, it simply reinforces Doctor Erland's conviction of his own power: he intends for her to use this gift to escape so that she can assist him in his endeavours. Doctor Erland keeps the truth of Cinder's identity secret until the closure of the novel, when it serves his purpose to encourage her to escape from prison. He orchestrates her escape so that she can be of use to him in his quest to overthrow Queen Levana. "I am not suggesting you should *try* to escape. I am saying you *must* escape." (378 emphasis in original), he tells her. He takes full advantage of Cinder's vulnerable situation. Knowing she has no one else to help her, Doctor Erland uses his patriarchal power to manipulate her into helping him: ""I understand you are frightened right now, and confused. Do not think too much. All I'm asking is that you find a way out of this prison … I will guide you through the rest."" (384). Indeed, even as he encourages her to demonstrate agency, Doctor Erland reinforces the novel's failure to uphold its feminist endeavours. He instructs Cinder to utilise her body to escape whilst simultaneously dictating that she shouldn't think too much about the manner of her absconding. This is reminiscent of the typically sexist assumption that women are less intelligent than men and should

therefore use their bodies to succeed. It should be noted, however, that Meyer's text does offer a more feminist ending than the others examined in this chapter. In a heroic role usually reserved for fairy-tale princes, Cinder decides to leave her Prince behind and escape to assist Doctor Erland to save the world. This is a reversion of the fairytale trope of the Prince saving the princess, as it is Cinder who risks her life to escape in the hope that she will one day return to save the Prince.

Similarly, Dickinson's text does not follow through on the feminist ideology it establishes. Although Eva's escape is enacted as a result of her human-chimpanzee hybridity, it is masterminded by her wealthy male friend, Grog. He instructs her that, ""[y]ou're not going to St. Hilaire just to shoot a few commercials. You don't imagine that's all I've been sweating my guts for or why I got you along here now?" (Dickinson 157). Grog reinforces his patriarchal power here in his demand for Eva to acknowledge the hard work he has undertaken on her behalf. Furthermore, his didactic tone and declaration that he has sent for Eva further demonstrate Grog's unconscious reiteration of his own power as a rich male in Eva's society. Grog advises Eva to ensure that her escape is covered by the media so that it is difficult for her sponsors to conceal. He dictates: "you make yourself *news* in the middle of [your escape], and SMI can't copyright that. The rest [of the media] will be onto the island like vultures, watching every damn thing they're doing." (193 emphasis in original). Eva highlights Grog's control of her escape when she notes the disparity between his requirements and hers: "Grog had said he could still have used her if she'd been the only one to get free … but Eva knew that a lone chimp is almost a kind of ghost, not quite real. It was the group that counted." (196). Much like Doctor Erland, Grog's actions are self-serving as Eva's televised escape provides a significant amount of free publicity for his animal-rights organisation. Following her escape and subsequent showdown with her sponsorship companies, in which she is shot with a tranquiliser dart, and which is broadcast live, Grog tells Eva, "World Fruit as good as panicked … My contact called me up and I got on to them and offered them [a] deal and they took it." (204). Her freedom ultimately comes at a price, however, as her sponsors agree to leave the newly-freed chimps alone in exchange for "SMI to have exclusive filming

rights, where possible by remote control cameras, and World Fruit exclusive commercial use of any such film. Human access to be kept to a minimum" (202). Although Eva is free from the captivity to which her transformation had bound her, the freedom she experiences is monitored. In this way, those who own her still retain a semblance of power over her, meaning she is never truly free.

Furthermore, once Eva's freedom is negotiated the narrative skips to her death. This suggests that for Dickinson, Eva's life as a chimpanzee is not relevant to the story and it is only the parts of her life in which she acts as a human that are important. Arguably, this reflects Dickinson's stance as a staunch humanist and reflects his own privileging of the human over the animal. However, McCallum suggests that the ending of *Eva* "in fact signals a number of narrative openings, possible futures for this group of chimpanzees." (127). In this way, it could also be argued that Dickinson's text offers an interesting privileging of the animal over the human. The possibilities offered by the closure of the text are numerous, although we are led to understand that the chimpanzees will very likely outlive the humans who had so subjugated them. They will also do so with the benefit of Eva's hybridity, and with the survival techniques she taught them.

