



Interdisciplinary Research in Gender

DISMANTLING RAPE CULTURE

THE PEACEBUILDING POWER OF 'ME TOO'

Tracey Nicholls



Dismantling Rape Culture

This book analyses rape culture through the lens of the ‘me too’ era. Drawing feminist theory into conversation with peace studies and improvisation theory, it advocates for peace-building opportunities to transform culture and for the improvisatory resources of ‘culture-jamming’ as a mechanism to dismantle rape culture.

The book’s key argument is that cultural attitudes and behaviours can be shifted through the introduction of disrupting narratives, so each chapter ends with a ‘culture-jammed’ re-telling of a traditional fairy tale. Chapter 1 traces an overlap of feminist theory and peace studies, arguing that rape culture is most fruitfully understood through the concept of ‘structural violence.’ Chapter 2 investigates the gender scripts that rape culture produces, considering a female counterpart to the concept of ‘toxic masculinity’: ‘complicit femininity.’ Chapter 3 offers analysis of non-consensual sex and a history of consent education, culminating in an argument that we need to move beyond consent to conceptualise a robust ‘respectful mutuality.’ Chapter 4’s history of sexual harassment in the workplace and the rise of #metoo argues that its global manifestations are a powerful peace-building initiative. Chapter 5 situates ‘me too’ within a culture-jamming history, using improvisation theory to show how this movement’s potential can shape cultural reconstruction.

This is a provocative and interventionist addition to feminist theory scholarship and is suitable for researchers and students in women’s and gender studies, feminist theory, sociology and peace studies.

Tracey Nicholls lectures in Politics and International Relations at Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand. Previously she taught peace studies and gender studies at Soka University (Japan), and philosophy at Lewis University (United States). Her doctoral work, in philosophy at McGill University (Canada), introduced her to questions of political and ethical significance of improvised music that shaped her research programme. Her first monograph developed an ethics of improvisation, translating practices of improvising musicians into strategies for building more democratic political communities. Her engagement with anti-rape activism has focused on student-led consent-education efforts. These strands of work inform this book’s exploration of improvised resistance (‘culture-jamming’) as a response to rape culture, presenting ‘me too’ as a social movement with peace-building possibilities.

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Acknowledgements

This book was conceived in upheaval and written in various shades of anger, despair, and determination. I was about halfway through a major transition in my life when ‘me too’ emerged into public awareness, and it became clear to me that I would have to write this book as a process of moving on to think about other things. I had been living and teaching in the United States (in the Chicago area) for almost ten years when I realised that I was no longer willing to sacrifice where I wanted to live in order to do what I wanted to do. I had previously been prioritising my career—building it, in fact—around my American job, and slowly putting to rest my hopes that I would get a Canadian job offer and be able to return ‘home,’ to the country where I grew up and where, thanks to Canadian taxpayers, I had managed to navigate my way through a university education that no one (least of all, me) ever expected I would have. Even as I was putting away my hopes of a Canadian job, I was making trips back and forth between the United States and New Zealand, and growing increasingly attached to the nieces and nephew I had there. As a child, I had grown up in a family where I had an aunt who lived overseas and was really only just a name to me. Unwilling to occupy that role in their lives, I decided early in 2015 that I was going to leave North America and return (‘return’?) to New Zealand.

Then we all lived through 2016. It’s hard for me to describe to people outside the US how terrifying it was to wake up in the country that had just elected Donald Trump President of the United States. It was terrifying for a lot of people who already had a lot less security, a lot less insulating privilege, than I had. In my case, fear was compounded by a crushing sense that all of the scholarship I was building my career on, work that was a genuine labour of love, had been refuted by that election. All of my belief that social progress was happening—that, in Martin Luther King’s words, the moral arc of the universe was bending towards justice—was shattered. Everything I had written about democracy, justice, the transcendent power of music seemed wrong, silly, poorly conceived.

As I white-knuckled my way through 2017, working on figuring out what parts of my academic life I could take with me in this transition out of what I had been trained to think of as the centre of the academic world,

I found myself in a serendipitous cultural moment (one of many in my teaching career). In the last four months of that year, I was teaching a course centred around themes of sex and power in Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* just as the *New York Times* and *New Yorker* 'me too' reporting on Harvey Weinstein was appearing. I remember drawing it in to classroom conversations, but I also remember it being enormous and really hard to process. The more I paid attention to it, the worse it got. Because I am one of those academics who needs to write in order to understand what I think, it became more and more obvious as I grappled with revelations in industry after industry that I was going to have to write something. This is that something.

The preliminary planning and early writing of this book happened over 2018 and 2019, when I was living in Japan and teaching peace studies and gender studies in a flagship English-language programme. While I was there, I had the enormous good fortune to be part of a community of female scholars, faculty, and students who gave me encouragement and inspiration. Special thanks are due to Chloë Garcia for her companionship in the pubs of Hachioji before she flew back to our shared alma mater, McGill; and to my fellow faculty women at Soka University, notably, Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen, Johanna Zulueta, and Maria Guajardo. And all my love and gratitude goes to the first group of graduate students I supervised, the 'Fabulous Six' (Ankita, Enn Li, Kit, Monica, Raissa, and Swati): you gave me the particular joy of working with young women who are learning that their thoughts and ideas deserve to be taken seriously as academic scholarship.

Revisions to early chapters, and the last two chapters in their entirety, were written after I relocated from Japan to Aotearoa New Zealand. I am grateful to Massey University and the Politics and International Relations programme in the School of People, Environment and Planning for giving me an academic home in the country I have always wanted to return to. It took almost 45 years to make that happen, and I have been so grateful that my COVID-19 lockdown experience was shared with Aotearoa New Zealand's team of 5 million. You have inspired so much of what I have to say in the later parts of this book about creativity, ingenuity, and the power of community. A random offhand comment at a philosophy conference a decade ago helped me realise that the Latin root of the word 'community' (*munis/muneris*) positions it as a gift that we give to and share with each other. It is easy to idealise the power of community. It is easy to sneer at it. What is less easy is to sit with the full awareness of how much one owes to people one may never meet, but nevertheless depends on for everyday well-being.

Cataloguing influences for one's work is also never easy. So many of the items I list in chapter bibliographies are works that have shaped my academic thinking, and merely listing them is such a pallid tribute to the ideas and writers I have grown to love. But there is one text, one writer, I need to acknowledge as a much more personal debt. I read Sara Ahmed's

book, *Living a Feminist Life*, for the first time during the savage grief that followed my mother's death, and it was both comfort and inspiration. Ahmed's characterisation of feminism as a way we can put ourselves back together resonated with me, and I clung to it. I feel the writing of this book, *Dismantling Rape Culture*, as a process throughout which I have indeed been leaning on feminism as I have been putting myself back together, after that grief, in a new life. I'm not at all sure I could have gotten there without *Living a Feminist Life*.

And, as odd and out of place as it may seem to fellow obsessive readers of acknowledgements sections (I've never seen anybody do this before), I really want to acknowledge the debt I owe to the taxpayers of Canada, without whom the banks of Canada would never have been willing to loan me the money to educate myself into this extraordinarily privileged life I am living. I love teaching, and I love my scholarship. They feel deeply constitutive of my personhood and I do each of them always in the knowledge and gratitude that I have this precious gift because I had the good fortune to live in a society that still had some commitment to the ideals of community investment. Individual Canadians may or may not agree that my education was money well-spent, but I am proud to be a recipient and representative of that social generosity.

On a more personal level, I am so grateful for the enduring friendship I share with Karen Trimble Alliaume, Kari Coleman, Cristina Perissinotto, and Chloë Taylor. All of you have coloured and contoured the thoughts in this book, even if you don't recognise them, even if you don't agree with them. Thank you for your assessment that, as Karen once so diplomatically put the point, the benefits of being my friend outweigh the disadvantages. And thank you to my sister Michelle, and my bracket, Julie, who don't care about academia at all and who don't follow the things that make me crazy excited, but love me enough to always know, at least in broad brushstrokes, what I'm working on at any given point.

There is no dedication appended to this book; that is a careful and intentional decision. I tried out a few instantiations, but in the end, the only thing that felt right was to take what I think of a 'Woody Guthrie' approach (he encourages people to do whatever they want with his classic song, 'This Land is Your Land'; all he wanted to do was write it and sing it). In that spirit, this book is for whoever wants it, whoever resonates to its title or cover and wonders if it might help them answer (or ask) some of their questions. I hope the book rewards readers' efforts.

That said, although it isn't written exclusively *for* anyone, I did write the book with my nieces and nephews in the forefront of my mind. Every word is infused with the hope that Ruba, Rose, and Lila; Finn, Amy, and Bella; Audrey; and Nic experience a world that is better than the one I grew up in, and with the hope that when they reach the point that they, like me, can look back at the patterns of their lives, they will see as much progress towards ending sexual violence as I have seen. It is also, *in memoriam*, for Stephen,

who suffered his own harms from sexual violence and didn't live to see a better world.

A version of the section of Chapter 4 that discusses the activism of Tarana Burke was previously published in October 2019 in a Kenyan current affairs magazine, *The Elephant*, as 'The Unapologetic Blackness of Me Too.' Some of the material in Chapters 4 and 5 has also been informed by conference presentations: I presented a version of the argument that 'me too' can function as an 'umbrella' term, covering many different gender-equality petitions, at a conference I co-organised with Johanna Zulueta of Soka University and Kana Takamatsu of International Christian University in June 2019, *Women and Peace-Making in the Asia Pacific*, in Mitaka (Tokyo); and I presented work on music of the 'me too' movement and on music's capacity to produce empathy in two virtual conferences hosted by the Min-On Music Research Institute (MOMRI) in Yotsuya (Tokyo) in August and October 2019.

Monica Thomas, who worked formally as my research assistant for much of the writing, has been one of the book's most enthusiastic supporters. She gave me unstintingly the great gift of insisting that this was a project worth doing and one that needed to be done by me, in those moments of exhaustion when my will faltered. I also want to thank Alex McGregor, my editor at Routledge, whose enthusiasm for this project was immediate, and palpable throughout the time we have worked together. I didn't realise at the outset how emotionally important it would turn out to be for me that this project could be seen as a collaboration by women. I don't mean to reduce anyone to a gender identity I impute to them, or to assume a politics out of that, but I do think that the fact that my contact with Routledge has been through Alex, and through editorial assistant Eleanor Catchpole Simmons, has contributed to my sense that this project is a collaborative feminist effort. Because my most profound wish for the book is that it have a wide circulation, I am most keenly grateful to Alex, and to Routledge, for arranging to include it in their partnership with *Knowledge Unlatched* so that the e-book could be an open-access title, available for free download. Finally, I offer my deepest gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for the constructive feedback they gave me. I am so thankful for the work you have done to help make my ideas clearer, stronger, and more accessible.

Introduction

Interpreting cultural fairy tales

I grew up female in relatively progressive versions of patriarchal societies (New Zealand and Canada), and I have always tried to live an autonomous life. My first marriage ended when I was 20, and I remember thinking at that point in time that I was tired of being someone's daughter, and someone's sister, and someone's girlfriend, and then someone's wife. I wanted to be someone. Not someone famous, or someone powerful, just someone—a person.

Living a dream

I remember the 1970s: being bored by books about the 'good girl' lives of Florence Nightingale and Queen Elizabeth I, and fascinated by the rule-breaking outsider of Arthurian legend, Morgan le Fay. I remember discovering in *Ms. Magazine* that women are people too; I remember Mary Tyler Moore and Harriet the Spy. And Pippi Longstocking. She asserts herself in my mind these days as the model of the life I want to live. I even read Stieg Larsson's *Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* series several years back because I had read somewhere online that he had created the character of Lizbeth Salander as a thought experiment about who Pippi might be as an adult.

I remember the 1980s: being shocked by the rape statistics at the end of Jodie Foster's movie *The Accused*; being horrified by news reports of the Central Park jogger. I remember hearing a co-worker in Sydney, Australia confide what she knew of the details of the vicious and fatal high-profile rape of Anita Cobby.

I also remember being proud of myself as an adult woman for not having internalised the fear and sense of vulnerability that characterised the thinking and behaviour of so many of the women I knew. Unlike them (I felt), I owned and fully inhabited the various cities in which I lived; I went out whenever I wanted, and reeled home after nights in pubs and bars through whichever shortcuts and alleys would get me home quickest. Every once in a while, if there was information being disseminated about a serial rapist on the loose or some other crime wave that might see me as a target, I would modify my usual habits—make a point of sticking to well-lit main streets for the

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duration of the public safety campaign, for instance. But I liked the idea that I made my choices about public space more like a man than a woman. I liked that I felt unthreatened. I believed I was an unlikely target, and maybe I was. Certainly, I was lucky in many respects. All of the threats to my safety and well-being that I had ever faced (at least until I was mugged one night in 2011 in the foyer of the Chicago apartment building where I lived) had taken place in the private spaces of my life, not in public space.

Then, in the waning days of 2012 and the new year of 2013, I woke up from the dream that I could live gender-neutral in public space. I was, at that point in my life, dividing my time between Chicago, where I lived during the teaching terms of the American university that employed me, and Montreal, where my then-partner had continued to live and work after I finished graduate school and took up life on the tenure track. That Christmas, I was home in Montreal and the news was dominated by accounts of the brutal gang rape of university student Jyoti Singh Pandey (the ‘Delhi bus rape’). Sickened and revolted by thoughts of how vicious an attack would have to be to necessitate being airlifted to a country in which one could get state-of-the-art care and still die of one’s internal injuries, I returned to Chicago in January. There, the news was dominated by the Steubenville High School rape case in Ohio, in which a teenaged girl (who, to my knowledge, has never been named¹) was sexually assaulted at a party by two young men whose actions were recorded on social media and shared widely in their peer group. Those two cases were followed in rapid succession by the sexual assault of Daisy Coleman, another teenaged girl in another American state, and the fatal sexual assault of a teenaged girl in South Africa, Anene Booysen. I woke up to the realisation that I lived in a world full of sexual violence and gendered insecurity concerning one’s right to bodily integrity. I realised I live in rape culture.

My immediate response to this realisation was to throw myself into the project of making my own little corner of the world—at the time, a tenured faculty position in philosophy and women’s studies at a small Midwestern university in the United States—a source of support and inspiration for students who were sexual assault survivors and those who were interested in becoming anti-sexual-assault activists. I helped form, and mentored, a student group that promoted bystander intervention,² and felt really proud that we were part of a national response to the problem referred to at the time as a ‘sexual assault epidemic’ on college campuses, and part of the ongoing conversation about consent norms. I am still proud of having done that work, and I believe strongly that working locally in one’s own little corner is crucial, but the eruption into global consciousness of what I initially labelled to myself ‘the Harvey Weinstein parade of shitty men’ prodded me to say more, do more, on a wider scale.

Over the last couple of years, as I have relocated my academic life out of the United States and into, first, Japan, and now Aotearoa New Zealand, I have found myself reading compulsively and thinking obsessively about

these entitled men, the people they have abused and marginalised, and the outpouring of disclosure and support that has taken form in various countries around the world as ‘me too’ movements.³ It is, of course, still far too early to be able to say with any evidence-based conviction what changes in our social relations these movements will inaugurate. But as I watch ‘me too’ morph from its origins in African-American community activist Tarana Burke’s support for victimised black girls and women into a global movement that includes middle-aged Japanese women engaging in public protests (that their cultural norms tell them is most unseemly behaviour), I become increasingly convinced that I am witnessing one of the most important social movements of my lifetime. (Having spent most of my life in North America and the last decade of that North American life in the United States, specifically, I would identify the others as the Occupy movement and the Black Lives Matter movement.) The stories that are emerging under the ‘me too’ umbrella have me thinking about whose stories we tell and listen to, how they are heard and understood, and what kinds of people we become as a result of being influenced by those stories.

We need—as individuals *and* as societies—to ask probing questions about who tells our stories, and who tells us what our stories mean. What are the lessons our cultures need us to learn? Are there other ways of understanding our narratives, our interpretive strategies, and the cultural constructs into which they are socialising us? In asking myself these questions, I have come to see Susan Brownmiller’s groundbreaking book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* as a helpful starting point for much of the conversation that I want this book to participate in—conversation about how ‘me too’ can be mobilised to dismantle rape culture.

Much has been written on rape, rape culture, and the related sexual violations and exploitations that rape culture nourishes since *Against Our Will*’s 1975 publication. It was an already large body of scholarship before the October 2017 *New York Times* reporting by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, and the *New Yorker* reporting by Ronan Farrow, that now mark the beginning of the ‘me too’ era in the United States. In the discussion that follows, I will draw inspiration from both popular and academic writing on how we need to reconstitute our social relations. The scholarship I am especially indebted to includes the history of rape that Mithu Sanyal traces in *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo*; the analysis of how lived experience can ground an effective theory of resistance in Linda Martín Alcoff’s *Rape and Resistance*; the recovered history of African-American women’s organising against sexual assault in Danielle L. McGuire’s *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*; the early (1992) work that Nicola Gavey has done on ‘technologies of heterosexual coercion,’ and her more recent and comprehensive analysis of the cultural context of both rape and ‘grey area’ sex (often coercive, but not easily fitting into categories that we think of, or want to label, as rape) in *Just Sex?: The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*.

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My thinking has also been informed over the years by work collected in anthologies that mark the evolution of feminist thinking and writing about rape culture, from *Transforming a Rape Culture* (first published in 1993, see Buchwald et al.), to *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (2008, see Friedman and Valenti); and anthologies that mark the emergence of ‘me too’ into popular consciousness: Roxane Gay’s *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* and the Verso Books collection *Where Freedom Starts: Sex Power Violence #MeToo* (both published in 2018; for the latter, see Kindig). And there is a growing literature theorising the sexual and gendered harassment that women face online, in media and culture, and in face-to-face public interaction, and theorising strategies to neutralise that harassment. Notable contributions to this body of work include Kaitlynn Mendes, Jessica Ringrose, and Jessalynn Keller’s *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back Against Rape Culture*, the multiply-authored public policy recommendations in *Stopping Rape: Towards a Comprehensive Policy* (Walby et al.), and Fiona Vera-Gray’s analysis in *The Right Amount of Panic: How Women Trade Freedom for Safety* of the ‘safety work’ women do in public life to rebuff harassment and tactics for normalising women’s occupation of public spaces. All of these contributions offer valuable insights for those of us concerned to harness the accountability resources of ‘me too’ into the project of dismantling rape culture.

My particular focus, however, is on the stories we tell ourselves. Unlike the ‘narrative politics’ Tanya Serisier develops in *Speaking Out: Feminism, Rape and Narrative Politics*—the telling of personal narratives as a form of political activism (13)—and the emphasis on survivors’ points of view that grounds Alcoff’s theorising of experience in *Rape and Resistance*, my emphasis is on cultural narratives rather than individual ones. In developing this focus, I do not intend to diminish either the power of personal narratives or the courage of the people who share them. What I hope to achieve is to underscore the now-settled principle in feminist theory of the personal being political in a way that amplifies Serisier and Alcoff’s personal approach through demonstration of the cultural ramifications of narratives. As ‘me too’ discourses take hold, they too offer the tantalising possibility that questions about our social narratives can instigate a reshaping of our gender relations. Serisier cautions us against an excess of optimism about the power of personal narratives, observing that survivors breaking their previously imposed silence has neither ended nor significantly reduced sexual violence (12), and she is correct in noting that telling stories does not immediately transform our social world. But, as Gavey argues in *Just Sex?*, there has been a sea-change in cultural attitudes about the seriousness of sexual violence as a widespread social problem. This is in no small part *because of* the personal narratives that have been put forward, and taken up, as political activism—from speak-out sessions organised by radical feminist gatherings in the 1970s to this latest wave of ‘me too’ testimonies.⁴

Here, in this consideration of stories that are told and why they matter, I want to note one very pointed disagreement I have with Brownmiller: her contention that Greek mythology has little to teach us about sexual violence in antiquity. In the course of her history of rape, she offers a discussion of mythology and culture in which she claims that ‘classic Greek myths reveal . . . very little’ (Brownmiller 283); the male gods raped as a matter of course, but ‘victims to these rapes . . . rarely suffered serious consequences’ (283). I think, to the contrary, that this mythology shows us quite clearly what the norms and expectations are in the particular social worlds that are—or were—telling and hearing these tales. She herself seems quite aware of this point later in her book, when she turns her attention to what we might think of as the ideology of rape culture: widespread beliefs that women ‘want’ to be raped, and are colluding partners in a game of dominance and submission—beliefs she characterises as ‘the deadly male myths of rape [that function as] the distorted proverbs that govern female sexuality’ (Brownmiller 312). Myths about gods raping heartily and with impunity, and the goddesses or mortals surviving, often to give birth to gods and heroes, normalise the view that men’s sexual urges are to be given primacy and to be endured, perhaps in the hope that good things will occur as a result of a violation. To accept these myths is to accept that women are the servants of men, and ought to live subordinate lives. I do not accept that.

Why we believe our own story-telling

As I began the writing of this book, I was directing a reading group in which I was discussing Brownmiller’s book with a very bright young female graduate student who seems to have always been aware that she is living in rape culture. Our first discussion hinged on a common feature of my pre-2012 thinking and Brownmiller’s: the lack of awareness of our own vulnerability we appear to have shared, the groundless conviction that ‘it won’t happen to me’ (Brownmiller 8). I tried to explain to this smart young woman I was working with how it could be the case that the smart woman who wrote the book we were reading and the smart woman supervising her graduate studies could ever have not known this thing that she is so completely aware of. How could I have not known this feature of every culture I have ever lived in? How could I have watched the Jodie Foster movie, followed the rape cases of the 1980s, and lived in a fantasy of safety in public spaces all the way up to 2012? It seems as incredible to me now as it does to my student.