Callie, although assisted in large part by Helena's elderly female friends, requires the gravitas and power of an elderly male Senator to gain support for and lend credibility to her cause. It is ultimately the help of Senator Bohn that brings the plight of Callie and the other Prime Directions victims to the attention of the government. Indeed, even after all of her hard work to free herself and the other donor bodies, Callie herself defers to the power of this wealthy older man: "[t]he senator's presence, even if only on airscreen, was helping to solidify the troops. The power of a charismatic politician." (Price 291). The power dynamics of Callie's society require that an old man must be the one to ultimately bring about change and freedom.

Mandanna's Eva is assisted in her escape by two older males. Her love, Sean, assists her in her initial escape, while her older male guardian, Erik, gives Eva access to funds to aid her. When captured, Eva's life is ultimately saved by the intervention of her creator, Matthew. He convinces his colleagues at the Loom to send her back to live her life as Amarra, rather than destroy her, which is the normal procedure for echoes who break the rules. In this way, it could be argued that Eva's rebellion is, in fact, unsuccessful and it is simply Matthew's power (over her and his fellow Weavers) that enables Eva's survival. Indeed, her survival is contingent upon her returning to her captivity and an existence performing Amarra. In order to live, she must return to inhabiting someone else's subject position. Adrian, the Weaver in charge of the Loom, reinforces his control over Eva at the closure of the novel, telling her: "'You've always been our monster … Don't ever forget that.'" (Mandanna 385). His repeated claim of ownership, and Eva's voluntary return to the Loom's control, is an endorsement of the patriarchal power structure that permeates the novel.

Are these triumphant escapes, then, simply "a temporary illusion of individuality" (Mallan, "On Secrets, Lies, and Fiction" 40)? Given that they are authorised and, in some cases orchestrated, by those who hold the societal power that these protagonists seek, I suggest that they are. Thus, a feminist reading of these narratives seems to indicate that they simply reinforce the patriarchal notion of the power of men. In other words, they produce ideological tensions that are never resolved. The texts empower their female protagonists by privileging their point of view and ensuring that they are the only focaliser of their texts. They also present seemingly empowering narratives in that the protagonists resist their ownership and attain subjective agency. However, I argue that this feminist ideology is undone in the texts' closure. Without the benevolent indulgence of human men, we are to assume that these female non-humans would remain under the power of their owners (who are, for the most part, also human men). These texts attempt to be feminist, but ultimately fail.

Science fiction is a genre that has traditionally been dominated by male protagonists. These texts, with adolescent female protagonists, disrupt this practice. As such, they are well-positioned to offer a feminist response to this tradition. Indeed, their depiction of strong, brave, subjugated heroines who fight (sometimes literally) for their freedom establishes them as a feminist reversion of the traditionally male-dominated action and adventure stories that are so common within the genre. Indeed, *Starters* in particular positions Callie as an alternative to traditionally male action-oriented science fiction heroes in that she engages in physical combat in which she is injured. Of course, as the text ultimately fails to uphold a feminist ideology, Callie remains beautiful despite her injuries:

> "[p]arts of my face were still the flawless work of the body bank makeover team. But then I had one black eye, several bruises, a huge cut with stitches running from jaw to cheek, and … I was missing a tooth." (Price 293).