I could only explain to her—and to myself—that when I look back at my life as a woman in the countries where I have lived, I realise that I resemble the 1950s cartoon character Mr. Magoo. The defining feature of Mr. Magoo is that he is visually impaired to the point of bumbling dysfunction but refuses to acknowledge his limitations. In the particular cartoon that lives in my memory and provides the example I draw on when I describe myself

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this way, Magoo accidentally wanders into a dangerous construction site and narrowly avoids death or serious physical injury at several points only because he is so unaware of the dangers that he does not flinch. Cluelessness, I told my student; that's what got me largely safely through a life that more sensible and self-aware women might not have taken on. (I also now think, looking back, that what I was labelling as cluelessness was a variant of what sociologist Liz Kelly calls 'safety work,' psychological and behavioural strategies one adopts as a woman to be able to move through public space without confronting danger.⁵)

Cluelessness, luck, privilege: they all strike me, these days, as synonyms describing the twist of fate that allows me, like Brownmiller, to write a book on rape culture without the autobiographical fact of being a rape survivor. Like her, I do not identify myself in that way. Unlike her, I am less certain that I can say 'I may have been shortchanged here and there, but I have never been coerced' (Brownmiller 7). Part of what I want to analyse in this book is the shading into each other of short-changing and coercing. This implicates the 'grey areas' of sexual relations that 'me too' is foregrounding as a concern in social media and popular discourse, discussion that has parallels in feminist scholarship on 'technologies' of coercion in heterosexual relationships (see Gavey, 'Technologies and Effects' and *Just Sex?*) and has been advanced by books like Roxane Gay's *Not That Bad*.

Another part of what I want to analyse is what we might think of as the 'infrastructure' of rape culture, or, to use Gavey's terminology, the 'cultural scaffolding.'⁶ Like Gavey and Sandra Lee Bartky, I draw on the understanding of power that Michel Foucault articulates in *Discipline and Punish* (published in French as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* in the same year Brownmiller published *Against Our Will*) and in his four-volume *History of Sexuality*. Foucault's account of the exercise of power upon individuals (discipline) begins with an authority constituting a standard of measurement (a judgement of what constitutes a good performance), and then observing and ranking performances to assess individuals—in his examples, students, patients, prisoners, army recruits—in terms of how well they are training themselves to meet this standard.⁷ Discipline is successful once it has been fully internalised and the individual subjected to the disciplinary power has taken over their own monitoring, thus obviating the need for supervision by the authority figure.

Bartky takes up Foucault's fairly abstract account of genderless bodies being acted on by authority and the normalising effects of peer pressure, and transforms it into a theorising of how women's subjectivity, sense of value, and social behaviours are constructed in response to disciplinary practices of a modernised patriarchal domination (132). Arguing that women and men have different relationships to the institutions of modern life such that women's 'docile bodies' are engendered in ways that men's are not, she cites current fashions of the ideal female body and practices of dieting and exercise to meet that standard (132–133); norms of spatiality⁸ and body posture

that govern how much space women feel free to take up in public relative to men (134–136); and the ‘technologies of femininity’ that mandate clothing and cosmetics ‘choices’ which are not at all the ‘self-expression’ they are promoted as (136–139).

Indeed, she asserts that

technologies of femininity are taken up and practiced by women against the background of a pervasive sense of bodily deficiency . . . [such that] virtually every woman who gives herself to it is destined in some degree to fail.

(Bartky 139)

This ‘disciplinary project of femininity’ constructs ‘a panoptical male connoisseur [who] resides within the consciousness of most women: [we] stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment’ (Bartky 139–140). Internalising the male gaze as ‘self-surveillance’—‘panoptical’ in the sense that we move in public space as if we are being watched even when we might not be (is my lipstick smeared? do I have visible panty lines?)—results, in Bartky’s view, in women’s constant awareness that ‘whatever else she may become, [a woman] is importantly a body designed to please or to excite’ (149). But, as Foucault is concerned to acknowledge, if power is everywhere, exercised in all normalising and standardising processes, then it is also *in our hands*: to be deployed as subversion as well as capitulation.⁹ In this particular cultural moment, when ‘me too’ discourses are calling for male power to submit itself to a shifting social accountability, I find myself hopeful that, through improvisatory resistance strategies, we might be able to rework our standards of acceptable behaviour, and perhaps even open up cultural spaces in which we can dismantle the infrastructure of toxic sexual and gender relations.

We tell stories—including myths and fairy tales—for all of these kinds of reasons: to explain, to normalise, to share understandings about ‘what the world is like,’ and to change those understandings. Whether oppressive or liberatory, we tell the particular stories we tell to share particular knowledge of the world. But human beings are oddly unpredictable: we do not always learn the lessons our society thinks we need to learn, and we do not always learn our lessons the way we are expected to. Recognising the diversity of insights we might mine from our stories, this book is therefore primarily concerned with how they teach us to think about our sexuality, its importance to our self-concepts, and the implications of a commodified or imposed sexuality for our sense of how valuable we might be to others—how that thinking fucks us all up, and how different thinking might help us all be a little bit less fucked-up. It’s also concerned with the philosophical backdrop of this commodified, disposable sexual field we live in (rape culture)—the patriarchal way of thinking that examines each woman and asks, ‘what is your use (to men)?’ Because of these concerns, each chapter is organised

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around stories we tell, and could tell, about distinct elements of our socio-sexual lives: rape culture itself; gender scripts or roles we are socialised into; how we understand consent; the ‘me too’ call for accountability in sexual, social, and professional relations; and the subversive (culture-jamming) potential of particular stories we are telling currently. I describe each chapter more fully in the next section of this introduction.

This is a feminist book because it pushes back against the patriarchal thinking that (people we label) women are *for* (people we label) men and ought to live in accordance with what men might need from us or might expect of us. In explaining why the problem of rape is a public-cultural problem and can therefore have ‘no private solutions,’ Brownmiller observes that ‘to accept a special burden of self-protection is to reinforce the concept that women must live and move about in fear and can never expect to achieve the personal freedom, independence and self-assurance of men’ (400). The uncompromising feminist who rejected and denounced that limitation on women’s lives is the Susan Brownmiller I want to draw on, not her more recent derogatory and dismissive remarks about young women spending their feminist freedom recklessly in drinking ‘like men’ and going on ‘Slutwalk’ protests to make the point that one ought to be able to wear what one wants.¹⁰ Disappointingly, her current views undercut the very point about women’s rights to psychological and physical autonomy that appear to me as the strength of *Against Our Will*.¹¹ To accept this notion of a special burden to protect oneself from becoming a rape target, a rape victim, a rape survivor, is to accept subordination. As I have already asserted, I do not accept that—for myself, or for any other person.

But there is a great deal of difference between speaking words that assert one’s value and living a life that roots out the patriarchal, gender-hierarchical norms one has internalised in order to replace them with more self-affirming ways of thinking. We are susceptible to the ‘discipline’ that Foucault and Bartky theorise precisely because human beings are social creatures. To reject the norms of one’s culture is difficult at the outset and indescribably painful throughout the entire effort because it demands a constant state of conflict with and alienation from our social others who—if we would only just conform, be polite, be gracious, be what others expect us to be—would heap upon us the validation each of us craves, however much we might like to believe that we don’t.

When I consider this need we have to see our own selves reflected back to us, I start to see as a significant feature of the hell that Jean-Paul Sartre depicts in his play, *No Exit*, the fact that there are no mirrors. The characters who are consigned to the play’s infernal hotel room have no way of being reflected back to themselves except through each other. And part of the brutal brilliance of that play is that the three main characters are drawn precisely so that each of them is either unable or unwilling to give the other two the reflection of themselves that they desire. ‘Hell,’ Sartre tells us, ‘is other people’ (45). To be slightly more nuanced about it, though, human

emotional needs and socialisation are such that these other people in our worlds are both the home we seek and the hell we resign ourselves to. It is also the case that cultural norms are difficult to reject precisely because they get internalised and become *our* norms, as Foucault and Bartky both point out. Rejecting what we have internalised is not an easy process—nor even always a successful one; it is, to borrow words from Kahlil Gibran, not a garment that one casts off, but a skin that one tears with one's own hands (4). This is why, I think, it proves easier for many of us to accept the cultural stories we inherit and try to make them work for us, rather than throwing them away and trying to fashion new stories. This is why, I think, women and men and those of us who struggle against gender-binary categories all put so much effort into coming to terms with the cultural scripts handed down to us.

A world in which women accede to the expectation that we will compete with each other for male attention is a world in which men can choose to never see their privilege and its consequences for the women in their lives. As Brownmiller observes, it is a world in which men can categorise sexual assault as a 'women's issue' and not have to take any personal responsibility for the connection between women's vulnerability to assault and coercion and their own male entitlement (400). It is also a world in which people do not have to interrogate their culture's culpability (Brownmiller 400). She argues:

Once we accept as basic truth that rape is not a crime of irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust, but is a deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation and possession on the part of a would-be conqueror, designed to intimidate and inspire fear, we must look toward those elements in our culture that promote and propagandize these attitudes, which offer men, and in particular, impressionable, adolescent males, who form the potential raping population, the ideology and psychologic encouragement to commit their acts of aggression *without awareness, for the most part, that they have committed a punishable crime*, let alone a moral wrong. The myth of the heroic rapist that permeates false notions of masculinity, from the successful seducer to the man who 'takes what he wants when he wants it,' is inculcated in young boys from the time they first become aware that being a male means access to . . . a woman's body.

(Brownmiller 391, emphasis in original)

These elements of culture that Brownmiller refers to constitute an 'ideology of rape' that is enshrined in law, the putatively level playing field in which male control over the public sphere is sedimented, and is normalised at the level of culture. This ideology 'is fueled by cultural values that are perpetuated at every level of our society,' she asserts, 'and nothing less than a frontal attack is needed to repel this cultural assault' (Brownmiller 389).

Her notion of ideology has been taken up by new generations of feminist authors—Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Jessica Valenti are perhaps the most well-known and widely read—whose work can explain why women don't just uncomplicatedly use laws against rape to get 'justice.' (The argument that, if a woman is telling the truth about being raped, she would press charges is deployed by apologists for rape culture with wilful disregard for everything we know about the chronic and widespread under-reporting of sexual assault.) In *Rape and Resistance*, Alcoff helpfully frames the reluctance of women to report rape and press charges in terms of the inadequacy and limitations of law; the cultural assumption that law is *the* instrument we should use when harms happen to us is undercut by rules of testimony that privilege the defendant, statutes of limitation that disadvantage the survivor of child sexual abuse, prosecutorial discretion that mitigates in favour of 'winnable' cases, and legal emphasis on individual culpability over cultural or institutional accountability (46–47). It is also helpful to consider Miranda Fricker's account of testimonial injustice, which explores the notion of gendered credibility deficit (14–15; 18–21), when we are theorising what many women who don't pursue legal solutions already know: they won't be believed. And Mithu Sanyal's and Nicola Gavey's respective discussions of women's unwillingness to use the word 'rape' to describe coercive or non-consensual sexual encounters both suggest that some women, at least, are resisting being identified (or self-identifying) as a 'victim' (Sanyal 66–68; Gavey, 'Technologies and Effects' 335; Gavey, *Just Sex?* 147–153).

Harshness towards women who do complain of sexual aggression is not only a feature of male-dominated social institutions; it also forms the first line of defence utilised by other women. Where men believe that women 'play the victim' so they don't have to examine their own complicity in the deeply shitty social world most women experience—from catcalls to victim-blaming for the abuse and assaults we might suffer—women might be more inclined to believe that other women 'play the victim' so that we don't have to admit to ourselves how radically vulnerable each of us is. 'She asked for it,' we can tell ourselves, and if we can believe that, we can breathe a little easier, feel a little safer, because we know that we are not 'asking for it.' That story works to insulate us from the dangers in our patriarchal, misogynistic social worlds—until the day it doesn't work anymore. The day that an assault I didn't 'ask for' happens to me, the day it happens to someone else who I recognise as 'an innocent victim,' the day I wake up from my dream that there is such a thing as gender-neutral public space—that is the day when I begin to realise that I need a better story.

How we can tell better stories

In addition to our shared identity as women who are not rape survivors, another thing Susan Brownmiller and I share is a motivation to write our way to these better stories our cultures need (a motivation that is also

shared by many feminist writers who *are* bringing to their work a first-person experience of the violence we are all hoping to end with words, ideas, and better stories). In her autobiographical prologue to *Against Our Will*, Brownmiller confides that it took her years to see rape as a feminist issue, and that she chose to write the book because she is ‘a woman who changed her mind about rape’ (9). The detailed and searing outcome of her coming to awareness of rape as a matter for feminist scholarship and activism concludes with the declaration that she has given us the history of rape and the challenge to her readers that ‘[n]ow we must deny it a future’ (Brownmiller 404).

My book, the outcome of my own belated awareness that we live in cultures that normalise sexual violence, particularly against women, is my own response to her challenge. While I have worked for years in a supportive capacity to end sexual violence, I had not previously felt competent to insert myself into this scholarly discourse, and when I consider that past hesitancy now, in the context of my desire to amplify the ‘me too’ conversations going on around me, I realise that I had not previously felt that my voice would add anything to this discourse precisely because rape is not something with which I have direct experience. Although I want to completely endorse the point Alcoff makes about foregrounding the voices and experiences of survivors in analyses of rape (45, 47–49), I now think that, at the level of rape culture, the ‘me too’ impetus towards accountability is reframing conversations about sexual violence—including coercion, exploitation, and harassment—as everyone’s responsibility. I want to take up my share of that responsibility, and I hope that in doing so I can be part of shifting cultural attention to focus more squarely on perspectives that have previously been erased and ignored. This book is my best effort to bring my own scholarly perspective to the shared project of analysing how we need to understand and transform the rape cultures within which we live.

As someone whose very localised work in anti-sexual-assault education—at private religiously affiliated universities in the United States and Japan—has been transformed by this ‘me too’ moment, I feel an urgent imperative to participate in building our present social relations into a more just, peaceful, and equitable world for persons of all genders. Throughout this book, I draw on experiences I have had in the course of my work with students in bystander intervention and consent education, and the advocacy and support work I have done on their behalf. I also draw from my teaching and research in philosophy, feminist peace studies, and improvisation theory. The theoretical backdrop for my discussion is social constructionism in what I understand as a broadly Foucauldian vein. I do not consider myself a Foucault scholar *per se*, and I will not pretend to have any expertise or authority in explicating the finer points of his views, but I find his work on disciplinary power and the production of knowledge in conjunction with the exercise of power—and Bartky’s extension of his work to a disciplinary project of femininity—to be the framework that best makes sense of how the concepts

I am exploring—rape culture,¹² gender inequality, toxic sexual relations, and strategies for producing mutuality, accountability, and resistance—act upon us. As Foucault traces in his *History of Sexuality*, different historical eras and cultures have produced very different ways of thinking and behaving with respect to sex and the kinds of relations the men and women of those times and places have been expected to enact. What we are taught to understand as ‘normal’ and ‘proper’ shape us. They do not fully determine what/who we become, and they do not fully limit the extent to which we are capable of becoming other than what/who we are, but they do exert influence.

As a way of explaining how individuals who are shaped by techniques of social control can nonetheless craft acts of resistance or subversion, I want to draw on improvisation theory to offer an understanding of localised resistance. Improvisation theory is a multidisciplinary field that draws much of its inspiration and insight from improvisatory practices in music, but its interest is social processes, broadly construed. Regardless of whether the study of those processes begins with jazz ensembles or the serendipitous smooth functioning of Mumbai’s *dabbawala* system (which daily delivers 200,000 home-made lunches to office workers and then returns the lunch box containers to their points of origin in a coordinated yet non-centrally planned effort that is reportedly the envy of global delivery companies like FedEx¹³), the goal of improvisation theory is, first of all, to examine social coordination efforts that emerge without ‘top-down’ planning or a single entity in control of the process. This view of possibilities for individual creativity and social coordination that can be brought to bear on projects of, for instance, subversion of canons and definitive versions of stories is consistent with Foucault’s view that both power and resistance to power can be generated in any network of interaction.

As my discussion develops, the analysis of what rape culture is and how it influences us shifts into analysis of critical efforts to transform culture through both activism and improvisatory reconceptualising (culture-jamming) of our attitudes and social norms. What I hope to offer in this synthesis is a way of understanding how we can have individual agency within a social construction view like Foucault’s: a point about the micro- and macro-levels of thinking power and resistance that acknowledges the ability to critically assess ourselves in relation to social expectations and other social actors as a corollary of being our own jailors and disciplinarians.

If we have the ability to conform, we also have abilities, however latent, to resist. This is what improvisation theory articulates: it aims to show the socio-political possibilities for, and implications of, committing to processes of coordination—sometimes rather than, sometimes within—processes of control. For instance, the responsiveness that is so highly prized in improvising ensembles supports a conception of community that undermines hierarchical distinctions (like that of performers and audience members) and asserts instead that we all have a role to play in constructing and nurturing our communities. Also of note is the value that improvisation theory

places on the ‘codeswitching,’ or cultural fluency, that results from learning and knowing the stories and values of multiple communities well enough to be able to shift back and forth between them and interpret them for each other. Valuing an ability to hear shared meanings when they are spoken in different voices, or unfamiliar rhythms, gives rise in improvisation theory to an ability to recognise interpretational expertise that is demonstrated in the mapping out of real-time translations among cultures or perspectives. Improvisation theory judges all of these performances or processes contextually, according to how well they foster participation, community-building, respect for differences, and the capacity to embrace contingency in a world of risk and uncertainty.¹⁴ But these capabilities of responsiveness and interpretational fluency also give rise to the kind of subversive insight that reveals the processes of social control that structure our lives and our thinking. Where Foucault insists that there is no ‘outside’ to power relations, improvisation theory encourages us to see how much playing around with norms and expectations is possible to us ‘inside.’ Because of this, it has obvious relevance to the practice of social critique and change that I am discussing in this book as ‘culture-jamming,’ and it forms the theoretical underpinning of the resistance strategies I explore in the book’s final chapter: the basis of the ‘*how* do we do it?’ question I take up after my arguments for *why* we need to dismantle rape culture.

Awareness of our cultural influences, adoption of more fluid gender roles, and contestation of harmful social scripts all implicate the extent to which we are given—or not—epistemic credibility (the status of ‘competent knower of the world’) that in turn allows us to feel ‘authorised’ to participate in the mass global project of producing the cultures we live in. Each of these areas in which we see challenges to patriarchal hierarchy have been advanced, and can be furthered, by culture-jamming. We need to jam our cultures because it is only once we become aware of the distorted thinking we do not want to endorse that we can begin the conceptual conversions that will change the ways we act towards each other. Part of the point I aim to make in this book is that we have always been engaged in retelling familiar stories in order to derive different messages. ‘The most amazing part of the [real-life Bluebeard] Gilles de Rais story,’ Brownmiller recounts, ‘is that the legend of Bluebeard’s Castle that we know today has metamorphosed from a terrifying account of a sex-murderer of small boys to a glorified fantasy of a devilish rake who killed seven wives for their “curiosity”’ (292). Analysing these retellings can reveal important insights about how we whitewash, who gets erased, and who gets trivialised. It can also show us ways in which we ourselves can retell a story to make it better, to make it fit our culture-jamming needs.

But there is more to say about what culture-jamming is. It is not simply a matter of retelling; it is ‘the practice of disrupting the mundane nature of everyday life and the status quo with surprising, often comical or satirical acts or artworks’ (Cole). As sociologist and journalist Nicki Lisa Cole tells the history and possibilities of culture-jamming, the phenomenon came to

public attention as a critical practice through the work of Adbusters, an organisation highly critical of cultural practices of conspicuous consumption, easy acceptance of ubiquitous marketing, and ‘I shop, therefore I am’ mentalities. Cole traces the practice back to its conceptual roots in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, which analysed the rise of mass culture and the attendant power of broadcast media and advertising to construct our desires, social attitudes, and self-concepts. Viewed in this context, culture-jamming is a tactic used to make us aware of the implicit assumptions and associations that shape our behaviours and our lived values, thereby making it possible for us to examine them critically and decide for ourselves whether they are indeed commitments we wish to hold. Cole argues that culture-jamming’s purpose is ‘to produce feelings of shock, shame, fear, and ultimately anger in the viewer, because it is these emotions that lead to social change and political action.’

One of the examples through which Cole illustrates the power of culture-jamming is a performance that I followed in the news as it was being performed and provoking controversy: Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz’s senior thesis project, ‘Mattress Performance: Carry That Weight.’ Sulkowicz was raped in their dorm room in August 2012,¹⁵ and to draw attention to the university’s mishandling of disciplinary proceedings following that on-campus sexual assault, they conceived the idea of a graduating project that involved them spending the final year of their undergraduate experience, 2014–2015, carrying around a dorm-room mattress until the student who raped them was removed from campus. This piece of performance art was intended both to protest the university inaction that resulted in Sulkowicz having to continue to attend classes knowing that their rapist was also still attending the same university, and to educate others about the multi-faceted problem of ‘the campus rape crisis,’ as it was being referred to in North American discourse at the time.¹⁶ As I understand the way this performance unfolded, the mattress they carried was not the actual mattress from their dorm room, but a replica of the same dimensions and weight. The rules set for the project were that they had to carry it everywhere they went on campus, and they could not ask others for help carrying it, but could accept help if it was offered (‘Mattress Performance’).

Columbia’s non-response to Sulkowicz’s protest continued throughout their entire undergraduate experience—the other student was never expelled, asked to leave campus, or disciplined—so Sulkowicz and a small cadre of their supporters carried the mattress throughout their graduation ceremony in May 2015. According to Cole, this performance “‘jammed” the notion that sexual assault and its consequences are private matters, and illuminated the reality that they are often hidden from view by the shame and fear that survivors experience.’ In her analysis, successful instances of culture-jamming are events or performances that ‘surprise those who bear witness to them with their disruption of social norms, and in doing so, call

those very norms, and the validity of the institutions that [organise] them into question' (Cole).