Although they position themselves to offer a feminist response to the science fiction tradition of heroic male protagonists, these texts ultimately fail to bring about a feminist closure as they do not resolve the feminist ideologies they promulgate. They ultimately capitulate to patriarchal principles by reinforcing the need for men with power to award freedom to adolescent female protagonists. This undermines the feminist notion that these young women earn their freedom as a result of their struggles against the patriarchy. Instead, it is the patriarchy that grants them permission to demonstrate this agency. If, as many scholars assert, YA novels actively intend to perform a socialising function, what, then, does this convey to implied adolescent readers? I argue that the oppressive systems which are normalised for the protagonists are in turn unconsciously absorbed and normalised by readers. These narratives echo patriarchal power structures that exist in readers' real worlds, and I suggest that readers' unconscious absorption and normalisation of these power structures simply reinscribes them.

The posthuman worlds examined here are, for the most part, dystopian depictions of futures in which the marriage of biotechnology and capitalism has resulted in significant power imbalances between

rich and poor, young and old, human and posthuman. Indeed, as a result of these power imbalances these texts are well positioned to examine the exploitation of women and posthuman figures as discussed in this thesis. Applebaum (95) observes that texts with science-fiction themes such as those under examination here often use current social trends to extrapolate possible futures. As noted previously, the exception to this rule is Mandanna's *The Lost Girl*, which takes place in a world not that different from contemporary society. In each of these dystopias power is held by rich men, who also claim ownership of several of the protagonists. These men are the face of the capitalist world against which these young women struggle to attain independence. Indeed, YA authors often use fictional, futuristic realities to examine power relations such those "between genders, races, or governing bodies and their subjects" (Applebaum 95) that occur in the present day. I suggest that the authors of the texts under examination here utilise their created dystopian futures to reinforce teenage readers' acceptance of social norms, and, at the same time, encourage their resistance to same. As Mallan notes, "literature for children and young adults generally positions readers to take an empathic view of the characters and their circumstances, so they see the world through either a self-reflecting or an other-reflecting lens." ("Dystopian Fiction for Young People: Instructive Tales of Resilience" 22). I argue that these texts simply perpetuate models of patriarchal power and oppression found in teenage readers' own lives. Furthermore, I suggest that these teenage readers may also normalise the already common idea that assistance is needed from older males in order to attain a sense of agency and identity.

Trites suggests that investigating the ways in which social institutions function within YA literature allows scholars to gain insight into the ways that YA fiction itself serves as a function of institutional socialisation (*Disturbing the Universe* 22). On the surface, *Cinder*, *Eva*, *Starters* and *The Lost Girl* seem to present positive narratives about othered teens attaining a sense of agency and identity. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that these texts actually reinforce dominant social power dynamics in which children and adolescents achieve power and agency only with the help of

adults. Indeed, if I am to continue to employ Nayar's definition of posthuman subjectivity as emergent and achieved in combination with one's environment, it becomes apparent that these technologically-enhanced teens achieve agency not only through a growing sense of self and a daring escape, but, more explicitly, with the express assistance and permission of those who hold societal power. A significant theme in YA and children's fiction is, "the autonomy of the individual self and the quest for agency within a social context." (Flanagan, "Girl Parts" 41). However, given the way in which these girls achieve agency in their social context (that is, with assistance and permission of those in charge), I suggest these texts offer adolescent readers a version of freedom that is sanctioned by the very society that seeks to control them. As Trites explains, "[v]irtually every adolescent novel assesses some aspect of the interaction between the individual adolescent and the institutions that shape her or him." (*Disturbing the Universe* 23). I suggest that these novels, whilst seemingly offering a feminist outlook and an endorsement of teenage rebellion against institutions of power, may in fact do the opposite. Instead, these YA narratives endorse the ideological position that female subjective agency can only be acquired inasmuch as it is sanctioned by institutional and patriarchal power structures.

Applebaum (97) suggests that, as a medium produced by adults, children's literature often echoes the wishes of adults to simultaneously empower and control young readers. After all, observes Trites, it is adult publishers and authors, not teenage readers, that assign books to the category of YA fiction, and, thus, determine "the power relationships that define adolescence." (*Disturbing the Universe* 7)[8]. A great deal of existing YA scholarship investigates the influence adults have on the socialising factors inherent in YA and children's literature (see, for example, Flanagan; Ostry; Kimberley; Trites). However, the texts examined here provide particularly fertile ground to examine the anxieties surrounding adult's fears for adolescent's acquisition of subjective agency in an increasingly

[8] Although it has been suggested that children's literature scholars should reconsider adult-centred notions of power when analysing the power demonstrated by children and adolescents in literature (Beauvais), I suggest that in the texts under examination here, the power that the adolescent protagonists are striving for is in fact comparable to that held by adults.

technology-driven world. This is further evidenced by the way that these texts reinscribe patriarchal ideologies and subjugate non-human beings who exist in a liminal posthuman state which clearly serves as a metaphor for adolescence.

Trites suggests that a particular function of literature for children and adolescents is that it offers depictions of young characters who exhibit agency to which children and adolescents in the real world may not have access (*Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* 29). If we are to consider, then, that the posthuman protagonists in the texts under examination here function as an allegory for teenagers in the real world, what does this suggest about the message these adult authors intend to convey to their (implied) teenage audience? Much of the subjective agency they attain is limited. For example, Dickinson's Eva will never see her family again and must forgo the comforts of civilisation and human contact to which she is accustomed, Callie continues to be pursued by her mysterious antagonist, the Old Man, and Mandanna's Eva voluntarily returns to her owners after a brief period of freedom. Can it be argued, then, that these texts encourage resistance, but in a limited fashion? Or perhaps these authors mean to suggest that teenagers should seek assistance with their own endeavours for achieving subjective agency? In any case, the fact that their freedom comes as the result of the intervention of an older man surely serves to reinforce not only the gender stereotypes that these protagonists attempt to resist with their performativity, but also the perceived importance and power of older men in society. These texts each set up a feminist outlook which they ultimately fail to reconcile with the patriarchal ideology underlying each narrative. Thus, they merely reinscribe patriarchal power dynamics present in the real world. However, in many cases this intervention is subtle and thereby possibly unnoticed by teen readers, who may simply accept that it is part of the status quo of contemporary society. Although these posthuman texts do encourage teen readers to question many things about their society, they do not ask them to question that society's most powerful people are rich older men.

Trites suggests that YA fiction as a genre evolved because it finds its basis in characters demonstrating an "ability to grow into an acceptance of their environment." (*Disturbing the Universe* 19). This is the case for Callie, Cinder and, particularly, Mandanna's Eva. Indeed, Mandanna's Eva, after fighting for so long to establish her own identity and free herself from those that claim to own her, simply returns to the oppressive environment from which she escapes. This ending certainly fits with the idea that YA narratives encourage teenagers to accept their environment, rather than to struggle against it.

Guerra (276) writes that the chance to reflect on conflicts of biotechnology, capitalism and power imbalances by reading about them can be particularly valuable to adolescents who, as future leaders and policy-makers, will soon have to navigate the inevitably complex interplay of business and bioethics. *Cinder*, *Eva*, *The Lost Girl* and *Starters* offer savvy adolescent readers an opportunity to question the implicit ideologies in the narratives they read. Although at first glance these texts appear to celebrate teen heroines taking control of their own bodies and escaping the clutches of ruthless owners, a deeper reading suggests that they in fact reinforce dominant patriarchal social modes. Each female protagonist requires assistance, and in some cases permission, from those in their society who hold power in order to escape their situation. This simply reinforces the dominance of the power structures that teenagers face in the real world. Rather than seizing the opportunity to engage with the ethical concerns of feminist storytelling, these narratives instead reinforce the idea of female teenagers as powerless and inadequate. This is only exacerbated by the fact that the protagonists depicted in these texts are owned, posthuman objects attempting to reclaim themselves and discover a sense of agency.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways in which the posthuman protagonists of my primary corpus, viewed by their owners and society as non-human objects from which to profit, have utilised the very things that constrain them (their posthuman bodies and their expected gender roles) as forms of rebellion. These texts lend themselves to an examination of power, ownership and rebellion precisely because the posthuman characters are not human and, thus, are not inherently entitled to the same rights as their human counterparts. Indeed, as I mentioned, if the characters under examination here were, in fact, human, this would necessitate a discussion of slavery, rather than the exploitation of commodities. I contend that it is the non-human nature of the posthuman protagonists that allows for such an investigation of power and dominance as they relate to adolescent characters, without the political connotations attached to examinations of slavery. Arguably, however, these texts portend a new kind of exploitation in which posthuman individuals are summarily classified as non-human and, as a result, denied rights and agency. These texts also reinforce patriarchal power structures as they reinscribe the societal dominance of wealthy, human males.