Sulkowicz's performance resonated in a feminist protest climate that was ready for the 'me too' movement that was about to emerge, but it was ahead of the discourse, not part of it. For an example of culture-jamming that is squarely within the frame of 'me too' protest, we need to consider more recent performances. The song-dance developed by the Chilean feminist collective Las Tesis, 'Un Violador en Tu Camino' [A Rapist in Your Path], has travelled around the world since its first performance in November 2019, performed in France, India, Palestine, and Turkey, and a bilingual (Spanish and English) version was adopted as a feminist 'anthem' by American women protesting outside the New York City courthouse where Harvey Weinstein was sentenced in January 2020 for the crimes that catalysed the 'me too' movement in that country. Styled 'a live performance of feminism without borders,' the choreography draws women's voices and bodies into an indictment of the silencing of our voices and violating of our bodies that patriarchy, colonisation, and rape culture all depend on—'a collective awareness of gender inequality' (González-López). News stories about this 'me too' anthem in feminist outlets like *Ms. Magazine* have presented it as a manifestation of truly transnational feminism, a locutionary intervention from the Global South that is being heard and valued, rather than co-opted, by feminists in more privileged countries. As initial news coverage of cultural interventions that 'go viral' are often uncritical, it seems to me that here is a role for improvisation theory; it can be a critical-analytical lens through which to assess the efficacy of culture-jamming efforts.

My approach throughout this book is to analyse the stories we tell, and the stories we need to tell, about various facets of rape culture in order to reveal the contours of the social structure we need to dismantle. I begin in Chapter 1 with a story of what rape culture is that starts with Susan Brownmiller's narrative, and weaves in Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the social construction of gender, Sandra Bartky's gender-cognisant reading of disciplinary power, and Danielle L. McGuire's recovered history of the anti-rape activism done by African-American women in the explicitly racialised rape culture of the pre-civil rights movement American South, along with analyses of our contemporary field—primarily Nicola Gavey's work on cultural scaffolding, Courtney Fraser's argument that chivalry and misogyny form a symbiotic support structure, and Fiona Vera-Gray's attention to the trade-offs women make to stay safe in public space.

I then introduce, as a story we need to tell, a discussion of peace studies scholarship that theorises rape culture—misogyny, sexual objectification of women, coercive prescriptions to uphold a gender binary and practice particular forms of heterosexuality, and devaluation of men and women who deviate from prescribed gender scripts—as a form of structural violence that harms us all. 'Structural violence' is a central concept in the academic discipline of peace studies; it is a way of theorising experiences of social

organisation—like chronic poverty or racism—that can be as damaging and traumatising as direct interpersonal violence. The term is defined by its originator, peace studies founder Johan Galtung, as ‘violence [that] is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’ (‘Violence, Peace’ 171).

To underscore the ways in which rape culture shows up as structural inequality, I include in this discussion of peace studies an argument for a terminology choice that runs throughout the book. At various points in these chapters, I will engage in specific discussions of particular harms—sexual assault and rape (terms I use as synonyms), sexual violation and exploitation, sexual harassment, and sex–gender subordination—but where I am discussing the harms of rape culture in broad and inclusive terms, I will be using ‘sexual violence’ as an umbrella term. This terminology makes an even more forceful argument for the relevance of peace studies; the connections I identify between gendered social subordination, rape culture, and sexual assault are theorised as *structural* violence, and I think the use of *sexual* violence as my larger category helps to make this point. In showing how rape culture functions as structural violence, I draw on work in feminist peace studies by Betty A. Reardon and Catia Confortini who have argued—as Bartky does on the matter of Foucauldian discipline—for the need to adapt the abstract discussion of persons, lives, and bodies in Galtung’s framework of violence into a more gender-cognisant tool of analysis. I also link peace studies’ attention to gendered violence to work done by bell hooks on the politics of domination, and to Catharine MacKinnon’s origin stories of patriarchy—a connection that I think helps to put feminist theory and peace studies in conversation with each other in the very way suggested by the collaborative work of peace scholar Duane Cady and feminist scholar Karen J. Warren.

In thinking about why we see resistance to acknowledging the reality of rape culture, I speculate that it is due in part to the fact that phenomena of structural violence are frequently presented as crises in far-off places (Rylko-Bauer and Farmer), and rape culture is the ‘water’ in which we swim in modern, industrialised cultures. Introducing the work on epistemic injustice done by Miranda Fricker, I shall argue that, precisely because of the fraught interplay of the familiar and the formidable, we are tempted to deny that there is a rape culture at all, or to deny that it rises to the level of a structural violence, a set of relations that we could, and should, formulate otherwise.

From the argument that rape culture is indeed a kind of structural violence, and needs to be seen that way if we are to truly comprehend it, I move in Chapter 2 to a story of the kinds of human beings it seems to aim at producing. Here, I put recent discussions of ‘toxic’ masculinity in psychology into conversation with the personal testimony offered in Chanel Miller’s recently published book, *Know My Name*, her account of putting her life back together after being raped by Brock Turner. The world-wide attention the Turner case received cemented the idea that rape culture breeds sexual

entitlement in men, and I argue that this sexual entitlement is conjoined with a perceived entitlement to authority to form the core of toxic masculinity. What also needs sustained, interconnected attention is the model of femininity, or ideal womanhood, that is needed to shore up toxic masculinity, a socialisation I conceive of as ‘complicit femininity.’ This piece of my argument is framed—through discussion of Beauvoir and Gavey again, this time also in conjunction with Adrienne Rich’s classic essay, ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,’ and Sara Ahmed’s engagement with it in *Living a Feminist Life*—as a complex acknowledgement and dissection of the scripts women are given.

I consider the complicity that is collaboration: women who cleave to a patriarchal social structure in the belief that they, as ‘good women,’ will be protected by it and will benefit from it. And I consider the complicity that is survival: the choices and decisions that the vast majority of women find ourselves considering as ‘least-worst’ options in the sometimes savagely restricted menu of life chances that is our structurally violent, compulsorily heterosexist culture. Drawing most notably on Rich and Ahmed and Rebecca Solnit’s essays in *Men Explain Things to Me* as resources, I develop some thoughts on a counter-story that aims to further undermine the restrictive gender scripts feminism has been contesting as part of its theorising and strategising against rape culture.

In my third chapter, I examine stories of consent by first developing an account of the spectrum of problematic sexual encounters that we see as the consequence of our ‘toxic masculinity–complicit femininity’ gender socialisation. I begin with an overview of how rape has been, and is currently, understood that contrasts Brownmiller’s Second Wave feminist history of rape (in her own words and as analysed from the current vantage point in feminist scholarship) as something that men do to women, with the view that Mithu Sanyal gives us. Sanyal points us to a more gender-inclusive understanding of rape, one consistent with crime surveys and personal testimonies that suggest a greater population of male survivors and victims than cultural understandings of sexual violence had previously accepted. This, I argue, is important to take note of because, despite the patriarchal male dominance that underpins rape culture and might seem to benefit men as a whole, the cultural and structural violence of patriarchy and rape culture damages us all, and damages us unevenly, producing effects in marginalised populations that are not suffered by more privileged individuals.

From my discussion of histories of sexual violence, I move along the spectrum of problematic sex, to consider what Nicola Gavey theorises as ‘heterosexual coercion,’ and I use her 1992 analytic framework to consider discussion of ‘grey areas’ of sexual relations exposed in the wake of the now infamous *Babe.net* article, ‘I went on a date with Aziz Ansari. It turned into the worst night of my life’ (Way). The overarching purpose of this chapter is met in the final section, a story of how our thinking about consent has developed, from the ‘no means no’ model to recent formulations of the idea

of enthusiastic consent, underpinning an argument that consent models of thinking about sex need to develop even further, into something like what Linda Martín Alcoff outlines in *Rape and Resistance* as the need to develop sexual subjectivity that supports agency and desire for all of us. Consent models have been useful in advancing our thinking about positive and negative sexual relations; that is undeniable. And in many cultures around the world they may still prove a necessary corrective to social norms that do not make space for (some) participants in sexual relations to say no when they mean no. Robust consent norms are obviously and undeniably better than assumptions of entitlement to sexual access, or perfunctory, pro-forma models. Networks of sex-positive feminists and anti-sexual assault activists have worked tirelessly to make these norms more robust and they have done valuable, life-saving work, but if we are to extricate ourselves from rape culture, one piece of that movement forward has to be evolving beyond the idea that sex is about letting, not wanting. As long as we are working with consent models, we are implicitly entrenching ourselves in a view of sexual encounters in which one party is letting another party obtain something that other party desires. We need to develop constructs of mutuality that allow all sexual agents to own their own desires (and lacks), to speak authentically of wanting (or not), and to learn how to negotiate mutually agreed-upon ways of satisfying these wants, instead of refining our existing models of consenting to what one's partner wants.

Chapter 4 tells stories of the development of the concept of sexual harassment and the global 'me too' moment. The first section tells a story that links early 20th-century socialist feminist discussion of sexual predation in workplaces with American Second Wave feminist activism against sexual harassment and with later (Third Wave) feminist awakenings sparked by the Clarence Thomas–Anita Hill Senate hearings in the United States in 1991. The second section moves from a focus on how rape culture shapes workplaces to a history of African-American women's activism against sexual assault (Danielle McGuire's recovered history of the anti-sexual-assault activists who built the foundations of the civil rights movement) as the historical-cultural backdrop for the organising done by Tarana Burke, founder of the 'me too' movement, that made #metoo possible. It also covers, through their own memoir *She Said*, the reporting done by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, the *New York Times* reporters who broke the Harvey Weinstein story which marks the beginning of American 'me too' calls for accountability by powerful men engaged in sexual misconduct. In the third section, my critical analysis of the capacity of this present wave of 'me too' consciousness to generate long-term systemic change, is global in scope, framing 'me too' as an umbrella concept rather than a single movement. Articulating this phenomenon in a way that can accommodate diverse campaigns and culturally distinct histories gives us a non-homogenising lens through which to see similarities in current manifestations of women's refusal to accept ongoing gender subordination, even as we take notice of the important

cultural differences. Through this lens, I explore whether there are any early indications that individual behaviour might be changing and institutional structures might be reforming, and what we might reasonably be able to conclude about the peacebuilding potential of ‘me too.’

In the book’s final chapter, I draw on my previous scholarly work developing an ‘ethics of improvisation,’ a set of norms that can guide us as we improvise new strategies for more just, stable, and democratic societies. I apply that thinking to the question of how we can ‘culture-jam’ our present inadequate social relations through deployment of feminist/woman-oriented subversions and readings of cultural productions. In the course of analysing stories we have told and stories we could re-tell, I argue, first, that this culture-jamming strategy has always been with us, and, second, that we need to be doing it more widely (in a more sustained manner) and more broadly (in a greater range of areas).

Among the examples of subverted and reimagined cultural productions I identify are two historic declarations of human rights, the French *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen de 1789*, which was reworked by French revolutionary and women’s rights activist Olympe de Gouges (*Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, 1791) and the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776), which was reworked by American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (‘Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions,’ 1848). Turning from politics to fiction, I consider the instructive and thought-provoking example of *Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes’s 17th-century contribution to the canon of Spanish literature. My attention then turns to the question of how rape stories are told in film—from Mithu Sanyal’s analysis of whose voice and point of view gets told in *The Accused* (1988) to analysis of the point-of-view shifts in the recent Netflix series *Unbelievable*—and speculate about how to normalise more empathetic cultures.

I close the chapter with a discussion of the extent to which we can already see transformation at work in perhaps the most regressive depictions in mainstream film of women’s potential: Walt Disney’s fairy tales. The ‘old-school’ princesses I take on throughout this book are being replaced by more agentic, less male-identified characters who reflect to varying extents the figure (the wilful girl) Sara Ahmed introduces in *Living a Feminist Life*’s engagement with the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *The Willful Child*. The sheer range of these disruptions and subversive interventions can, I argue, draw our attention to the ways that the patriarchal thinking that perpetuates rape culture congeals in our perceptions of the world without us even being consciously aware of it. Stories alone cannot change the world, but telling stories differently can encourage each of us to think differently, to react differently to our social worlds, and to see when and how others are reacting differently. It is perhaps less of a smashing of rape culture than I would wish for, but even an erosion over time is a better outcome than the status quo women have been expected to endure for my entire lifetime (so far).

I would like to close this introduction with one further note of explanation about how I am organising this book, and why. In taking on the question of how to end rape culture, and framing rape-culture activism through the idea of improvisatory culture-jamming, I am calling into question the fairy tales we tell ourselves—about who gets raped, how it happens, why it happens, and what each of us could or should be doing about it. One way we (as cultures) have led ourselves into this rape-culture space that we need to get out of is literally through telling fairy tales—about princes who will appear in women’s lives as magical validators of our self-worth; about the passive princesses we (as individual women) should be—beautiful, and patient, and waiting; about the happily ever afters that will stretch out before us once we are chosen; about the dangerous paths through dark woods and the big bad wolves that lie in wait there for us should we be foolish enough to strike out on our own and try to be something other than princes and princesses. This is a point that Ahmed makes in *Living a Feminist Life*: speaking of paths we are directed to follow in the hope they will lead us to happiness, she says that even though traditional, subordinated, heterosexual lives are no longer prescribed for women, ‘happy stories for girls remain based on fairy-tale formulas: life, marriage, and reproduction, or death (of one kind or another) and misery’ (49). To reinforce the point that these stories are leading us astray and that we need to be telling them differently, I am ‘jamming’ fairy tale tropes in the chapter sub-titles I use throughout. I also introduce a ‘jammed’ fairy tale at the end of every section, as a ‘coda.’¹⁷ My favourite stories are, and have always been, re-tellings of familiar tales with a twist—characters who don’t conform, plot lines that don’t resolve in the standard expected ways, morals of the story that justify an entirely different way of doing things than what was taught to us as children. Subversions.

Notes

- 1 I have made a conscious feminist-political decision in this book to provide names for already publicly identified victims and survivors of sexual assault as these incidents emerge in my discussion of rape culture. I do so in the spirit in which Jyoti Singh Pandey’s mother and father publicly named her in the wake of her death—so that she might be seen as a full human person and not just as the shadowy victim of the Delhi bus rape. My contention throughout this book is that rape culture, as a structural violence of patriarchal societies, functions in ways that deny full personhood to women, most especially to sexual assault survivors and victims. In much of the journalistic reporting of sexual assault during the decades of my adult experience of the world, victims have not been named; this has been a principled effort to avoid stigmatising them (see Katha Pollitt’s 1991 analysis of media coverage of rape charges brought against William Kennedy Smith for a feminist defence of ‘the longstanding custom of media anonymity’). But, as I am concerned to argue in the chapters that follow, times and social conventions are changing, and increasingly it seems that participating in the practice of erasing these names serves to uphold the stigma and shame that

have always unfairly marked those who have been subjected to this form of violence. Obviously (I hope), I do not name anyone whose identity is not already in the public sphere. Equally obviously, I think that we can only challenge the stigma, and change the cultural tendency of widespread under-reporting, through a refusal to continue the silence that denies names and other facts of autobiographical identity to these persons. (For the record, and in this spirit, I want to acknowledge here that the woman I knew of for years and refer to above only as ‘the Central Park jogger’ is former investment banker, now inspirational speaker and author, Trisha Meili.)

- 2 Bystander intervention is the peer-education strategy acknowledged and mandated by the 2013 Campus SaVE (Sexual Violence Elimination) Act, in its enumeration of the obligations colleges and universities in the United States have to protect students from sexual assault. The central focus of bystander intervention, training students to intervene in social situations that might lead to sexual assault, is grounded in social psychology hypotheses that groups of people are less likely to intervene than lone individuals because of the phenomena of ‘bystander apathy’ and ‘diffused responsibility’ that were theorised in the social psychology literature after the 1964 stalking and murder of a young New York woman, Kitty Genovese. Her death became a cultural touchstone because of the media reporting that three dozen of her neighbours had heard her cries for help and ignored them; during the half-hour in which she was suffering the attack that proved fatal, no one telephoned the police to report the crime in action, according to the standard accounts. Four years later, social psychologists, John Darley and Bibb Latané, wrote and published the paper, ‘Bystander Intervention in Emergencies,’ that introduced these hypotheses and laid the groundwork for subsequent research into bystander intervention. For an in-depth analysis of what is often forgotten and ignored about the Genovese murder and of the resulting mis-theorisation of the extent to which bystander apathy is a widespread social problem, see Peter C. Baker’s 2014 argument that this case needs to be understood in its particulars: as an instance of sexual violence against women.
- 3 Throughout this book I will be discussing ‘me too’ movements in the plural, as a way to draw connections among different local–national protests against sexual violence and sex/gender-based exploitation, which—despite the very real and important differences between, say, protests against sexual assault in the United States and protests against workplace sexual harassment in India—I think we need to understand as a growing global refusal of patriarchal gender subordination. ‘Me too’ functions in my argument as a convenient umbrella term that captures the synchronous eruption of a variety of protests that women are making around the world against social conditions we are no longer willing to endure. In addition, I distinguish ‘me too’—the support movement started by African-American community activist, Tarana Burke, in 2006—from #metoo, the online discussion of sexual assault and male impunity that was inaugurated on Twitter by Alyssa Milano in 2017 (inspired by Burke’s years of work). These ‘me too’/#metoo histories will be the focal discussion of Chapter 4.
- 4 One of the aspects of ‘me too’ testimony that tantalises me in its potential to trigger social change is that the wealthy and powerful men being accused of sexual assault, sexual predation, and sexual misconduct of varying levels of seriousness occupy a very different social position than the men foregrounded in Brownmiller’s discussion of ‘the police-blotter rapist’ (174–209), who, as both

- Tanya Serisier and Angela Davis (among others) note, tend to be poor men of colour. (I discuss Davis's criticisms of Brownmiller in greater detail in note 11.)
- 5 See Fiona Vera-Gray, 14.
 - 6 Nicola Gavey defines this as 'discourses of sex and gender . . . that set up the preconditions for rape—women's passive, acquiescing (a)sexuality and men's forthright, urgent pursuit of sexual "release" . . . [and] script a relational dynamic that arguably authorizes sexual encounters that are not always clearly distinguishable from rape' (*Just Sex?*, 3).
 - 7 For Foucault's account, see 'Docile Bodies' in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, and for Bartky's gender-cognisant account of discipline, see 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,' in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*.
 - 8 Here, Bartky is drawing from the analysis of women's perceived field of movement and intentionality offered by Iris Marion Young in 'Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality.'
 - 9 See Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*, 100–101.
 - 10 On the matter of drinking, she asserts that 'there are predators out there, and . . . women have to take special precautions.' Of what she calls 'slut marches,' she says, 'sure, [you can wear whatever you want] but you look like a hooker.' See Katie Van Syckle, 'Against Our Will Author on What Today's Rape Activists Don't Get.'
 - 11 This is not the only point on which Brownmiller can be, and has been, criticised. Both bell hooks (in *Ain't I a Woman*) and Angela Davis (in *Women, Race & Class*) have taken her to task for the ways in which they see *Against Our Will* perpetuating the devaluation of African-American women and colluding with racist historical revisionism, most notably for foregrounding in her history of rape the phenomenon of black men raping white women and largely ignoring the post-slavery history of white men raping black women (an erasure that requires correction of the historical record through the kind of scholarship we find in Danielle L. McGuire's history of black women's anti-sexual-assault activism throughout the 20th century). Davis, in particular, charges Brownmiller with 'racist ideas' exemplified by her account of the 1955 murder of Emmett Till for the alleged crime of wolf-whistling at a white woman (see Brownmiller 178). Brownmiller describes this incident exclusively in terms of gender politics—men objectifying women—to the point that the racial politics, which drenched all social relations in rural Mississippi and cannot be glossed over responsibly, recede. Equally problematically, the fact that Emmett Till was a *fourteen year old boy* is elided in Brownmiller's attempt to locate his life and death in the context of sexual violence against women. Other criticisms that have been made against *Against Our Will* include the lack of evidence for Brownmiller's categorical assertions about the role of rape in pre-historical societies (for which we, by definition, have no records) and many of her more sweeping and essentialist statements about men and rape, which suggest, in contrast to her thesis that rape is a political issue, that it is a biological imperative or somehow otherwise 'natural' and therefore ineradicable. See the analysis offered by Stevi Jackson, 'Classic Review—Against Our Will.'
 - 12 I want to acknowledge here the point made by a number of feminist scholars who incorporate elements of Foucauldian thought into analyses of sexual violence: Foucault has expressed views on rape that read as remarkably insensitive. Notably, there is his dismissive treatment in volume 1 of *History of Sexuality* of a

19th century account of molestation of a young village girl, which he characterises as an ‘everyday occurrence in the life of village sexuality’ (31). There is also the public position he took to the effect that rape should not be seen as a special type of violence, that it should instead be treated as an instance of physical assault (cited by Gavey in *Just Sex?*, 94n10; quoted in Plaza 27). Chloë Taylor argues, concerning the first instance, that much of the dismissive language describing Charles Jouy’s victimisation of Sophie Adam was Jouy’s characterisation, not Foucault’s (see *Foucault, Feminism, and Sex Crimes: An Anti-Carceral Analysis*). And, concerning Foucault’s argument that rape ought to be treated as simple assault, Gavey describes the suggestion offered by Vicki Bell that desexualising rape might be a move to undermine its transgressive power (see *Just Sex?*, 94n10). If Bell’s suggestion is correct, then Foucault’s view of rape appears much closer to the view that Susan Brownmiller and Second Wave radical feminists espoused: that rape is an act of violence, not an act of lust or passion.

- 13 Emma Henderson, ‘How Dabbawalas Became the World’s Best Food Delivery System.’
- 14 Ajay Heble and Ellen Waterman, ‘Sounds of Hope, Sounds of Change: Improvisation, Pedagogy, Social Justice.’
- 15 Post-graduation, Sulkowicz has publicly identified as gender non-binary and has indicated a preference for they/their/them pronouns.
- 16 The problem of campus sexual assault is indeed a complicated social phenomenon: as with most incidences of sexual assault, it often occurs between people who know each other—sometimes are in, or on the threshold of, a sexual-romantic relationship—and, in the particular case of campus sexual assault, it often occurs between people who have neither the life experience nor the social education to be capable of nuanced conversations about consent and desire. (In this sense, they often are ‘he said–she said’ situations, although not as simplistically as depicted by those who seek to minimise the problem.) The universities who have a moral obligation—and, in the United States, a Title IX (of the Education Amendments of 1972) legal obligation—to provide an equitable education to all students, regardless of gender, wrestle with questions of how to weigh a victim’s petition for justice against a defendant’s right to their own education. The campus policing apparatus frequently finds itself tasked with investigative, adjudicative, and outreach responsibilities for which it is not adequately resourced, a burden falling on them as a result of longstanding and widespread unwillingness of local law enforcement to take sexual assault seriously (on this last point, see Brownmiller 352–367, and the more contemporary account in Rebecca Flintoft’s chapter, ‘Sexual Assault,’ in *Violence Goes to College: The Authoritative Guide to Prevention and Intervention*).
- 17 My codas borrow from musical composition the practice of adding to the end of a musical work or passage some additional material that allows the audience to look back at the ideas that have been expressed and consider them in a new light or from a different perspective.