The preceding investigation examined the ways in which posthuman adolescents are exploited for profit by those who claim to own them. It posits that although these protagonists resist their ownership and seek to free themselves, these narratives in fact simultaneously empower and disempower them by setting up feminist ideologies which they ultimately fail to uphold. I have demonstrated the ways in which the protagonists' subjective agency emerges as they interact with their environment, using their bodies and employing performativity to resist those who seek to control them. However, the protagonists who seemingly liberate themselves from their ownership by escaping their subjugated situation in fact do so with the assistance and, in some cases, the permission, of those in power. This assistance and permission does not necessarily come from those

who own them, but certainly from those who hold power within society; namely, wealthy older men. Cinder, Callie and both Evas are assisted in their endeavours to escape by wealthy men, reinforcing patriarchal social constructions that young women face in the real world.

Posthuman bodies, particularly in terms of how they are represented in my primary corpus, are often seen as non-human and powerless. This is made particularly apparent in my examination of how and why the protagonists are owned. These protagonists are owned because they are viewed by their owners as objects, and they are exploited for the same reason. They are taken advantage of mostly because they *can* be. They hold no position in society and are controlled by their owners. They are forced to inhabit normative gender roles in order to survive and are the victims of a significant societal power imbalance, brought about because they are not only posthuman, but also female. As a result of their status as posthumans, which many of them keep secret, they are isolated and have no recourse to complain when they are mistreated or abused. They are simply viewed as objects with which their owners can do as they please.

Though not within the scope of this thesis, this investigation provides a sound foundation for an investigation into the ways in which factors other than technicality affect the subjectification of female protagonists in posthuman YA fiction. Factors such as disability, race, poverty and human-animal dualism each affect the subjectification of the protagonists of the primary corpus, but the brevity of this thesis does not allow for such investigations to be undertaken. Given that, as previously mentioned, much YA scholarship regarding posthuman texts considers narratives with both male and female protagonists, I believe that a more thorough investigation into factors other than technicality that affect the subjectivity of female posthuman protagonists would be of great benefit to both YA scholarship and the field of posthumanism.

I have argued that, by attempting to free themselves from governments, schools, parents and corporations, the protagonists of my primary corpus model forms of resistance to institutional power structures that implied teenage readers experience in their own lives. Indeed, this may in fact be the sole message that teenage readers absorb from these narratives. However, as the young women who attain freedom do so only with the assistance of those in power, it cannot be overlooked that the primary corpus narratives reinforce patriarchal power dynamics. Furthermore, *Only Ever Yours*, the only narrative among the primary corpus that does not depict an escape attempt, brutally and violently reinforces these patriarchal power structures, as freida is assaulted, punished and ultimately recycled for use as a laboratory subject as retribution for her attempted transgression of the strict rules of her patriarchal society.

Although it is commendable that the authors of these texts seek to encourage adolescent readers to strive for subjective agency and to resist power structures that seek to disempower and marginalise them, I contend that they must be wary of simply reinforcing these power dynamics. As society moves into the posthuman era, YA texts that depict the increasingly problematic relationship between biotechnology and capitalism are increasing in popularity and publication volume. While it is good that these texts encourage adolescent readers, the decision-makers of the future, to consider the consequences of decisions they make today, it is equally important for authors to ensure that they do not simply reinforce patriarchal ideologies. They must instead provide narratives of actual resistance.

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