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1 *Once upon a time . . .*

Rape culture is structural violence

What rape culture is: *the prince's battlefield*

A 'rape culture' is not only, or merely, a culture that valorises or habitually practices rape. It need not be a society in which roaming packs of insecure, violent young men are frequently spotted in the act of savaging innocent girls, or silly ones.¹ It is also a society in which a powerful man you refuse to have sex with can end your career.² And a society that raises its girls with the message that they need to make themselves attractive to men, that their value and well-being depends upon male validation.³ And a society that ignores the disappearance of racially and socio-economically marginalised women, as was the case when a serial killer was targeting First Nations women in the impoverished Downtown Eastside community of Vancouver (Canada) in the 1990s, or as continues to be the case in First Nations and Native-American communities across the Canadian Prairies, and the US Plains states and Pacific Northwest today.⁴ 'Women are trained to be rape victims,' Brownmiller contended in 1975 in *Against Our Will*; 'To simply learn the word "rape" is to take instruction in the power relationship between males and females' (309). Her further claim that this possibility of violence 'seeps into our childhood consciousness by imperceptible degrees' (Brownmiller 309) reads to me as an adaptation to 'rape culture' discourses of the socialisation processes that French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir describes as the ways in which female human infants are turned into 'women.'⁵

A culture need not be something we honour, or are proud to be part of; despite the generally positive connotations we ascribe to the word, 'culture' is simply a label that points to an environment of embedded expectations for the individuals who act within it. It functions as a 'discourse' in the Foucauldian sense, a power-knowledge construct that imposes constraints and issues permissions in, and alongside, telling us what counts as knowledge.⁶ A rape culture is one that normalises and excuses rape, a social context in which the desires of privileged aggressors are prioritised over the comfort, safety, and dignity of marginalised populations that are seen as targets, as prey.⁷ This context does not *have to be* gendered, but it typically

is. In most of the cultures that comprise our globalised world—the one that appears in films, in news media, on Facebook—men are normalised as the hunters for sex and the conquerors of women; women are normalised as the guardians of our own chastity and virtue. Those of us who ‘fail’ to be virtuous are disparaged, disregarded, and pathologised in these cultures, which tend to be slut-shaming, and victim-blaming, and, of course, heterosexist. Implicitly, in films, songs, and the fairy tales told to us as children,⁸ we are presented with a world in which the young questing hero (the prince) goes in search of his ‘lady love’ (the princess). He knows her by her beauty, her modesty, her submission to him. He wins her. Her life from that point on is an appendage to his life. This is rape culture.

Let me offer a selection of personal experiences that illustrate what is involved in being seen as ‘prey’ in a society that normalises predatory relations. You know you’re living in a rape culture when:

- A strange man howls or whistles at you from the passenger seat of a pick-up truck, and your first thought is to check that you’re not accidentally exposing ‘too much’ leg;
- You’re sitting on the subway reading Plato’s *Apology*⁹ on your way to a friend’s dissertation defence, and all of a sudden you realise the man sitting across from you is masturbating—at you? because of you?;
- Part of your getting-ready-to-leave-the-house routine involves standing in front of a full-length mirror and assessing your clothing choices with the question ‘pedestrian or prostitute?’ in mind;
- One of your male work colleagues engages in friendly conversation, offers moral support, or otherwise does something kind, and you have to fight a niggling back-of-the-head worry that this might be one of those situations that will escalate into something needing to be ‘managed’;
- You spend all morning reading online posts in the latest social media conversation about aggressive ways in which women are policed by men into compliant behaviour, thinking ‘no, that’s not me; I haven’t had that experience,’ and then, on your three-block walk to the bus stop, are accosted by a drunk man who instructs you to smile at him and observes to no one in particular that you should be wearing a skirt instead of jeans;
- You have a friendly, utterly non-flirtatious conversation with a man in a bar that ends in a handshake and leaves you pleasantly surprised, with unaccustomedly warm, positive feelings for ‘all men’;
- You accept a ride home from a reunion with an old friend, and end up parked in the woods late at night trying to explain to him that, no, you don’t want to have sex with him, and no, you’re not ok with just sitting in the car with him while he masturbates;
- You have sex with your husband even when you don’t want to because, ‘no, I don’t feel like it,’ is apparently not a good enough reason to not have sex, and it’s easier to grit your teeth for ten minutes of not really

consensual sex than to argue for four hours the night before you have to work an early shift.

Some of these examples might seem trivial, others might seem neurotic, but the brute reality of gender-hierarchical societies is that any woman you know could, if she feels comfortable with you, give you a broadly similar list of aggressions that she has been subjected to and fears that she has internalised. And to the extent that any of them might strike a reader as ‘not that bad,’ I think this points us to the great value of the anthology Roxane Gay contributes to the growing ‘me too’ conversation. In her introduction to the volume, Gay describes how it evolved away from her original idea for a collection of essays about rape culture that would balance personal accounts with more objective analysis (xi). It became a collection of testimonies: from a Hollywood actress’s reflection on the structures of objectification and exploitation of women (the ways in which Harvey Weinstein is revealed as emblematic rather than ‘one bad apple’) to the many accounts offered by women of their own childhood and adolescent experiences with sexual violence that effectively trained them into the view that living with these scars is just what it means to be female in their societies. Organised through Gay’s own recollection of coping with sexual violence by telling herself that it wasn’t that bad, that other women’s stories were worse than hers, the collection becomes a challenge to what she describes as ‘the calloused surfaces’ of our empathy (ix–x).

While there is considerable difference—across cultures, and across racial, sexual-orientation, and socio-economic or class identities—in *how* women experience the insistent pressure to orient our lives to men (the particular forms the pressure might take), the existence of that pressure to take responsibility for men’s sexual desire, to manage it, and to conform to it is something that typically exists as a background feature of women’s lives in male-dominated societies. Even as we acknowledge that women, women’s lives, and women’s experiences are not the same everywhere, it seems to me reasonable to hypothesise that the ability to recognise ‘my own social world’ in stories of other women’s encounters with abuse and aggression has driven world-wide attention to and global manifestations of ‘me too’ news coverage and social media conversations. Being able to provide such a list of one’s own experiences of gendered power and policing is the consequence of having been shaped by the kinds of social forces that feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky describes in her gender-cognisant representation of Michel Foucault’s disciplinary power: standards of behaviour, bodily presentation, and a compliant attitude that women internalise as ‘the disciplinary project of femininity’ in what Bartky contends is ‘the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality . . . [characterising] contemporary patriarchal culture’ (139, 140). ‘The disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere,’ she tells us; ‘the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular’

(Bartky 142). We are socialised to believe and to expect that we are always, in every interaction, subject to being assessed in terms of how well we are performing the tasks assigned to women (an expectation Bartky discusses as internalisation of a ‘panoptical male connoisseur’); this subsuming of the male gaze is one aspect of rape culture.

In a 2005 anthology called *Transforming a Rape Culture*, the editors describe the scope of the social relations they seek to transform:

On TV programs and ads, in newspapers, novels, poetry, songs, opera, rock, and rap, on every billboard, in every shop window, on every museum wall we found evidence of rape culture. We began to understand the ways girls and boys are programmed to be victims and rapists, and we saw how training for this behavior begins early—before nursery school, even before birth, in most cases, with our own parental notions of the (highly artificial) distinctions between male and female.

(Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth xiv)

One such example of the public propaganda they describe confronted me every time I visited the United Nations University in Shibuya (a neighbourhood of Tokyo, the city in which I lived for the first two years of the ‘me too’ awakening). A larger-than-life billboard down the road from the UNU building depicts a young woman holding to her waist a picture frame that reveals to us the underwear underneath her fairly nondescript casual-professional wardrobe. Outside the picture frame, she is a young woman dressed to go to work, or to go grocery shopping, or to go to the movies. Within the picture frame we see her bra, her underpants, and her very trim, flat-stomached waist. I’m not certain what she’s advertising because of the language barrier (my Japanese language skills are very rudimentary and I can’t read kanji), but it seems to be a weight-loss clinic, or maybe a women’s fitness centre. At any rate, it is yet another instance of women’s bodies being used within our cultures in ways that men’s bodies typically are not: the use of sex and the implied promise of sexy young women available to you (or, if you are female, sexy young *womanhood* available to you), if you buy this beer, use this shaving cream, patronise this fast-food restaurant.

This is an old point about objectification and commodification of women’s bodies that has been made by media literacy analysts like Jean Kilbourne for, literally, as long as I have been alive. One of the students who commented on a presentation I gave about this book project in the early stages of writing responded to the photograph I showed of this billboard by saying:

Japanese culture depends on women[’s] attraction, like there are so many shops and books and products that show women[’s] sexiness.

I feel it's weird and I really hate this culture. But I'm not sure how to sell products without using women[']s attractiveness.

(Nicholls, 'Jamming Rape Culture')

When the commodification of women's bodies is normalised to the point that even people who can see what is happening, and can see what is wrong with what is happening, cannot imagine alternatives: this too is rape culture.

Objectification and commodification of women are two of the features *and* logical consequences of the gendered social hierarchy that feminist scholars are pointing to when we deploy the term 'patriarchy.' The self-censorship, self-doubt, and self-blame underpinning my own 'living in rape culture' checklist are others, as is the story-telling that assigns heroic life-paths to men and subordination to women. Patriarchy (literally 'the rule of the father'), a way of ordering societies that normalises male dominance and female submission, works to put power, wealth, and knowledge in men's hands, and casts women as dependent on men's largesse and approval. If we are 'good girls,' we are delicate (weak), trustworthy stewards of household budgets, and willing pupils of authoritative, learned men. If we are 'bad girls,' we are schemers and temptresses, materialistic (unfeminine, if we attempt economic autonomy), and, if we presume to know more (or other) than what is given to us by the men who are our teachers, intellectually arrogant.

It is not the case that every society ever formed has followed this model—cultures like the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (called the 'Iroquois' by white settlers of North America) have social structures that are matrilineal (clan name and family identity is passed down from female ancestors) and matrilocal (men move into the family houses of their wives when they marry)—but societies that are not grounded in male dominance are typically understood as counter-examples to a perceived norm. Both Confucianism and Christianity, for instance, have developed doctrines that present men's authority over women as the natural order of things, and the historical legacies of colonialism are such that the gender hierarchy represented in the term 'patriarchy' is a settled aspect of the popular imagination in most parts of the world. When superiority and inferiority are understood to define both the social relations and the persons engaged in those relations, it becomes very easy—even natural—for the dominant group to normalise its desire to impose its will on the subordinated group.

In volume 1 of his *History of Sexuality*, philosopher Michel Foucault notes that 'it is one of the essential traits of Western societies that the force relationships which for a long time had found expression in war, gradually became invested in the order of political power' (102). This is how we end up living in rape cultures: within the only gender categories made available to us in most cultures, men are raised from the time they are boys to feel entitled to women's attention, women's care, and women's bodies. Women are raised from the time we are girls to also believe that men are entitled to

these things, or at least, we are raised to be wary about openly contesting that entitlement. Patriarchy, and the rape culture that is its manifestation in many societies, becomes another latent violence shaping our social relations and our perceptions of our capacities. Its dominance-subordination ideology makes possible the

[p]hysical and sexual violence against women, usually committed by men, [that] is pandemic in our culture[s,] and the high rates of violence against women and girl children make it clear that we who are female are particularly vulnerable to violence simply due to our gender.

(Adams and Fortune 12)

‘How did this whole story begin?’ Simone de Beauvoir asks rhetorically as she sets up her discussion of how women have been relegated to being the ‘second’ (inferior) sex (10).

Why is it that this world has always belonged to men¹⁰ and that only today things are beginning to change? Is this change a good thing? Will it bring about an equal sharing of the world between men and women or not?

(Beauvoir 10)

In the course of addressing these questions, she frames sexual relations between men and women in controversial terms usually associated with Susan Brownmiller’s contemporaries in feminist theory and activism, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, claiming that woman is ‘a raped interiority’ (Beauvoir 35). Her point here is to identify the divergence, in heterosexual relations, between what gives men sexual pleasure and what gives women sexual pleasure, and to underline the presence of male dominance in what we think of as sex—a point that social psychologist Nicola Gavey more recently discusses as ‘the coital imperative’ (117–119). ‘The clitoral system does not change with adulthood, and woman preserves this erotic autonomy her whole life,’ Beauvoir contends,

but it is only indirectly linked to normal coitus, it plays no role whatsoever in procreation . . . [whereas] the vagina . . . becomes an erotic center uniquely through the intervention of the male, and this always constitutes a kind of rape.

(384)

This characterisation might strike some readers as unhelpful or polemical, but it seems to me to foreshadow some of the more conceptually messy yet necessary discussions taking place these days—not just in feminist analysis of rape and rape culture, like Gavey’s *Just Sex?*, but in ‘me too’-inflected commentary on how we should assess current dating norms and practices. (I

discuss Gavey's work on technologies of heterosexual coercion, through the particular case of an online article about a young woman's 'bad date' with 'woke' pro-feminist comedian Aziz Ansari, in Chapter 3.) These discussions of how we distinguish sex that is criminal (rape) from sex that is problematic (coercion and manipulation) and sex that, in our current understanding of consent, we think ought not be subject to reproach or condemnation are important conversations to be having in our current cultural moment. 'Me too' has revealed not just despicable behaviour on the part of powerful men, and not just appalling failures of accountability and transparency on the part of corporations and institutions who have covered for these men.¹¹ It has also revealed, even in societies whose public discourse suggests widespread acceptance of gender equality as a desirable feature of public life, the persistence of a disturbing complacency in socio-sexual norms. This complacency encourages us to identify harassment and distinctly non-consensual experiences as regrettable risks of dating in the modern world (or, in the case of non-consensual sexual activity within an intimate-partner relationship, the downside of commitment). As Gavey asks, 'what does it say about our culture(s) that there can be so much ambiguity over the differential diagnosis of rape versus sex?' (159). Noting her own efforts to think through these questions and her reluctance to simplify complex issues for the sake of being able to put forth a coherent position, she characterises the challenge of destabilising these categories of rape, coercion and consensual sex as 'an important part of the same fight [against rape] at a different level' (Gavey 159).

In this era of the 'me too' hashtag, identifications and analyses of rape culture are increasingly mainstream, but they often come to us with little exposition of the history of the term and the concept. The term 'rape culture' emerged in the context of feminist organising in the United States during the 1970s, the height of what is known in feminist history as 'Second Wave' feminism.¹² A growing feminist awareness of the pervasiveness and normalisation of rape was part of Second Wave contributions to building more gender-equal societies, and it forms the backdrop to canonical texts of the anti-rape movement, like Brownmiller's history of rape, *Against Our Will*.¹³ Brownmiller documents the phenomenon of rape as a longstanding practice of violence against women, motivated not by sexual desire, but by misogyny and men's desire to assert and maintain social dominance; however, she does not deploy the term 'rape culture' as a label for what she is describing.

As the Wikipedia entry on rape culture presents the term's history, its first uses were in a 1974 book edited by two members of the New York Radical Feminists, Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson (*Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*) and in a 1975 documentary, *Rape Culture*, that was produced and directed by Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich.¹⁴ From the mid-1970s, the term gained acceptance as a way of denoting the social attitudes that make it possible for us to live with pervasive sexual violence and to continue to deny it the status of a crisis against which we must

be mobilising. In *Just Sex?*, Gavey notes that the time elapsed between then and now has been a period of evolution from a social perception in which

rape was considered to be rare, and where complaints of rape were commonly regarded to be lies, distortions of normal sex, harmless anyway, and/or provoked by the victim . . . to more widespread concern about rape as a serious social problem.

(162)

Linda Martín Alcoff likewise opens her book, *Rape and Resistance*, with the observation that our current relation to the concept of rape culture is ‘a moment of an unprecedented social revolution’ (1). But there is still considerable debate about how much of women’s experience of male-dominated societies is actually, or appropriately subsumed under the concept of rape culture. At least in part, this is because we have come, over the course of the last five decades, to understand rape as an act of violence,¹⁵ and we don’t experience much of the relentlessly normalised cultural messaging that forms its infrastructure *as* violence. This is precisely why I want to tell an alternative story of what rape culture is, a discussion I turn to later in this chapter. The theorising of violence done in peace studies gives us resources to understand and explain violence that is latent in features and phenomena of social worlds, and which has become so sedimented that we—many of us—do not even recognise or experience it as violence.

Regardless of who we credit with coining the term, and what we agree counts as its constituent features, it is clear that Brownmiller was influential in bringing the concept of rape culture to public attention beyond communities of feminist scholars. In a recently published analysis of the possibilities and limitations for narrative politics (the telling of personal stories in the service of political activism) in ending sexual violence, legal scholar Tanya Serisier observes that Brownmiller’s book was a catalyst for the transformation of our social understanding of rape, helping to shift the topic out of a criminal justice context and reposition it as a matter for feminist struggle and feminist theorising of gender politics (8). *Against Our Will* popularised a new understanding of why someone engages in violent sexual assault; this law-breaker was not the twisted pervert that psychologists and experts in criminal behaviour had previously hypothesised, but ‘for the most part, an unextraordinary, violence-prone fellow’ (Brownmiller 180). In this Second Wave understanding, rape is not an action that men are driven to because they are mentally defective or overwhelmed by lust, passion, or the wiles of seductive women; it is intentional violence.

According to Brownmiller, drawing on sociology and criminology of the 1950s, the young men who, statistically, are most likely to be identified as perpetrators of rape are demonstrating their masculinity in the way most easily open to men of low social status: through violence (181). Powerful, socially influential men do not need to use force to get what they want, she

claims; violence is the province of the socially marginalised (Brownmiller 181). In the 1970s, this depiction was a radical shift away from perceptions of rapists as either perverts or ardent men, and Brownmiller's characterisation was supported by the crime statistics she was drawing from.¹⁶ Today, however, we are much more aware that under-reporting—of rape, generally, and of acquaintance rape and intimate-partner rape, in particular—gives us a distorted account of who the rapist is. And, of course, today, in the wake of the 'me too' revelations in the United States about culturally powerful men, like film producer Harvey Weinstein, television executive Les Moonves, and celebrities like Kevin Spacey (even the pre-'me too' revelations about then-IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn's sexual assault of a maid in a New York hotel room¹⁷), Brownmiller's contention that only the socially marginalised resort to sexual violence proves an inadequate picture.¹⁸

Part of what is so inadequate about this picture is that, even as an account of *American* history of rape culture, it is significantly and problematically partial in its inattention to the divergent experiences of women of different races.¹⁹ Within the predominantly white-liberal-feminist and radical-feminist networks of the 1970s, rape culture was an emergent idea. In African-American women's experience of American life, however, this was an old idea, as was the awareness that powerful white men are, in fact, quite willing to use violence to assert their perceived right to African-American women's bodies. There is a long history of anti-rape activism in African-American women's groups, only now beginning to be recognised in feminist histories of anti-rape struggles in the United States. As this history is recovered in, for example, historian Danielle L. McGuire's book, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*, the organising that African-American women did across the segregated southern states in the early part of the 20th century is now being credited as the ground of the civil rights movement that successfully challenged legal enshrinement of a racial hierarchy that made African-American lives, and African-American women's bodies, radically vulnerable to violence at the hands of the petty and powerful white ruling class.²⁰ This was rape culture that was openly hostile to the women who were its targets; there was none of the latent violence that is expressed as patronising and infantilising behaviours (the facet of rape culture that legal scholar Courtney Fraser discusses as 'benevolent sexism').

McGuire documents the protest and resistance campaigns and the community organising of African-American women, the tireless work against racialised sexual violence they did in churches and with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to demand equal justice under the law for African-American women who had been raped and sexually terrorised. Her account of this fight for women's bodily autonomy begins with a history of the campaign to get justice for Alabama woman Recy Taylor in the form of arrest and trial of the seven men responsible for the 1944 gang rape she suffered. But, as McGuire observes

throughout her book, African-American women's organising did not begin in the 1940s; from slavery onwards, there was 'a tradition of testimony and truth-telling' in which women claimed their basic human right to their own bodies (*At the Dark End* 35). Rape culture in the segregated American South was on display in competing narratives: the sanitising story told by the racist power structure—through mainstream cultural products like *Gone With the Wind* and *The Birth of a Nation*—of benevolent slavery, black men's alleged propensity for sexual violence, and proud white men defending white womanhood, countered by the radicalising story of 'equal justice and bodily integrity' that was brought to life by African-American community mobilisation (McGuire 28).

Although Recy Taylor never did get justice for the sexual violence she endured, the principle African-American women were fighting for—that sexual violence against black women should be treated as seriously under the law as sexual violence against white women—was finally upheld as legal precedent in 1959 when the four white rapists of Betty Jean Owens in Tallahassee, Florida were convicted and sentenced for their crime against her (McGuire 169–187). Only much later, in the mid-1970s, would Second Wave feminists take up the case of Joan Little, a North Carolina woman who killed the prison guard who had raped her. McGuire observes:

[t]he Free Joan Little campaign is often portrayed as the product of second-wave feminism, which finally enabled women to break the code of silence surrounding sexual violence and 'speak out' against rape. While this may be true for white, middle-class feminists who became active in the antirape movement in the early 1970s, African-American women had been speaking out and organizing politically against sexual violence and rape for more than a century.

(277)

The narrative used by the white power structure in the pre-civil rights movement American South exemplifies a relationship in rape culture of 'benevolent sexism' and 'hostile sexism' that legal scholar Courtney Fraser theorises as a symbiotic structure. 'Understanding these different manifestations of sexism is crucial to understanding rape culture,' she argues, 'because much of the social structure that encourages or allows sexual violence against women is, like benevolent sexism, more subtle than the misogyny that people typically associate with sexism' (147). What she distinguishes as hostile sexism is that easily identified conventional misogyny; benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is the commitment to chivalry that 'place[s] women on a pedestal and strip[s] them of agency in the process' (Fraser 143). Fraser draws on law and psychology to make the case that rape and chivalry depend on each other; it is because of the threat of rape that women are thought to need men's protection, and it is through chivalry's imputation of vulnerability and diminished agency that women are made more

vulnerable to rape—the ‘you know you want it’ justification, infamous from Robin Thicke’s 2013 hit song ‘Blurred Lines’ (145, 155).²¹

Cultural depictions of women as purer and in some ways better than men exist in tandem with more repugnant and more obvious depictions found in porn,²² crude locker-room talk, and phenomena like the ‘Burning Sun scandal,’ news reports that male celebrities from the Korean popular music (K-pop) scene are implicated in the allegedly pervasive and violent drugging, raping, and trafficking of sex workers and female nightclub-goers.²³ These pop stars, putative role models and the objects of infatuation for countless adolescent girls and young women, have been questioned by police for activities such as sharing sex videos and bragging in chat rooms about their roles in sexual assaults—obviously revolting and degrading actions that are becoming increasingly common elements of rape scandals like the Steubenville High School case that I mentioned in this book’s introduction. The activities of some men who openly engage in predation comprise a threshold for sexual violence within our societies that makes sexualised depictions of girls and women seem normal, makes women’s insecurity in public spaces look like sensible self-protection, and makes heterosexist accounts of men’s sexual dominance and women’s sexual subordination appear as the natural order of things. Rejecting attempts to normalise these elements of our social worlds, Fraser argues instead that they are features of a culture of dehumanisation. She contends: ‘[d]ehumanization, more than simple objectification, entails treating women “as a tool for men’s own purposes”’ (Fraser 152), and underscores throughout her discussion that de-agentification—even where it is motivated by a desire to protect—is dehumanisation. Rape culture is the battle many women struggle to survive on a daily basis, yes, but both forms of sexism Fraser analyses combine to ensure that it is ‘the prince’ who determines the battlefield and the terms of engagement.

Given an invitation to examine the messaging of their culture, many people—even those who have never previously considered the idea of rape culture—can easily identify ways that it erupts in their lives. Fairly early in the writing of this manuscript, I had the opportunity to guest lecture about my book project in a sociology of gender class taught by a colleague at a Japanese university.²⁴ At the end of the class, the students submitted comments responding to the guiding questions of the lecture: have you heard the expression ‘rape culture’? what does it mean to you? The dominant theme of the responses I received was consistent with data reported by another legal scholar, Fiona Vera-Gray, documenting that ‘at least 80% of women living in cities . . . have been subjected to harassment or violence in public’ (7). One female student observed, ‘I’ve been told to be careful,’ and several of them spoke of having been groped by strangers on crowded trains. These multiple references were of particular interest to me because I have often experienced the very crowded rush-hour trains in Tokyo as potentially, but not actually, violative. That these students have experienced actual

violations in the same circumstances strikes me as a function of both age and ethnicity differences; in a society marked by male dominance, the cultural expectation that young people will accede to demands made by their elders, and a sometimes uneasy incorporation of visible outsiders ('gaijin'), it is easy to see why Japanese high-school girls would be targeted and a middle-aged foreign woman would not. As Vera-Gray observes, 'the forms and frequencies of men's harassment of women may be different across the world,' but the strategies and responses that girls and women feel compelled to develop—the 'safety work' that sociologist Liz Kelly studies—constitutes a constant pressure on female persons in public spaces (12). The solution to train-groping threats that a number of these young women identified, carrying a safety pin that can be used as a defensive weapon to fend off a groping man, is a tactic that at least one Japanese woman of my own generation recalls using decades ago when she was in school.

The perception of young Japanese women and girls as available for opportunistic sexual satisfaction is reinforced by pornography, and was also referenced in one student comment in a discussion of the term 'omochikaeri.' This term, used in polite/standard Japanese when one wants to order food to take away from a restaurant, has devolved into an anime-derived meme, and slang for a one-night stand or casual 'hook-up.' Literally translated as, 'I'm taking it home with me,' and used popularly to comment on something (or someone) the speaker evaluates as 'kawaii' (cute), it has become a term for casual sex that the student noted 'will easily be rape.' This is because, as a number of other student responses testified, Japanese cultural socialisation is such that even though women know—in theory—they have a right to refuse sexual advances, they are hesitant to do so because it is perceived as rude or offensive.

Another student wrote, 'I have agreed to things I didn't want in order to keep myself safe [on] multiple occasions, and the fact that male counterparts do not feel that danger or pressure to conform *is* the patriarchy.' Yet another student, who characterised women saying no as 'dangerous,' concluded that 'people don't care much about women.' Vera-Gray contends that the reason we don't 'see the full impact of the sexual harassment of women . . . [is] because we've separated out safety from freedom and are only measuring the former' (16). However, when we think about freedom and safety together, she says, we realise that one common strategy women use to stay safe is to relinquish freedom: we stay home instead of going out in public, we stick together in groups and do things like deputising one of our group to stay at the table in a bar and watch our drinks when others of us head to the bathroom or the dance floor. '[I]n women's lives, the two [freedom and safety] work *together*' but in inverse relationship, such that we accept as necessary giving up one in order to claim the other (Vera-Gray 16, emphasis in original).

What I think stands out most clearly in this Second Wave story of rape culture is that hatred of women—misogyny—is not an accident of messaging.

It is, in fact, one defining characteristic. Patriarchal misogyny and chivalry, theorised by Fraser as an inseparable symbiosis, form the ground out of which rape culture manifests and reveal it as a system of social control. Rape culture is the casual and pervasive presentation of women's bodies as both territory and commodity. Rape culture is also the relentless normalising of a masculinity governed by a 'conquest mentality' and a femininity that is enacted through feigned resistance to being conquered, which we all know will only be a prelude to eventual submission. Recalling Brownmiller's characterisation of rape as grounded not in desire for sex but in hatred of women (391), and considering anthropologist Kathleen Gough's inventory of the economic, political, and cultural respects in which women, across cultures, have been subordinated to men (69–70)—an account Adrienne Rich draws on to explain how compulsory heterosexuality is imposed on women—it becomes clear that rape culture is the set of social relations that emerges from an ideological commitment to the view that women exist to be used by men. Without the belief that women are *for* men and inferior to them, we would not have cultural practices that are so dismissive of whether a woman is saying yes or no—a point that I here intend to be about sexual consent, but applies equally to housework, pregnancy, underpaid labour in the workforce, emotional support, and all the other ways in which women are expected to serve men's interests without ever being asked (or ever questioning) whether those interests coincide with our own. Rape culture is, at its core, a training manual for *how* to be sexual—one that encourages men and women to harm, disrespect, dislike, and distrust each other. It needs therefore to be rewritten.

What structural violence is: *the ivory tower view of the battlefield*

One of the resources I think we can and should draw on in the project of reconceptualising rape culture is the canonical theory of violence that has been produced within the academic discipline known as peace studies. This theory, described by feminist peace studies theorist Catia Confortini as 'a unified framework within which all violence can be seen' (333), was first articulated by Johan Galtung, founder of the discipline as an academic field of study, in a 1969 journal article, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,' and was expanded in a 1990 follow-up, 'Cultural Violence.' In the discussion that ranges across these two articles, Galtung develops a theory that links the violence we typically recognise quite easily—'direct violence,' which may be physical or psychological, but is always initiated by individuals or groups of individuals—to forms of violence that are normalised as social institutions and structures ('structural violence') or as broader, 'big picture' cultural forces ('cultural violence'), thereby going unnamed *as* violence. These three forms of violence interact, co-produce, and justify each other such that, in his 1990 explication, Galtung speaks of them as a triangle of

violence ('Cultural Violence' 294). '[P]ersonal violence [what Galtung labels "direct violence"] is violence *with* a subject [initiating agent], structural violence is violence *without* a subject, and cultural violence serves as legitimization of both personal and structural violence,' explains Confortini in her analysis of what a feminist-theory reading adds to Galtung's theory of violence (336).²⁵

I think it is clear that all of the facets of our social organisation commonly identified as 'rape culture'—not only the pervasive fear of sexual violence among women and girls, but sexual commodification and objectification of women and girls, and coercive prescriptions of gender binaries and particular forms of heterosexuality—comprise a structural violence that harms us all as people, even if and where we do fail to see it as violence. And I think this structural violence of rape culture can be understood as produced by the cultural violence that is the ideological commitment to misogyny, chivalry, and the devaluation of men and women who live outside of prescribed gender scripts. The structural violence of rape culture enacts the cultural violence of patriarchy such that it becomes the 'reality' that proves the truth of patriarchal thinking. And, of course, they both work together to produce as unfortunate but inevitable, and therefore ineradicable, the direct violence that is rape and the other forms of interpersonal sexual aggression.

My argument that rape culture is a structural violence nourished by the cultural violence of patriarchal ideology depends, of course, on clear delineation of both Galtung's theory and the need to filter it through a gendered analysis, as Sandra Bartky does with Michel Foucault's articulation of disciplinary power. Galtung sees all forms of violence 'as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to *life*,' because each of them functions in an individual's life to produce conditions of existence, and consequent abilities to meet our own basic needs, that are less than they might be ('Cultural Violence' 292, emphasis in original). He identifies culture as 'the symbolic sphere of our existence' and cultural violence as the aspects of that sphere 'that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence' ('Cultural Violence' 291).²⁶ Confortini notes, however, that his theorising proceeds without recognition of the ways that social structures are gendered. In her view, a feminist approach 'contributes to Galtung's theory by seriously tackling issues of power and gender, which are essential to an understanding of violence as a complicated process through which social relations of power are built, legitimized, reproduced, and naturalized' (356). It achieves this understanding, she explains,

[b]y viewing gender as a social construct . . . [which] dispels the myth of a peaceful or peace-prone femininity (and correspondingly a warrior or war-prone masculinity). We are then able to see that a variety of masculinities and femininities exist, which experience violence in different terms and from different positions of power.

(Confortini 356)

But, without a feminist corrective, we are left with, and within, social/cultural relations that privilege ways of life in which men lead and women follow, ways of life in which men make war and women make peace—relations that enact violence in the form of imposed gender identities.

Because it serves as justification, '[c]ultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right,' Galtung observes ('Cultural Violence' 291). It does this in a number of ways, one of which is 'by changing the moral color of an act'—as in, 'a cat-call is a compliment; it means he finds you attractive.' Another is by 'making reality opaque, so that we do not see the violent act or fact' (Galtung, 'Cultural Violence' 292). We learn, through cultural training and desensitisation, to see dehumanisation, exploitation, and repression as normal—or, better still, we learn to not see them at all (Galtung, 'Cultural Violence' 295). Galtung details a number of processes by which cultural violence presents structural violence as an acceptable and unremarkable reality, but the three I think most relevant to my discussion of rape culture are 'penetration,' 'marginalisation,' and 'fragmentation' ('Cultural Violence' 249). The unintentionally aptly-named penetration is a process of consciousness-formation in which the values and perspectives of a dominant group (the 'topdog,' in Galtung's parlance) are 'implanted' in the minds of a subordinate group (the 'underdog'). Marginalisation is a process of 'keeping the underdogs on the outside,' which he understands to be frequently combined with fragmentation, a process of 'keeping the underdogs away from each other' ('Cultural Violence' 294).

While Galtung says nothing to suggest that he is familiar with Simone de Beauvoir's work, this does seem to me to be a pretty good way of understanding the arguments she makes in *The Second Sex* about the ways in which girls and women are trained (socialised) into seeing ourselves as the 'inessential Other,' the add-on, to the male subject, for whom the world is made into a field of conquest (5–7). The 'archetypal violent structure . . . has exploitation as a center-piece,' Galtung contends; 'some, the topdogs, get much more . . . out of the interaction in the structure than others, the underdogs' ('Cultural Violence' 293). Applied to gender, this *is* the definition of patriarchy as an ordering of our social world in which men are superior to women. Betty A. Reardon, whose early, inaugural work in feminist peace studies asserts a relationship between sexism and the organised, state-directed violence that she theorises as 'the war system' (10), defines patriarchy as a society in which 'men are conditioned to play winners and women losers' (37). In a 'competitive social order' in which control and dominance are 'submerged in cultural norms, traditional myths, and political ideologies' (Reardon 10–11), we will find patriarchal cultural violence everywhere, and nowhere—for it is, as Galtung notes, precisely the case that we are raised to not see the violence that plays out, and is internalised as, devaluing of women.

There is a convergence of Galtung's cultural violence, Reardon's sexist-patriarchal culture blinded by its own myths, and Beauvoir's social

construction of the feminine experience in the way this internalisation of contempt appears in women—as self-hatred, deep-seated insecurity about one’s value, the willingness to rationalise poor treatment by others, heightened tendencies to suffer depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem, etc. This internalised cultural devaluation is reinforced by the structural violence that is women’s experience of rape culture: the reinforcement of cultural hierarchies and value-judgements through media messaging, corporate directives, and peer/family pressure on matters as diverse as one’s dating, mating, and reproductive choices and the extent to which one is free (or not) to perform femininity in one’s workplace (e.g. by not wearing make-up; see Bartky 138–139). I defined structural violence in my introduction, borrowing from Galtung’s words, as ‘violence [that] is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’ (‘Violence, Peace’ 171). It should be obvious when we look at facets of our social structures—like the gendered wage gap, the dominance of men in political representation and corporate leadership, and the disparate scrutiny of men’s and women’s behaviours and personal appearance in public spaces—that unequal power and unequal life chances are gendered (as well as raced and classed).

Galtung’s project of (re)defining violence is driven by his conviction that the commonly intuited definition—‘physical harm caused by an identifiable actor with *mens rea*—excludes too much’ (Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace’ 168). One key element of the expanded understanding he offers is that violence need not be committed by a defined subject; in defining the phenomenon as the causal explanation of the difference between actual and potential realisations (how much of ‘what we are capable of’ our society gives us opportunities to achieve), he is thinking of avoidable negative outcomes like starvation and illiteracy *as* violence (Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace’ 168–169).²⁷ He is also thinking of avoidable inequality and the unequal power to decide as instances of violence (Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace’ 171), precisely the features of social organisation that, when gendered, mark a society as patriarchal.

Structural violence is thus what many of us are more inclined to speak of as social injustice (Galtung himself notes these are synonymous terms (‘Violence, Peace’ 171). It is violence (rather than just bad luck or misfortune, and also as opposed to natural disaster) because it *could* have been otherwise; we could have organised our social structures in ways that did not disadvantage those who suffer—or could have organised them in ways that minimise the suffering—but we simply did not bother to make those changes. It is precisely because rape culture meets these two conditions defining the peace-studies conception of structural violence—the diminishment of an identifiable group’s life chances and the could-have-been-otherwise nature of that deprivation—that I use the term ‘sexual violence’ as the expansive/inclusive category into which I fold my discussions throughout the book of various facets of rape culture. Sexual assault (rape), sexual coercion, sexual

harassment, and the sometimes brutally repressive imposition of male dominance and female subordination (gender socialisation) are not interchangeable concepts and are not reducible into each other, but they do all function as aspects of the social relations theorised as rape culture and they are all recognisable within a peace-studies framework as the direct violences that cultures and structures render as inexplicable, inevitable, or ‘not that bad.’ They are all ‘that bad,’ in that each of them makes it vastly more difficult for the person who experiences them to face their social world with confidence that their value as a human being will be affirmed and respected. Labelling all of them ‘sexual violence’ enables the conceptual context that Galtung deploys in his redefinition of violence.

In addition to insisting that social forces and social processes of organisation can be agents of violence—that intentionality is not a necessary condition—Galtung also wants to include in his expansive concept both physical and psychological manifestations, and both latent and manifest forms: implicit or imminent threats to destabilise are, for instance, a form of violence (‘Violence, Peace’ 169, 172). Just as it is not necessary to have a defined subject initiating a harm or deprivation for it to count as violence, so too the harm or deprivation does not require a defined object (Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace’ 170). A lie no one believes, or is expected to believe, can be an act of violence, as can the burning down of a shop that has not been targeted but is nonetheless destroyed in a rage-filled protest. Rape, a threat that women live with and because of which we (many of us, at any rate) modify and constrain our behaviours in public or sexualised spaces, even if the actual crime is one we never experience personally, is an example of violence that has no defined subject (there is no council of patriarchal elders that plots and implements rape culture) and has no (obviously) defined object.²⁸ It matters that we see rape culture through Galtung’s lens because one of the core features of his theorising is that structural violence is a chosen, could-have-been-otherwise, set of social relations. Because it is chosen, it is therefore changeable.

This theoretical view of the violence that is rape culture might, with reason, be criticised as a view from ‘the ivory tower’ of peace studies. Indeed, if the analysis were left there, that would be precisely the criticism I would level against it. But that is not where I want to leave the matter. As an academic discipline, peace studies is valuable for its ability to give us a broad overview of both how we need to understand the violence we are dealing with and what peace-building models might lead to social transformation, but it needs to be joined, as Confortini urges, with a feminist-theoretical analysis of how violence and peace-building show up ‘on the ground’ of rape culture. The common ground of feminism and peace studies lies in the potential each discipline has to sharpen and enrich the insights of the other (Confortini 334). Specifically, it is the conceptual capacity to grasp and critique the ‘logic of domination’ that represents a significant point of overlap between feminist theory and peace studies, claim feminist theorist

Karen J. Warren and peace theorist Duane Cady in their analysis of shared frameworks of the two disciplines (5). In the context of sexual violence, peace studies has the capacity to give us a deeper and clearer understanding of the (structural) violence embedded in rape culture and the (cultural) violence that produces it, as supplements to the work feminist theory has done to reveal the violence of rape itself.

Confortini offers the insight that violence can be exercised in positive and negative forms: as rewards for obedience, as well as punishments (337). Applying this insight to rape culture, we can see the sexism that Courtney Fraser distinguished as chivalry (benevolent sexism) and misogyny (hostile sexism) aligning with Fiona Vera-Gray's articulation of the choice women face in public space as one of safety or freedom. If one conforms to the patriarchal/masculinist structuring of public space as a place in which women should choose safety—often by choosing to not be there—then one is accorded the protection that chivalry prescribes for 'good women.' If one chooses freedom, one runs the risk of misogynistic violence as the cost of being a 'bad woman.'

Looking at structural violence as a phenomenon that manifests as 'avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs' (Ho 1), we can see that the human needs avoidably impaired by rape culture include the need for bodily autonomy, the need for healthy self-esteem, the need for self-actualisation (as opposed to having gender roles and scripts imposed upon us), and the need for social relations grounded in mutuality and respect. Anthropologist Mary K. Anglin's feminist approach to structural violence is helpful here because her presentation of the many forms this violence takes also reveals the many violations of what Kathleen Ho characterises as fundamental human needs. Like Galtung and Ho, Anglin wants to move beyond a narrow conception of violence as overt harm or damage. Relevant to the needs I list here, she draws our attention to

expropriation of vital economic and non-material resources . . . operation of systems of social stratification or categorization that subvert people's chances for survival . . . imposition of categories of difference that legitimate hierarchy and inequality . . . [and denial of] the opportunity for emotional and physical well-being.

(Anglin 145)

All of these exclusions and impositions produce 'structural violence that is normalized and accepted as part of the "status quo";' she notes, 'but that [normalised violence] is experienced as injustice and brutality at particular intersections of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, gender, and age' (Anglin 145–146).

Recognising this fact that injustices are experienced disproportionately by some groups because of their identity characteristics, and are invisible to members of other groups, international organisations like the United

Nations have been working over the last few decades to foreground, and mandate attention to, perspectives that have historically been overlooked or disregarded. For instance, the UN Security Council's landmark resolution on women, peace, and security (S/RES/1325) calls upon all UN agencies and personnel involved in peace and security initiatives to incorporate gendered perspectives, to recognise the particular gendered vulnerabilities that civilian populations face in war zones and during refugee crises, and addresses the specific issue of rape as gender-based violence.²⁹ We need, of course, to acknowledge, as Anglin does, that speaking of gender-based violence or of violence as having gendered structures does not mean that violence—even sexual violence—only happens to women; what it does mean is that we need to be aware of 'the differential effects of coercive processes on women and men, girls and boys' (Anglin 147).

In the context of Confortini's more recent thinking about the overlap of feminism and peace studies, it is instructive to consider the views that shaped earlier efforts to synthesise the two disciplines. Reardon, for example, argues that we need to put peace studies and feminist theory in conversation with each other because of her feminist conviction 'that sexism is the most pervasive and most fundamental problem of world order—indeed, of human social evolution—because it is a root cause of violence, especially socially sanctioned violence' (5). That latter view, that sexism, or the patriarchy, is *the* most fundamental problem facing human communities is a claim I find implausible. I think—indeed, I am arguing throughout this chapter—that patriarchal misogyny-chivalry constructs (that I discussed in the previous section in the context of Courtney Fraser's work) are the cultural violence that produces the structural violence that is rape culture, but I also think we need to recognise that both cultural and structural violences take many forms: race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and identity, age, physical and mental (dis)ability, and a host of other grounds we have for deciding that some people have less value than others.

The thesis that sexism is the foundation of violence has two implications we should reject out of hand: it renders these other bases of oppression and marginalisation invisible, and it essentialises a single monolithic 'woman's nature'—a false view that renders the diversity among women invisible. Neither is it the case that women are any more naturally desirous of, or even necessarily more socio-culturally inclined to, peace than are men, as Confortini makes clear in her overview of earlier feminist peace-studies scholarship. Accepting such views encourages the belief that that if we could just end patriarchy, all of the other allegedly subordinate oppressions would wither away in the wake of that victory.

Confortini's rejection of the view that sexism is *the* feminist priority is reminiscent of bell hooks's discussion of 'the politics of domination' in one of her early works of feminist theory, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. The essay in which she discusses this politics, 'Feminism: A Transformational Politic,' argues that if we need to identify an oppression

that is most fundamental, the most obvious place to look is in our family units. We learn domination in the same way, and in the same place, we learn love, she argues: from our parents and caretakers (hooks 21). In some respects, I find hooks' analysis of domination a more useful way to think about the issue of patriarchy and rape culture: we typically understand domination more broadly and recognise it more frequently than what we identify as violence. This, of course, is Galtung's point about the normalisation of cultural and structural violences; we don't see them *as violence* because we are raised in a social context in which those who have power over us are seen as entitled to exercise that power. And, as hooks observes in another essay from that same book, 'Violence in Intimate Relationships: A Feminist Perspective,' one pernicious effect of learning this politics of domination in the family is the way in which we carry it through our adult lives—living it out in our own parenting and relationship styles, in some cases, or sharing our childhood harms with intimate partners in ways that effectively provide them with scripts or models they might use to inflict their own damage (85–86).

In his analysis of cultural violence, Galtung tells us that

massive direct violence over centuries seeps down and sediments as massive structural violence . . . After some time, direct violence is forgotten, [structural violence like] slavery is forgotten, and only two labels show up, pale enough for college textbooks: 'discrimination' for massive structural violence and 'prejudice' for massive cultural violence.

(295)

These pale labels—the sanitising of language—are, of course, another way cultural violence operates (Galtung, 'Cultural Violence' 295). We can see both the 'pale label' version of history and a version that openly names violence in the incisive origin stories Catharine MacKinnon offers in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. The stories she tells illustrate two theories about how we came to be living in patriarchal, gender-hierarchical societies, how it got decided that men should rule over women. The first story tells us that, 'on the first day, difference was; on the second day, a division was created upon it; [and] on the third day, irrational instances of dominance arose' (MacKinnon 34). This story, that MacKinnon decisively rejects, naturalises gender hierarchy, and presents it as a fundamental discovery of early humans: we just *are* so very different that we need to have the social division (gender roles) that just appeared on the second day, and these roles have just happened, on the third day, to fall into a problematic hierarchy that is with us still.

The hidden politics and veiled violence of this story is such that feminist theory is encouraged to expend its efforts on the issue of whether the 'third day' dominance is justified or whether the 'second day' division is rational; the field is also discouraged from challenging the 'first day' premise that

gender is a difference pre-existing and shaping human social organisation.³⁰ The second origin story, the ‘dominance’ view of gender hierarchy (the story MacKinnon endorses), tells us that

on the first day that matters, dominance was achieved, probably by force. By the second day, division along the same lines had to be relatively firmly in place. On the third day, . . . differences were demarcated, together with social systems to exaggerate them.

(40)

Here we can see through the pale labels of the ‘difference’ view, to a struggle for power that took place so long ago that there is very little history of gender relations that does not impose patriarchal roles and scripts upon us.³¹ MacKinnon’s stories help us see that what many of us take to be a natural and therefore unassailable difference is the outcome of a violent power grab. And the particular contribution I see in adopting a peace-studies lens from which to view rape culture is its revelation of domination as congealed violence.

Further support for MacKinnon’s ‘dominance’ story can be gleaned from Gillian Youngs’s history of the ways in which feminist international relations is challenging masculinist assumptions that structure mainstream thinking (she calls it ‘malestream’ thinking) in the academic discipline of international relations. ‘The history of state formation and identity is . . . one of gendered (and other forms of) oppression,’ she tells us (Youngs 81). ‘At least since Aristotle, the codification of man as “master” [subject] and woman as “matter” [object] has powerfully naturalized/de-politicized man’s exploitation of women, other men, and nature’ (Youngs 81)—relations that Galtung’s theory would classify as cultural violence. And we can see what his theory would classify as structural violence in Youngs’s quotation of another international relations theorist, V. Spike Peterson: ‘Masculinist dominance is institutionalised by the “sovereignty contract” and the “sexual contract” of modern European state-making’ (Peterson, quoted in Youngs 83). The state, its social institutions, and social structures manifest the gendered dominance that MacKinnon hypothesises was achieved by force, and does so in ways that appear natural or inevitable rather than violent.

Why we fail to see the violence: *the princess’s rose-coloured glasses*

To varying extents, we are all the princess, looking out at the world through rose-coloured glasses and failing to see the forms of violence that continue to structure our social relations. One of the most difficult things we can ask of another human being, I think, is to correctly identify and analyse the social environment in which they are embedded. This is not because we are dumb, or cowardly, or lazy; it is because of the nature of human understanding. We

see things most clearly when we can stand apart from them and inspect them ‘from the outside,’ so to speak—a condition of epistemological experience that de Beauvoir is referencing when she observes that ‘alterity is the fundamental category of human thought’ (6). The experience of alterity, of being other than the thing one is analysing, crucially involves what is sometimes called critical distance. Distance, whether spatial or temporal,³² reveals the contexts in which we live by making them strange where they had once been familiar: this is why we can look back at our past selves in an earlier time or in a different society and gain insight about our surroundings that we simply were not capable of having at the time. If we did not have the capacity to recognise things (including our past selves) as other to our (present) selves, we would exist in worlds that are undifferentiated masses, like a giant lump of Play-Doh. Another way to say this is: without a capacity to understand through differentiation, we would not be able to demonstrate (self-) consciousness.

In making this point, I do not mean to suggest that we can never know the cultures or social worlds in which we are currently embedded. Nor do I mean to suggest that there is something exceptional about people who have analysed, and can criticise, their worlds contemporaneously. It is work that we are capable of doing, but we need, first, to choose to do it and, second, to get a ‘foothold’ that will give us a way into this process of gaining the critical distance that gives us perspective. Thinking of what sorts of things can be those footholds, I want to suggest that events that rupture the social fabric and refuse to be narratively assimilated, events taking place in an aspect of culture we feel alienated from,³³ and events we recognise as repetitions or parts of a pattern are the most likely candidates. In this book’s introduction I spoke of having lived in rape culture for decades before I realised that this was part of the backdrop of my life. I think I needed all of these types of events to bring me to my own realisation: the vicious and fatal rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey was the incident I found myself struggling with, incapable of processing into a story that made sense; the Steubenville and Daisy Coleman rapes took place in the United States, a country in which I lived at the time but—living there as a Canadian—felt very culturally detached from; and all three of them, together with the fatal rape of Anene Booysen in South Africa, happened so close together in time that they just seemed to fall into a pattern of violence against women I could no longer *not* see. I still don’t quite know, though, why and how I could have heard of all the other rape cases before them without identifying to myself the existence of rape culture. That is why I describe my pre-realisation life, the ‘before,’ as living in a dream.

Having woken, I see the structural violence of rape culture now, and I see that what I had always recognised in my world as a latent social contempt for and disparagement of women is more than contempt; it is an underlying hatred. This hatred of women, misogyny, is part of the cultural violence I discussed in the previous section as the ground of rape culture. It is difficult to tell a coherent story about how one comes to suddenly see

something obvious that had previously been outside one's frame of conscious awareness, but part of how I came to a (re)constructed awareness of the normalised misogyny in so many of our cultures is through the critical and activist voices of feminist thinkers I have read over the years. In trying to put the story together, I find myself filtering Brownmiller's analysis of rape as misogynistic violence not just through the more recent work I have been drawing on throughout this chapter, but also through work I read when I was much younger and that I now realise has marked my thinking about the status of women in the cultures I have lived in. For me, two formative influences are Margaret Atwood, Canadian author of the feminist dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Australian feminist Germaine Greer, whose major work, *The Female Eunuch*, I first read at 15 years old and did not read again until my late 40s.³⁴

Brownmiller, in dissecting some of the more baffling legal attitudes towards rape—police officers, for example, tend not to dismiss burglary or theft complaints as 'he said—she said' disagreements in the way they do with rape—notes that there is a 'disparity in thought' that makes 'male logic' about rape a very different thing from 'female logic' (377). This perception of social narratives as partial, incomplete, and dismissive of truths women tell about our lives is reflected in what is probably, in this global 'me too' moment, the most frequently quoted line of Atwood's oeuvre: 'men are afraid women will laugh at them, women are afraid men will kill them.'³⁵ And then there is Greer's analysis of misogyny and patriarchy, dating to 1971. My enduring memory of my first reading of that book was her observation towards the end that 'women have very little idea of how much men hate them' (249).

It is deeply shocking and destabilising to accord any truth to Greer's claim and then go on living with, working with, socialising with these people who (might) hate you. Even though fear might well be, as feminist literary critic Elaine Showalter contends, 'a logical response to a society in which women are genuinely in danger' (171), it is much less functional than denial. If we can convince ourselves that Showalter and Greer are wrong, or are talking about cultures other than the one in which we find ourselves, we can go on living out the polite social fictions we have been taught. The question of why we would want to do that—to go on living in a world that is hostile, dangerous, and, as a student I quoted earlier in this chapter observed, doesn't care much about women, and to remain unaware of what is confronting us—is explored in Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex* of the fundamental deforming of female-identifying human beings within patriarchal worldviews. We are profoundly shaped by the norms and expectations of our societies, she argues; the social norm of accepting men as full-fledged Subjects, and treating any female deviation from the male norm as evidence of women's diminished entitlement to recognition as autonomous human adults, produces a distorted social world in which women's passivity is presented as the polite and appropriate response to men's sexualised attention and microaggressions in public space. In short, we ignore the violence because it would be rude not to.

Rape culture's misdirection of our thinking about gender relations depends upon the acceptance of traditional gender roles that, for many, help define cultural or religious identities, and depends upon the justifications of women's commodification offered by rape culture's apologists, the 'pick-up artists,' 'incels,' and so-called men's rights activists. Their justifications all build on the expectation that women will be men's means to conquering the natural world, that we will be the challenge, the prize, and the 'soft place to fall,' as needed. Expectation, inculcated in both men *and* women, that women will be (must be) oriented towards meeting men's 'needs' (read: desires) results in the relentless prioritising of men's interests and preferences and the discounting of women's interests and preferences. As my research assistant on this project, Monica Thomas, observed in a discussion tangential to this book, 'men are taught to be *for something*; women are taught to be *for someone*.' Rape culture's misdirection also characterises discourses in which acquaintance rape and date rape are normalised, discussions in which the question of *which* non-consensual sexual relations count as 'legitimate rape' are taken seriously.

Unquestioned normalisation of sexual practices that meet our cultural understanding of what produces men's sexual satisfaction and an often equally unquestioned belief that women should strive to meet men's sexual needs are both generally agreed to be socially constructed, things we could bring to an end. (This is why rape culture is a structural violence.) We choose not to because the subordination of women to men and the erasure of women's sexual autonomy—a system that feminist poet and essayist Adrienne Rich theorises as 'compulsory heterosexuality'—helps make coherent a social hierarchy in which the putatively strong rule over the putatively weak. Showalter notes that 'women as a group are so conditioned to the victim's role, and so far from attempting any kind of violence, even in self-defense, that [our] expanded awareness of sex crimes only increases [our] sense of helplessness, vulnerability, and fear' (166). This is the learned helplessness that structural violence produces; we can't fight the system, so we resort to hoping it doesn't happen to us. I would add that women's personal experiences of sex crimes tend to only increase any pre-existing feelings of shame and unworthiness, because of the cultural violence inherent in messages that the victim, not the perpetrator, is the damaged party.

In a discussion of why people deny violence of all kinds, feminist queer theorist Sara Ahmed points out that people who identify the existence of violence tend to be blamed for causing the violence they are bringing to the attention of others. 'Feminists are not calling for violence,' she argues:

We are calling for an end to the institutions that promote and naturalize violence. Much violence that is promoted by institutions is concealed by the very use of stranger danger . . . the assumption that violence only ever originates with outsiders. It is because we expose violence that we are heard as violent, as if the violence of which we speak originates with us.

(Ahmed 253)

It is also the case, I think, that because we expose violence, *we* are heard as outsiders. To speak of rape culture as a violence that permeates one's society is to be blamed for making others see something they would rather not see, and therefore, to be made to feel like an attacker of the society one hopes to reform. After all, if we admitted that the violence exists, we would have to do something about it, and that seems like an overwhelming problem, one that would in turn cause us to be alienated from the society that would rather not see.

Turning now from the structural violence that is rape culture to the direct violence that is rape, there are some very good reasons here, too, to deny rape as a standard feature of reality. One of those reasons is that we, as individuals, often fail to understand a crucial distinction—the difference between arousal and consent—because our societies do not provide us with the conceptual or discursive resources to recognise that distinction. When I was teaching in the United States, I would, from time to time, raise this issue in classes touching on sexual ethics or in extracurricular workshops, typically in the context of students trying to make sense out of the idea that a woman could rape a man. The suggestion that this could be the case was and is often met with incredulous disbelief,³⁶ but it is a very obvious distinction. Any sexual activity that is not mutually consented to³⁷ can be understood as a violation of the party that has not consented, and many of those activities are classified legally (depending on the jurisdiction in question³⁸) as sexual assault (rape). Consent is a psychological state; it happens in the mind of each individual, and crucially requires the person who is consenting to convey that state of mind to their partner—in words or in utterly unambiguous behaviour. Conversely, the withholding of consent is also best conveyed in word or unambiguous gesture, but here we need to be sensitive to all of the reasons why someone either might not consent and might not convey that they are not consenting (one might be unconscious, or be convinced that withholding consent is shameful or dangerous³⁹), or might not be capable of giving genuine consent (one might be intoxicated, and therefore incapable of the clear-minded judgement that consent requires).

But, as anyone who has a body has probably had occasion to realise, bodies are weird. Sometimes they do things that our minds do not command, or accord with. Arousal is one of those things: it is physiological, not psychological. A body—male or female—can exhibit arousal, and can function sexually, without the mind connected to that body issuing its consent. A sex partner who takes note of the state of arousal in their partner's body and assumes that this arousal means their partner is consenting is potentially making a huge mistake. We might, perhaps, not always want to call this mistake 'rape,' in every case, but it is always a troubling instance of non-consensual sex. Knowing that there can be arousal without consent—and, of course, consent without arousal—helps us to be more aware of the many pitfalls on the path to the bedroom.

To avoid those pitfalls, we need language for sex that distinguishes arousal ('I'm ready,' says my body) from desire ('I want,' says my mind).

When we don't have that language, and the arousal–consent distinction it presupposes, we don't know that we are making these very serious errors in judgement about whether our partners are truly, fully 'there' with us in the way that I think most of us *do* really want a partner to be. In such cases, we can see ourselves as suffering a version of what virtue epistemologist Miranda Fricker theorises as 'hermeneutical injustice.'⁴⁰ Fricker defines this as the harm suffered when one is disadvantaged by a force one does not have the epistemic resources to name (6). Someone who is doing what I described in the previous paragraph—having sex in circumstances in which they take signs of arousal (their own *or* a partner's) to be signs of consent—is the victim, and potentially the unwitting perpetrator, of a hermeneutic injustice of rape culture. The person who experiences arousal but has not assented to the sexual encounter may find themselves deeply ambivalent about that encounter; it strikes me as reasonable to think that at some level of consciousness this person feels pushed into the encounter, subjected to something rather than being a willing partner to it, even as they categorise it as consensual (because of the acknowledged arousal that is being mistakenly read as consent). Lacking awareness of the arousal–consent distinction, this person can 'know' (intuit) that there was something not right about the encounter, but cannot identify—or explain to others—what that troubling feature was. Repeated over time, this experience can lead someone to conclude that they have some deep-seated personal problem with sex—or, perhaps more concerning, can lead that person to normalise this type of encounter as just 'what it is to have sex' and to never realise that it is importantly non-consensual. And, of course, lacking awareness of this distinction, this person is at real and immediate risk of becoming a harm to others when they mistake *their* signs of arousal for consent.

Yet another reason we have for denying that rape is a standard feature of reality is explained by the other type of epistemic injustice that Fricker considers: testimonial injustice. She characterises this as 'the primary form of epistemic injustice' and defines it as 'prejudice on the hearer's part [that] causes him to give the speaker less credibility than he would otherwise have given' (Fricker 4). '[T]he point of any operation of social power,' she tells us, 'is *to effect social control* . . . [and] it always has an object whose actions are being controlled' (Fricker 13, emphasis in original). When this power invokes some shared conception of social identity, it is 'identity power' (Fricker 14) which, in a patriarchal society, may be gendered. Illustrating this notion of identity power through discussion of a screenplay (*The Talented Mr Ripley*) in which the plot turns on a man's refusal to believe a woman's suspicion about who has murdered the man's missing son, Fricker asserts that

exercise of gender identity power is active when, for instance, a man makes (possibly unintended) use of his identity as a man to influence a woman's actions—for example, to make her defer to his word. He

might, for instance, patronize her and get away with it in virtue of the fact that he is a man and she is a woman.

(14)

In communicative exchanges that involve one person offering their testimony to others, those who are hearing the testimony have to assess whether they think the testifier is credible (Fricker 18); injustice results when we deploy stereotypes or prejudices that affect those assessments. Here, in this concept of testimonial injustice, we can see how the cultural violence that is patriarchy results in a culture in which ‘we’ (some of us) don’t see rape at all: in addition to the hermeneutic injustice that disrupts our ability to identify particular encounters as non-consensual, we typically accord less credibility to women and more credibility to men. In the ‘he said–she said’ that so much police investigation, public opinion, and personal judgement is reduced to, his words are more credible than hers.

Fricker contends that ‘our everyday moral discourse lacks a well-established understanding of the wrong that is done to someone’ who suffers testimonial injustice (40). ‘The idea that . . . testimonial injustice constitutes an ethical wrong that can be non-trivial, even profoundly damaging, and even systematically connected with other forms of injustice in society, is not much appreciated,’ she says (Fricker 40). Not being believed when one offers testimony about something one has experienced is very definitely not a trivial matter; she is utterly correct on that point. As she explains, our capacities to give and receive knowledge are significant aspects of reason—and rationality, the ability to exercise reason—has long been identified in philosophy as the source of human value. ‘To be wronged in one’s capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value’ (Fricker 44). It is, in effect, a way of calling a person’s status as a human being into question, and, says Fricker, ‘in contexts of oppression the powerful will be sure to undermine the powerless in just that capacity [their rationality], for it provides a direct route to undermining them in their very humanity’ (44). This is precisely what the cultural over-valuing of men and under-valuing of women does. We tell girls and women they should wait to be chosen by men, we encourage them to go along with what the man wants, and then—when politeness leads them in to dangerous situations—we qualify and constrain their right to construct their own narrative (e.g. the unwillingness of some people to identify their experiences as ‘rape’), which simply reinforces the fundamental subordinated Otherness, the unimportance, of women’s experiences. We cannot even be trusted as story-tellers of our own experiences?

Really?

Coda: culture-jamming *Cinderella*’s structural violence

What’s wrong with this story: Cinderella is not cared for by anyone with the means to help her realise her potential and make her own decisions

about how her life takes shape. She is abandoned to exploitation by her stepmother. This lack of resources and choices makes marriage to some man she doesn't even know the only path out of a life of servitude. And to even get *that* chance at a different life, she needs the magical intercession of a fairy godmother.⁴¹ Why? It doesn't have to be that way.

What if the story unfolded this way instead?

Once upon a time, there was a girl whose father loved her very much and tried his best to ensure that she had some security in an uncertain world. She was an only child whose mother had died when she was very young, and her father worried that she needed the influence of women in her life. So it was, he thought, a blessing for them both when he met and fell in love with a woman who had two daughters only slightly older than his own. He married this woman and she became his little girl's stepmother. Her daughters became his little girl's stepsisters.

But, being a prudent and thoughtful man, he realised that this blended family might not give his daughter everything he wanted for her. He decided that she needed to have access to wealth of her own, in the event that the future unfolded differently than he hoped it would, and so he drew up a will that both provided for his new wife and set aside a lump sum of money for his daughter when she came of age. The little girl wept when he told her of his financial arrangements and swore that they were unnecessary, for she could not bear to think of a world without her father. She was only consoled when he hugged her, wiped away her tears, and explained to her that this inheritance was something she would get when she came of age, regardless of what the family circumstances were at the time. The inheritance was to be the mark of her having attained adulthood; it was a recognition by her loving father that, like all persons, she needed her own resources with which she could build her own future.

As sometimes happens in an uncertain world, the girl found herself fatherless shortly thereafter, and totally under the control of her stepmother who had grown to bitterly resent the girl her late husband had loved so much. In anger and spite she ruthlessly exploited the girl, turning her into the household servant. Her daughters, modelling themselves on their mother's example, derided their younger stepsister as the household's chimney sweep—Cinderella, they began to call her.

As Cinderella's coming of age approached, the household was thrown into turmoil by the news that the king was throwing a ball: his son had returned from studying abroad and the king desired to introduce him to all of the eligible young women of the kingdom. The stepsisters were beside themselves with excitement, each dreaming of capturing the prince's heart and being spirited off to live in the grand castle at the top of the hill. Cinderella was pressed into service day and night, preparing their dresses, styling their hair in various fashions so they might each find the style most flattering to them,

tending to their every whim. As her exhaustion grew, Cinderella too counted down the days to the ball—not because of the ball itself, but because she would officially come of age the very next day and would be able to claim the inheritance her father had left her.

Finally, the big day arrived. The stepmother and stepsisters, all bedecked and powdered, climbed into their carriage and went off to the palace to try to impress the prince. Cinderella, for the first time in longer than she could remember, had an evening to herself in the house she had grown up in all her life. She wandered through the rooms, recalling the happy memories of growing up there with her loving father, and starting to collect the things she would need to take with her: mementos, her important documents, the few precious books she had managed to hold onto in the years since her father died and her life had become a gruelling struggle, her warmest cloak, her favourite hair ribbons. She ate her dinner in peace and blissful quiet, and went to bed with a sense of eager anticipation. Unable to sleep, she lay there looking out the window at the almost full moon. It would be full tomorrow night, she knew, on her first night of her newly independent life. She was still awake when the clock in the town centre struck midnight. It was tomorrow. She was free, no longer Cinderella.

The next morning, as her stepmother and stepsisters slept off the effects of the previous night's party, she carefully packed her things into the suitcase she had been keeping under her bed for just this occasion, ate a quick breakfast of bread and cheese, fed her stepmother's cat, and quietly let herself out the back door. The cat mewed and scratched at the door as she closed it, so she let him outside too. He followed her down the lane towards the street; the cat might technically 'belong' to her stepmother but she was, after all, his caretaker. She and the cat arrived at her father's attorney's office just as it was opening and, because he had been expecting her arrival on this day, he was able to promptly furnish her with a letter of introduction to the bank and the documentation of passage he had booked for her on a ship leaving port this very morning. Could she bring the cat? Of course, he assured her. She had enough gold to pay for her own cabin on the ship; she could share the cabin with any companion she chose, and could disembark wherever she wanted.

Notes

- 1 Susan Brownmiller's research into sociological studies and law enforcement statistics leads her to the observation, in *Against Our Will*, that '[t]he typical American perpetrator of forcible rape is little more than an aggressive, hostile youth who chooses to do violence to women' (176). She draws on criminologist Marvin E. Wolfgang's concept of a 'subculture of violence' to argue that socially marginalised young men often adopt violent, explicitly coercive behaviours to get for themselves the things that men with more prestige and influence can get with mere heavy-handed manipulation (Brownmiller 180–181). As I discuss later

in this chapter, that characterisation of rape culture (and the research on which Brownmiller draws) is partial, and ultimately misleading.

- 2 I initially had in mind the early #metoo-era news story of how Mira Sorvino's career was crushed by Harvey Weinstein because she rebuffed his advances (Farrow, 'From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault'), but as I write an early draft of this chapter, Ronan Farrow has just broken allegations of similar retaliations committed by high-level executives at CBS (see Farrow, 'Les Moonves and CBS'). One consequence of 'me too' stories, I shall argue throughout this book, is a richer and more critical understanding of who might be a perpetrator of sexual violence than what we find in the Brownmiller view summarised in the previous note.
- 3 See the American Psychological Association's *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*.
- 4 The police bias that made possible a staggeringly high number of victims—women publicly disparaged and dismissed as sex workers—of this serial killer is documented in *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*, the final report submitted to the province of British Columbia by Wally T. Oppal, the appointed Commissioner, in October 2012. Oppal's report documents a 'pattern of predatory violence' that deserved but did not receive timely investigation (4). 'Aboriginal women as a group have a heightened vulnerability to violence simply because they live in "a society that poses a risk to their safety,"' Oppal concludes. 'In British Columbia and around the world, vulnerable and marginalized women are exposed to a higher risk of violence including sexual assault, murder and serial predation' (7). At the national level, the Government of Canada commissioned a 2015 inquiry, Canada's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The final report of that inquiry implicated postcolonial racism, gender bias, and heterosexist prejudices in the ongoing crisis of violence against indigenous women and girls, and the societal inattention to this violence (see Buller et al., *Reclaiming Power and Place* 49–82). Of particular note is the report's framing of this violence through precisely the peace-studies lens I argue for as an aid to enhanced understanding of the violence of rape culture: the ways in which crimes of sexual assault, abduction, and murder are the direct violence that is produced as manifestations of cultural and structural violence (77–78). Analysis of the report by journalist Justin Ling quotes Roxanne White, MMIWG activist and member of the Yakama Nation in Washington state: 'Exactly what happens in Canada has happened here, and has happened in Alaska, and is happening in South America. . . . There are no borders.' Linda Martín Alcoff consistently makes a related point throughout *Rape and Resistance*, that disproportionate attention is given to cases of sexual violence in which (female) victims are white and perpetrators are men of colour, immigrant-outsiders, or otherwise socially coded as 'Other.' Taken together, both of these observations demonstrate the deep truth of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality thesis: the dangers and harms that threaten indigenous women and girls are not due only to gender bias, or to heterosexist prejudice, or even to the additive effect of (postcolonial) racism to those two phenomena; it is the interlocking of all these forces that works to produce widespread and institutionalised social indifference to these women and girls, to make their lives and deaths less valuable, less noteworthy, less likely to be grieved by anyone other than their families and friends.

- 5 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman,' Beauvoir tells us in the first sentence of volume 2 of *The Second Sex* (*La Deuxième Sexe*), 'Lived Experience' (283). This observation of ways in which one is trained into an identity that is subsequently perceived by others—indeed, experienced by oneself—as 'natural' is the common feature I see in Beauvoir's and Brownmiller's analyses. I do not intend to suggest that rape culture and gender socialisation are the same thing; as I explore in Chapter 2, the relationship is murkier and more nuanced than mere equation.
- 6 See volume 1 of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (*The Will to Knowledge*) for his account of how this process works to constitute our thinking about sex and sexuality. See Nicola Gavey's discussion in *Just Sex?: The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape* of Foucauldian discourse as 'material poststructuralism' for argument that this theorising of social construction goes beyond language to implicate social practices formed out of social and economic structures (86–89). It is this understanding of a broad field of influences that construct our understandings of thoughts and actions as 'normal' or as 'deviant' that I am drawing on when I use the term 'culture' or 'rape culture.'
- 7 This characterisation of women has been made explicitly in a 2019 BBC report about the drug-fuelled sexual abuse scandal currently being investigated by police in South Korea. An unnamed wealthy patron of elite nightclubs in the upscale Gangnam neighbourhood of Seoul is quoted in this report comparing prostitutes and so-called ordinary women (club-goers) to 'a business car versus your own car' and explaining that the lure of sex with a woman who is not a sex worker is '[t]he sense of achievement . . . when you gain access . . . that not everyone is allowed.' He justifies the drugging of these women by comparing the nightclubs to a predator-filled jungle: 'You say innocently that "I'm only here to dance." Sure, but will people let you only dance? . . . Sexy beautiful women are prey' (see Bicker, 'Gangnam: The scandal rocking the playground of K-pop').
- 8 Note that my reference here to films, songs and, most especially, fairy tales is drawing from a Western/North American cultural context. There are stories from many parts of the world (including many of the European folk tales on which modern, 'Disneyfied' fairy tales are based) that do not fit this pattern, but to the extent that Western cultural constructs are packaged into a homogenised 'global' culture exported from the United States, the pattern I describe here is familiar to children in a diverse array of cultures.
- 9 I swear I'm not making up this detail, but it does strike me as too perfectly fitting to be plausible that I should have happened in that moment to have been reading a text that can be interpreted as an entitled man's manipulation of his social context to serve his desires. I don't fully endorse this reading of Socrates on trial, but it is a plausible way of accounting for the historical record that a segment of jurors who had voted to acquit him in the determination of his guilt or innocence also voted for the death penalty in the sentencing vote (see I.F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates*, for a fuller argument in support of this reading).
- 10 Beauvoir's contemporary, Martinican theorist of decolonisation and the social construction of race, Frantz Fanon poses a similar question about *white* men (see *Black Skin, White Masks*, for instance, 258–260).
- 11 Linda Martín Alcoff makes this point even more forcefully in *Rape and Resistance*, contending that 'several kinds of social institutions have been in indisputable collusion with perpetrators, suggesting that the problem is less

of an individual pathology than a form of structural organization that either promotes sexual violation or finds ways to avoid addressing it' (234). She rejects 'universalist pronouncements' in favour of more nuanced and context-sensitive discussions of patterns of sexual violation (the broad-category terminology she uses where I use 'sexual violence'), but she does commit herself unequivocally to the view that these forms of structural organisation—what I discuss later in this chapter as the structural violence that is rape culture—'can be changed, and the changes [can be] enforced' (Alcoff 234). However, she does caution us that the medium in which 'me too' critiques of these individual and structural pathologies have been most vigorously pursued is not necessarily a benign or progressive force: 'Social media has shown itself to be a rather sharp double-edged sword,' she observes, 'a tool for whistle blowers but also an easy means to stage a virtual stoning of victims' (Alcoff 1).

- 12 Briefly, this history identifies the suffrage struggles of the 19th and early-20th century as 'First Wave' feminism, the argument for political equality of the genders. Once the right of women to vote had been established in law, it became apparent to those concerned with gender equality that political participation was not sufficient, that social and economic equality was also needed. This was the focus of 'Second Wave' organising: arguments for wage parity, for women's rights to enter traditionally male-dominated occupations and graduate programs in universities, for reproductive freedom and the right to control our own bodies, and for social resources like domestic violence shelters. During this Second Wave, we also saw more attention by feminist groups to anti-rape activism, like 'Take Back the Night' marches, and more theorising of the cultural attitudes that give rise to widespread acceptance of sexual assault as inevitable, and sexual exploitation and objectification as aspects of normal social relations.
- 13 Brownmiller's book is the most well-known of these writings by Second Wave feminists but she was by no means the only feminist writer of her era to take on the topic; Andrea Dworkin, Germaine Greer, Susan Griffin, Catharine MacKinnon, and Robin Morgan, among others, all produced influential accounts of sexual violence.
- 14 The Wikipedia entry 'Rape Culture' does observe that a journal article written by Patricia Donat and John D'Emilio, 'A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change,' gives grounds to accept that the term comes from Brownmiller's references in *Against Our Will* to 'rape-supportive culture.' But a 'co-production' origin story, in which Brownmiller and Connell and Wilson develop the concept collaboratively, makes the most sense: Brownmiller too was a member of the New York Radical Feminists, and it was NYRF consciousness-raising work on women's experiences of sexual assault that inspired her to write *Against Our Will*.
- 15 Gavey discusses the postmodern analysis of rape offered by Sharon Marcus as a repudiation of Brownmiller et al.'s thesis that rape is an act of violence, and presents Marcus's view as an argument that effective resistance to rape culture requires us to disassociate rape from the harms of violence, on the grounds that failure to do so reinscribes the masculinist logic of female purity that sees rape as 'a fate worse than death' (Gavey 176). The corollary of equating rape with violence, and not with sex, Gavey suggests, is the notion of 'an innocent heterosexuality' that is 'untarnished by the ever-present possibility of sex and violence being fused' (177).

- 16 As Gavey and Courtney Fraser both note, this method of calculating prevalence and analysing features of rape and rapists is now widely understood as inadequate, due in large part to awareness of chronic under-reporting. New methodological approaches, pioneered by psychologist Mary Koss and sociologist Diana Russell, began deriving more accurate data as early as the 1980s by asking questions not just about whether a woman had been raped but whether she had experienced activity that met researchers' definitions of rape, thereby identifying instances of rape regardless of whether the woman herself identified the incident that way (see Gavey, 160–162, for a discussion of social science research protocols that justify these data classification choices). In addition, Russell also developed interview protocols that involved intensive training for interviewers, race and ethnicity-matching of subject and interviewer, and scheduling of extended periods (in excess of one hour) in the subject's home, all to make the subject more comfortable, develop rapport, and give the interviewer time to draw out the nuances of the subject's account of her experience (Gavey 50–59). These refinements of the survey process are responsible for documenting rates of sexual violence that are much higher than previously estimated—far from being a rare occurrence, research by Koss, and by Gavey herself, has found that over 50% of women have experienced some form of sexual victimisation (Gavey 161)—and have provided a picture of sexual violence that reveals that women are much more likely to be assaulted by an intimate partner or acquaintance than by a stranger.
- 17 See Rebecca Solnit's essay 'Worlds Collide in a Luxury Suite' for an account of Strauss-Kahn's crime and its broader political context. For Nafissatou Diallo's story in her own words, see 'Dominique Strauss-Kahn's Accuser, Nafissatou Diallo, Speaks Out to "GMA's" Robin Roberts.'
- 18 Alcoff offers a pertinent analysis of who we (societies) identify as 'the rapist' in *Rape and Resistance's* discussion of the controversial account Michel Foucault offers in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* of the molestation of Sophie Adam by Charles Jouy, who was classified by his 19th-century rural French society as simple-minded and who Foucault appears to defend as a man seeking the same kind of 'bucolic pleasures' sought by other men and boys in his village (Foucault 31). In reference to Foucault's distinction between transactional sex and coerced sex (made in the context of whether Adam was a consensual participant), Alcoff points out that 'one can be forced into engaging in transactional sex' and then draws our attention to the more important point 'that the only reason the other males who are engaging in such acts are not also classified as "dangerous individuals" is likely because this would invite a more sweeping cultural reform. If the tendency to rape can be sequestered to the certain social outliers deemed abnormal, then heterosexual conventions, and male privileges, can be largely left intact' (108). As helpful as Brownmiller's analysis of rape as violence was to Second Wave anti-rape activism, the account she offered of who the potential perpetrators are effectively gave societies yet another reason to demonise socially marginalised men—often, as Alcoff notes, men of colour (28)—and obscured the culture of sexual predation and impunity that 'me too' has emerged to challenge.
- 19 Kimberlé Crenshaw makes this point about the erasure/exemption of African-American women from discussions of patriarchal norms in her critique of antidiscrimination discourses in law. Noting that legal findings of exclusions

of women are too often indexed to white women's experiences, she points out that 'analysis of patriarchy that highlights the history of white women's exclusion from the workplace might permit the inference that Black women have not been burdened by this particular gender-based expectation,' an inference that disregards both the historical (and current) social positioning of African-American women and the historical economic dependence of African-American households on their paid labour outside the home (see *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* 33). In this critique, Crenshaw also details the exclusion of African-American women from legal protection or redress in the case of sexual assault. The effect of this erasure of their personhood on both fronts comes together in a posthumously discovered essay by Rosa Parks (see McGuire, 'The Maid and Mr. Charlie').

- 20 This part of my discussion is a version of an essay previously published as 'The Unapologetic Blackness of the Me Too Movement' in *The Elephant*, a Kenyan magazine of current affairs and ideas.
- 21 This concern about seemingly benign attitudes that work in practice to reduce women's agency is something that both Nicola Gavey (in *Just Sex?*) and Linda Martín Alcoff (in *Rape and Resistance*) also worry about in terms of women's capacity to frame our own choices and decisions.
- 22 As I write this, I find myself quite ambivalent about Fraser's discussion of the empowering and culturally transformative effects of feminist/woman-friendly porn (194–197). I am stuck on the question of whether the problem of pornography is that the types that tend to be available are objectionable (violent, exploitative, demeaning)—which suggests that Fraser might be right: the solution *is* better porn—or whether the problem is pornography in all its forms. In the context of its relation to rape culture, I find myself leaning towards the latter viewpoint; even the most respectfully produced variations are representations of people *performing* sex, and seem to me to be necessarily implicating the 'male gaze' that I will discuss in Chapter 5's analysis of cinematic treatment of rape. Regardless of how diverse it is in its depictions of body types, how non-heterosexist, how concerned with treating all of the actors with respect and ensuring their mutual comfort and consent, it gives me pause insofar as it still encourages us to see sex as something people do, as performance, rather than as a way of engaging in interpersonal connection with another human being.
- 23 See Laura Bicker, 'Gangnam: The Scandal Rocking the Playground of K-Pop.'
- 24 'Jamming Rape Culture: Why and How We Need to Stop the Patriarchy,' guest lecture in *Gender and Everyday Life*, International Christian University.
- 25 Her focus in 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender,' is something of a counterpoint to my project in this section; where Confortini argues that Galtung's general theory of violence is strengthened by feminist theory's use of gender as a category of analysis, I am arguing that there are important insights we can gain into rape culture by drawing on (a gender-sensitive version of) the theory of violence Galtung has developed in peace studies. Confortini herself notes that 'a feminist theory of violence that takes into account violence of different kinds does not exist. Galtung and the peace studies framework provide us with one . . . [that] maintains a critical focus on systems and structures of inequality, while allowing for the discussion of differences and identities that is so crucial to feminism' (356).

- 26 As examples of these aspects he offers religion, ideology, language, art, and empirical and formal sciences (Galtung, 'Cultural Violence' 291). His characterisation of science as cultural violence might strike one as implausible on first hearing, but there is a wealth of analysis to support that characterisation. On the ways in which empirical sciences—physical and social—might be the instantiation of colonial cultural violence, see Keolu Fox and Chanda Prescod-Weinstein's 'The Fight for Mauna Kea Is a Fight Against Colonial Science' in *The Nation* (astronomy), and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (anthropology and sociology). On the ways in which formal sciences like logic might be cultural violence, see Bruno Latour's post-9/11 essay, 'War of the Worlds: What about Peace?' It is important to note, as Galtung takes pains to acknowledge throughout his discussion, that none of these aspects of culture are *necessarily* violent; all too often they are, but as both the *Nation* article and Tuhiwai Smith's book make clear, there are non-colonial, non-violent, culturally respectful ways of practising science.
- 27 A contrast with direct violence is perhaps instructive: a society at war is engaging in direct violence against the 'enemies' it kills, and is engaging in indirect violence against its own residents, whose taxes are financing bombs instead of hospitals and schools. This indirect violence is what Galtung is theorising as structural violence.
- 28 I am sympathetic, however, to arguments that contest the latter point: while there is no 'hit list' of particular women targeted to become rape victims in rape culture, there quite evidently are *populations* of girls and women who are identifiably vulnerable: refugees, undocumented migrants, sex workers, insecurely housed and economically marginalised girls and women, cognitively and physically disabled girls and women, indigenous girls and women and other racial minorities, and civilian populations in war time. This is not an exhaustive list.
- 29 Of course, it is one thing to call for gendered perspectives in policy planning, and another thing entirely to staff missions and agencies with people who have a robust understanding of what this means and how to implement it. There is illuminating discussion of this particular gap between theory and practice in Carol Cohn's conversation with Cynthia Enloe, 'Feminists Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War.'
- 30 Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is of course a notable exception to this tendency.
- 31 I am aware that there have been societies throughout history that might be described as matriarchal, but, as I suggested earlier in this chapter, in my comments on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, it does not seem to me that women-led societies have ever exercised any considerable widespread geopolitical power or enduring cultural influence. Looking around the world today, acceptance that men should rule and women should serve is one of the few common assumptions jutting out of global cultural diversity—the exception to this, perhaps, being the feminist-influenced gender equality that characterises Scandinavian countries and is also a feature of (some) western European nations (see World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*).
- 32 Critical distance may be understood in either way; one can conceptually pull back from the networks in which we function by trying to see oneself as historically situated—embedded in a particular time—or as geo-culturally situated—embedded in a particular space.

- 33 This notion of alienation as a provider of critical distance is a plausible explanation for why people who are members of racial or ethnic minorities can typically very easily identify even subtle institutional racisms or micro-aggressions that members of the majority (racist) culture struggle to understand as racism. But if it does explain awareness of racism, then the curious lacuna would be women's failure—refusal?—to identify sexism and misogyny. I will wrestle with this question in-depth in Chapter 2.
- 34 Like Brownmiller (as I discussed in this book's introduction), Greer has recently taken positions that undermine and appear to contradict the valuable insights I derived from her work, and that I deplore. In Greer's case, she has made a number of trans-phobic public statements that express quite vicious hostility towards trans women, denying that they are 'real women' and accusing them of acts of self-inflicted violence (see Saul, 'Germaine Greer Defends "Grossly Offensive" Comments' and Wahlquist, 'Germaine Greer Tells Q&A Her Trans Views Were Wrong' as examples). On the matter of how feminism *should* understand trans people and trans rights, I endorse Sara Ahmed's position that feminism (generally, in my view, although she is speaking quite specifically about the political programme of lesbian feminism) is about 'loosen[ing] the requirements to be in a world, . . . [thereby] creat[ing] room for others to be' (232). This means that '[a]n antitrans stance is an antifeminist stance' (Ahmed 234). On the matter of how we should assess problematic, even offensive, views of thinkers who have made important contributions to discourses that matter to us (and I am thinking here not just of Brownmiller and Greer, but of some of Foucault's public comments on rape), I think it is important to acknowledge that which we repudiate, and why, and critically examine the extent to which our engagement with (anyone's) ideas puts us in positions of seeming to endorse views we abhor. Given Greer's transphobia, I would not want to give her present-day views a platform, but in fact her early work *was* an influence on me. It feels intellectually dishonest to not acknowledge that.
- 35 Margaret Atwood, *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose, 1960–1982*. The quotation as I have rendered it in the text is a common abbreviation of the anecdote in *Second Words*. The full text reads:

'Why do men feel threatened by women?' I asked a male friend of mine. So this male friend of mine, who does by the way exist, conveniently entered into the following dialogue. 'I mean,' I said, 'men are bigger, most of the time, they can run faster, strangle better, and they have on average a lot more money and power.' 'They're afraid women will laugh at them,' he said. 'Undercut their world view.' Then I asked some women students in a quickie poetry seminar I was giving, 'Why do women feel threatened by men?' 'They're afraid of being killed,' they said.

(Atwood 413)

Two things strike me about this full-text passage, neither of them evident in the more well-known abbreviated version: first, that male socialisation is so bound up with the power to set the terms of reality that challenges to one's worldview are cognised as threats (as opposed to being a sign of epistemological diversity) and, second, that both the conveniently existing friend and the women in the poetry seminar spoke of abstract, generic men and women (those feeling threatened by the other gender) as 'they' rather than 'we.' Dissociation

of female speaker from female experience, in particular, is something I see frequently, even in feminist writings about women, and make a point of explicitly correcting when I notice myself doing it in Women's Studies classes or lectures. It speaks, I think, of a distance women are encouraged to put between ourselves, a lack of solidarity that is seen in habitual failures to identify different women's experiences as points of overlap or possible sites of empathy for other people's struggles to navigate a culture in which one does not feel valued.

- 36 One particularly sad example of this disbelief and uncertainty was expressed in an early response to the 15 October 2017 tweet by actress Alyssa Milano that is credited with launching the 'me too' hashtag: 'If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write "me too" as a reply to this tweet.' The response, from a man, was, 'Not sure how much this counts. I was 14 and she was 27. I was coerced. Definitely was not informed legal consent.' To their credit, other respondents to Milano's tweet jumped in to reassure him that his experience '100%' counted as a 'me too' instance. The fact that he was not sure makes this, in my opinion, an instance of the hermeneutical injustice I discuss in a following paragraph.
- 37 In Chapter 3, I take up the troubling nature of consent that has been a feature of feminist analysis of heterosexual norms and practices in Second Wave and Third Wave thinking. For now, I use the term as a kind of short-hand, a culturally accessible way to introduce the distinction I am immediately concerned with.
- 38 There is a lot of divergence in legal codes of various nation-states as to what counts as rape or sexual assault, and which is the preferred terminology. In the United States, for instance, the legal term used in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is rape, and it is defined as any non-consensual vaginal or anal penetration with a body part or object or non-consensual oral penetration by another person's sex organ. In Canada the legal term is sexual assault. The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) notes that Canadian law defines sexual assault broadly, to include all unwanted sexual activity. In Japan, 2017 amendments to a very outdated 1907 law against rape included renaming the crime 'forced sexual intercourse,' expanding the definition to include oral and anal penetration as punishable acts, and acknowledging the possibility of male victims. The People's Republic of China has also moved to include men as potential victims, but, except in cases of sexual relations with a girl under the age of 14 (statutory rape), seems to require the presence of violence or coercion for a crime to have taken place. Indian law assumes that the perpetrator must be a man, and includes an exemption for marital relations. While it does not recognise marital rape as a category, it does make a distinction between rape *per se* and rape committed by a man in a position of authority or public trust (for instance, a police officer). Across Africa, categories of sexual assault/sexual exploitation are used to capture crimes considered less severe than rape, although what counts as rape differs noticeably. In Kenya, it is forced, non-consensual penetration with genital organs; in Ghana, it is more vaguely defined as non-consensual carnal knowledge of a female 16 years or older. Of the European nations, Sweden is notable for its legal stipulation that causing someone to be incapacitated (hence, incapable of consent/decision-making) is the equivalent of (sexual) violence. At the international level, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) defines sexual violence as gender-based violence taking the

form of unwanted or coerced sexual acts, attempts, advances, and/or comments directed against a person's sexuality. Such violence takes multiple forms, the OHCHR contends, including rape and sexual abuse, and extending to forced reproductive acts (pregnancy, sterilisation, abortion), sexual enslavement and trafficking, forced circumcision, castration, and forced nudity (see www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Sexual_and_gender-based_violence.pdf).

- 39 Submitting rather than consenting because of a perception that refusing might be dangerous is a phenomenon that is being subjected to quite a bit of 'me too'-era analysis, but submitting because refusing is perceived as shameful also needs our attention. One of the concerns about 'hook-up culture' in American universities and 'omochikaeri' culture among Japanese youth is that parties who might appear to be consenting in the minimalist way that contractual-transactional legalistic perspectives recognise (did you *say* yes? well then, you must have *meant* yes) may actually feel unwilling but also feel obligated in some sense. Here, for instance, is a social space in which there is significant room for coercion of male sex partners: the stereotype of the 'real man' is that he always wants to have sex. So, when an actual man (or a boy) is presented with what the 'real man' stereotype understands as an opportunity to have sex, his actual feelings of exhaustion, stress, reluctance to be intimate with this particular person (feelings he has because he is, after all, a human being) can appear to him as embarrassing revelations that he is not a real man, and can push him into sex he is not in fact robustly consenting to. Dismissing such situations as instances of weakness of will or as less harmful disregards the power that social norms and conventions have in all our lives. The need for a social field in which all of us feel free to say 'yes' when we mean yes and 'no' when we mean no is the point I will be building to throughout Chapter 3.
- 40 Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with theories of knowledge: how we formulate ideas and how we justify them. Much of the epistemological work done in academic philosophical circles in the English-speaking world is done in a tradition known as 'Analytic Philosophy,' and has emphasised abstract study of logic, linguistic meaning, and theory justification. The questions Fricker is working out as 'virtue epistemology' are questions of how knowledge and epistemic judgements (credibility, trust, bias) are tempered by social power, and are therefore infused with ethical and political concerns. Thus, virtue epistemology, in Fricker's words, 'renegotiates a stretch of the border between' epistemology and ethics that philosophy in the Analytic tradition had previously seen as a settled boundary (2).
- 41 Putting this point in peace studies terms, Cinderella is a victim of structural violence: lack of resources results in diminished life choices. In a liberal-democratic society, there would be a social safety net that could ameliorate her deprivation; in the universe of fairy tales, however, it seems to me that these resources can only be furnished within the family structure. Unfortunately, this limitation—either of the story-world or of my imagination—does lend credence to a reading of my culture-jammed Cinderella as a 'poor little rich girl' (read: white girl) living off a trust fund. I deplore the elitist cast this gives my Cinderella, but I see no way to stretch the story and still have it be recognisable as a version of the Cinderella story. Perhaps this needs to be seen as a limitation of the culture-jamming strategy I pursue in this book: it can unsettle (in ways that Foucault thinks resistance to power is possible), but cannot (on its own) radically disrupt.

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2 *A beautiful girl met a handsome prince . . .*

Toxic masculinity and complicit femininity

How to be a man: *Prince Charming*

Rape culture—which I defined in Chapter 1 as casual, pervasive commodification of women’s bodies and relentless normalising of a masculinity steeped in conquest and control—depends on policings of masculinity and femininity that, like rape culture itself, are both manifestations of cultural violence. The traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity that we find embedded in our fairy tales are in fact mirror-image concepts: feminist international relations theorists Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe note that ‘particular masculinities—especially of the sort that states think they need— . . . [are] confirmed by women in their role as wives’ (1188). Essentially, the prince would not *be* a hero if there were no helpless damsel for him to rescue. It is true that we can articulate a variety of ways of being masculine and ways of being feminine (and ascribe those ways of being to persons of either gender identity) and I want to be clear that I do not think all of these ways of performing gender are harmful or odious. What I am analysing in this chapter are the pernicious effects of rigid commitments to traditional views of manhood and womanhood that cast men as owners or caretakers of women and as ‘mini-sovereigns,’ rulers over ‘their’ families and households, and cast women as vessels of care and procreation. These views, that I am talking about here as ‘toxic masculinity’ and ‘complicit femininity,’ are, to borrow Cynthia Enloe’s words, ‘decisions . . . masked as “tradition”’ (Cohn and Enloe 1192). Traditional and prescriptive, they condition those raised with them to accept as natural and unchangeable the idea that men ought to have power over women, and they give legitimacy to the kinds of social relations that characterise rape culture.

Throughout this chapter, I illustrate my analysis of problematic gender scripts with examples drawn from the dystopic world portrayed in Margaret Atwood’s novels, *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The Testaments*, and in the Hulu television series that retells and extends Atwood’s original story and provides the backstory for her sequel. This storytelling about fundamentalist patriarchy resonates for me in the ‘me too’ era through its depiction of powerful men and subservient women, both those who occupy the relatively privileged

roles of wives, daughters, and aunts and those who populate the exploited, terrorised classes of handmaids, household servants, and ‘unwomen.’¹ In particular, I see the symbiotic relationship of the Commander—Waterford, in the television series; unnamed in the novel—and Serena Joy as illustrating the toxic masculinity and complicit femininity through which marriage is enacted as ‘a transaction of power that create[s] a social system’ (Cohn and Enloe 1199).

The messaging our societies give us about how a male human being goes about the process of being a ‘real man’ implicates the Prince Charming of fairy tales insofar as he appears as the rescuer of the damsel in distress and offers her a path out of her miserable existence by becoming his princess. In many tales, he is the stylised, public relations version of the masculinity script that patriarchal social organisation mandates. ‘It is not men-on-top that makes something patriarchal,’ Enloe explains.

It’s men who are recognized and claim a certain form of masculinity, for the sake of being more valued, more ‘serious,’ and ‘the protectors of/ and controllers of those people who are less masculine’ that makes any organization, any community, any society patriarchal.

(Cohn and Enloe 1192)

In her conversation with Cohn, Enloe notes that she deliberately uses the term ‘patriarchy’ in discussions in which others might speak of ‘gender inequality’ because ‘using *patriarchy* . . . reminds us that we’re investigating power’ (Cohn and Enloe 1193, emphasis in original). In these power relations, men are in charge, and one of the things they’re in charge of is us: women. That is why people (men *and* women) raised in patriarchal social conditioning grow up to believe that men are entitled to women’s attention, women’s care, women’s respect, and women’s bodies.

What rape culture does, then, in its performance of patriarchal norms, is to cheerlead for girls the enthusiastic adoption of a femininity that serves male dominance and to venerate for boys the patriarchal figure of the ‘real man.’ This notion of ‘how to be a man’ appears, in areas of scholarship as diverse as sociology of gender and international relations, through engagement with RW Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity.’ Connell’s first articulations of this ‘contested concept’ were structured as a corrective model of masculinity—a pluralisation (into ‘masculinities’) and a non-essentialist theorisation of the hegemonic instantiation as a ‘pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 830, 832). Despite two decades of contestation in the academic literature, Connell and Messerschmidt contend that ‘the issues it [hegemonic masculinity] names are very much at stake in contemporary struggles about power and political leadership, public and private violence, and changes in family and sexuality’ (830)—struggles now taking place under ‘me too’

banners around the world. In their review of the scholarship this concept inaugurated, Connell and Messerschmidt acknowledge that it is not a masculinity that all men can or do perform, but they also argue that hegemonic masculinity does require other men—practitioners of ‘subordinated masculinities’—to orient themselves to it and that it does function as a Galtungian cultural violence: ‘ideologically legitim[ising] the global subordination of women to men’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 832).

We see this symbolised in *The Handmaid’s Tale*; in Gilead, the Commander is both the ruler over subordinated men—drivers and Guardians—and, as a social role, the promised reward for these men who, unlike the ‘econopeople’ (in other discourses, ‘the masses’), are placated and co-opted by the hope of rising through the ranks to this coveted position. Another point of note about this ‘performative’ conception of masculinity is that it is not a monolith; one may enact it more or less competently, more or less faithfully or subversively (Connell and Messerschmidt 837)—so it could even be performed in a spirit of parody or camouflage, as we might understand Commander Lawrence’s arguably less brutal participation in Gilead leadership.

‘[I]n some contexts, hegemonic masculinity actually does refer to men’s engaging in toxic practices—including physical violence,’ Connell and Messerschmidt concede (840). The hegemonic model ‘embeds certain notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 841)—we can see this in *The Handmaid’s Tale* in the orientation of wives, aunts, and drivers to the rulership of the Commanders—but the performance of hegemonic masculinity devolves into toxicity when it becomes a legitimisation of domination and ownership—as when Commander Waterford notes to Serena Joy in season 3 that ‘God has made me *the master of* an incredible woman’ (episode 1: ‘Night,’ emphasis added).

It is this latter, particularly harmful—to both genders—version of masculinity that the American Psychological Association (APA) focuses on, in a 2018 communication to clinical practitioners, as ‘masculinity ideology’: what we believe to be the case about what boys and men *are* like and what they *ought to be* like (2). ‘Although there are differences in masculinity ideologies,’ the report notes, ‘there is a particular constellation of standards that have held sway over large segments of the population, including: anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk, and violence’ (APA 2–3). While the guidelines for recognising and engaging with this patriarchal ideology sparked controversy upon their release in 2018—largely because supporters of ‘traditional’ (toxic) masculinity glossed it as demonising and disparaging men as a population—the APA was actually trying to encourage greater awareness on the part of practising clinical psychologists of the ways that men and boys suffer because of the gender scripts imposed on them. In explaining the need for these guidelines, the report says, ‘socialization for conforming to traditional masculinity ideology has been shown to limit males’ psychological development, constrain their behavior, result in gender role strain and gender role conflict’

(3).² The report cites extensive research showing that negative behavioural and cognitive consequences of conforming to traditional ideas of how to be a man include tendencies ‘to endorse and commit higher levels of intimate partner and sexual violence,’ an inhibited ‘ability to be emotionally vulnerable and form deep connections in adult relationships,’ and adoption of ‘an approach to sexuality that emphasizes promiscuity and other aspects of risky sexual behavior’ (10–11). ‘Many boys and men have been socialized to use aggression and violence as a means to resolve interpersonal conflict,’ conclude the report’s authors (15).

This socialisation is what peace studies theorist Bill Gay refers to as ‘violentism,’ a concept he defines as ‘the belief that violence—overt and covert, personal and institutional—is and perhaps should be used to achieve goals’ (468). Returning to the trio of violences I discussed in the previous chapter as the significant insight that Johan Galtung’s work (‘Violence, Peace’ and ‘Cultural Violence’) can contribute to thinking about rape culture—cultural (symbolic), structural (institutional), and direct (personal)—I think we can see the violence that makes hegemonic masculinity toxic showing up in two distinct aspects of male entitlement.

Regardless of whether any individual man has access to the social status that confers these entitlements upon him personally, patriarchal thinking normalises for men an entitlement to authority—a belief in their own fitness to rule, to set the terms of engagement in their social relations—and a sexual entitlement. Entitlement to rule over others is symbolised in Christian religious discourse by the figure of God the Father,³ in *The Handmaid’s Tale* by the figure of the Commander (the only member of the household allowed to read the word of God, and the one charged with interpreting it for all the others), and in the world of global politics by the pervasive figure of the authoritarian leader (the ‘strict daddy’ who keeps us all in line). This symbolism flows out into the world as the cultural and structural violences of paternalistic justifications for imperialism and of men’s occupation and monopolisation of social spaces they designate as ‘theirs.’ Entitlement to sex, to women’s bodies, is symbolised in the figure of ‘the ladies’ man,’ a glib and allegedly irresistible man who conquers and abandons women almost as a distraction on his way to saving the world, or ruling it. Think James Bond. Or real-life ‘wanna-be’ James Bonds: Donald Trump, for instance, or Jeffrey Epstein. Or the figure Susan Brownmiller dubs ‘the heroic rapist’ (283–308). When this symbolism manifests concretely, it becomes the direct violence of rape, sexual harassment and derogation of women, and sometimes, murder.

Men’s perception of their fitness to rule—seen in fairy tales as the prince’s right/duty to rescue the impoverished princess or kiss the sleeping one—underpins geopolitical adventures, which are both culturally violent in their depictions of cultural ‘others’ as savage (in need of civilising) or helpless (in need of rescuing), and structurally violent in their organisation of colonial occupations to meet the needs and build the wealth of the colonising

nation, not the colonised territory. Enloe, for instance, speaks of her interest in the ways that women's status in foreign cultures is perennially used to justify colonial occupations, linking the post-9/11 American invasion of Afghanistan to the 'benighted woman' tableaux at American 'World's Fairs' when the United States was pursuing colonisation of the Philippines in the late 19th century. 'The oppression of women . . . has been used as a[n inverse] measure of how enlightened a society is, without much deeper commitment to deprivileging masculinity,' she observes. 'That's why you have to have a feminist understanding of orientalism' (Cohn and Enloe 1201).⁴ This commentary on the masculinist/patriarchal assumption of a right to enter whatever spaces they choose, for our own good, is reminiscent of the influential postcolonial feminist critique that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes of British 'abolition' of *sati* in India in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'— '[w]hite men . . . saving brown women from brown men' (93).⁵ 'Imperialism's image as the establisher of the good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as *object* of protection from her own kind,' she contends (Spivak 94, emphasis in original).

In addition to asserting the right to enter any space they choose, to rescue and to civilise, men also assert entitlement to rule by marking off their own spaces and forbidding entry to 'outsiders.' When that assertion of 'sacred' space is perceived as having been violated, claimants can and do resort to direct violence—sometimes, physical harm, but also linguistic and psychological. One such instance of violent male outbursts at perceived intrusion on 'their' space is the notorious phenomenon known as GamerGate. GamerGate erupted as a Twitter hashtag in September 2014 and was claimed by users of the hashtag to be a movement by the self-perceived core of 'the gamer community'—young men who play video games—concerned that video-game journalism was giving preferential reviews of games developed by women, and frequently involved accusations that this bias was the result of sexual relationships between developers and journalists. It was an outpouring of violent, misogynist anger—performed primarily on Twitter, but coordinated on Reddit and 4chan message boards—that was directed most forcefully against female video game developers and cultural commentators who were arguing for greater representational diversity in video games. At least two female video game developers were harassed and 'doxxed' to the point that they had to leave their respective homes as a matter of personal safety.⁶ Although this months-long online campaign was supposed to be about 'ethics in game journalism,' none of the male journalists who were accused of colluding with the female video game developers were doxxed, threatened with physical violence, or harassed to the point of needing to hire personal assistants to manage their social media accounts. This led Brendan Keogh, a writer for the Australian literary and cultural magazine *Overland*, to conclude that GamerGate 'does not represent a marginalised, discriminated identity under attack so much as a hegemonic and normative mainstream being forced to redistribute some of its power.'

After 4chan banned discussion of GamerGate in September 2014, the disgruntled feminist-hating gamers migrated to 8chan, a site that has billed itself as ‘the Darkest Reaches of the Internet’ (Roose). Here, on this site where hate-fuelled gunmen like the Christchurch mosque shooter and the El Paso Walmart shooter have posted their ‘manifestos,’ posters, adopting a tone that they think is irony but is in fact an utter lack of empathy, discuss the fatalities these gunmen cause as their ‘high scores.’ It has also become, reports *New York Times* journalist Kevin Roose, ‘an online home’ for another collection of misogynists who are to sexual entitlement what the GamerGaters were to authority entitlement: a group who label themselves ‘incels’—involuntarily celibate. 8chan’s celebration of violence and viciousness towards other human beings is a vivid illustration of the toxic ‘masculinity ideology’ dissected by the APA (3): anti-women/anti-feminist rhetoric, valorisation of the killing this echo chamber counts as ‘achievement,’ disavowal of empathy as weakness, and endless depictions of life as a video game. It is a chilling example of the problem Carol Cohn discusses in the context of American willingness to use violence: ‘the refusal to acknowledge the *inevitability* of our vulnerability . . . [a]s a fact of human and political life’ (Cohn and Enloe 1204, emphasis in original). More than a generation ago, in 1975, Susan Brownmiller spoke optimistically towards the end of *Against Our Will* of her confidence ‘that men will cease to define their manhood in terms of their aggression toward, or protection of, women’ (306). Sadly, the re-evaluation of manhood and heroism that she hoped would emerge from the 1970s seems still to be struggling against the doubling-down into resentment, cruelty, and denial of women’s humanity that continues to flourish in spaces designated as men’s spheres.

The failure to make greater progress away from some of the more toxic aspects of traditional social expectations of who men are and what they do is, in part, attributable to the role-modelling of male power and success that continues to link authority entitlement to sexual entitlement. This has been most (in)famously expressed by America’s 45th president, Donald Trump, in the ‘Access Hollywood’ hot-mic incident that many political commentators and observers expected would end his presidential run in October 2016: ‘when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything . . . Grab them by the pussy’ (‘US Election’). Just as the Atwoodian dystopia of Gilead will give you both a wife and a handmaid if you are a Commander, so too will the world give you all the sexually compliant women you want if you become wealthy and famous. That is what boys are told, and that is what men come to believe. No wonder so many of the high-profile figures caught up and brought down in various ‘me too’ scandals feel that the goalposts have shifted on them: they have been trained into the view that attaining social status would insulate them. (The position I have taken throughout ‘me too’ debates and arguments is that goalposts have not, in fact, shifted; they have always been there. The difference now is simply that

we are beginning, through ‘me too’ discourses, to point to them and say, ‘look, goalposts!’)

Gilead’s Commanders feel entitled to women as tribute to their authority; so too do our societies’ powerful men feel entitled to their ‘spoils.’ It is, then, not all that surprising that we find young men like Elliot Rodger and Brock Turner in the world, men whose youth means they have less social status (less immediate access to authority), but whose social positioning as upper-middle class white men confers just as robust a sense of entitlement as their country’s 45th president. In an account of his first week of college, Elliot Rodger recalls,

I saw two hot blonde girls waiting at the bus stop. I was dressed in one of my nice shirts, so I looked at them and smiled. They looked at me, but they didn’t even deign to smile back. They just looked away as if I was a fool. In a rage, I made a U-turn, pulled up to their bus stop and splashed my Starbucks latte all over them. I felt a feeling [of] spiteful satisfaction as I saw it stain their jeans. How dare those girls snub me in such a fashion! How dare they insult me so! I raged to myself repeatedly. They deserved the punishment I gave them. It was such a pity that my latte wasn’t hot enough to burn them. Those girls deserved to be dumped in boiling water for the crime of not giving me the attention and adoration I so rightfully deserve!

(Rodger, quoted in Solnit 132–133)

As evidently unhinged and narcissistic as this diatribe is, it might be tempting to dismiss it, and the writer. But the young man who wrote those words nurtured his entitlement and resentment into a rage that, just months before GamerGate, became the Isla Vista Massacre in which he killed six people and injured another 14 because ‘beautiful girls’ were ‘denying’ him sex that they were ‘giving’ to other men—as if that sex were his, by right, and these women he perceived as owing him sex were inappropriately choosing others over him.

In the sphere of sexual entitlement, this is where direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence all intersect: Rodger, the son of a successful film-maker, was raised in a cultural environment that told him he was the kind of man a woman I once knew used to refer to as ‘prime property,’ and both he and Turner went to prestigious universities in Southern California that nurtured their senses of themselves as special, important, valuable men.⁷ In the aftermath of Rodger’s crimes, online discussion of it as misogyny prompted a Twitter hashtag battle between men who wanted to paint his actions as an isolated incident and women who wanted to point out that this was part of a discernible pattern in our social worlds. In response to the #NotAllMen postings, a message authored by ‘Jenny Chiu’ observed: ‘Sure #NotAllMen are misogynists and rapists. That’s not the point. The point is that #YesAllWomen live in fear of the ones that are’ (quoted in Solnit 125).⁸

Since his 2014 rampage, Rodger has become a figure of adoration and admiration—not from the ‘hot blondes’ he felt entitled to but from online communities of misogynists who have adopted the incel label. To them, he has become ‘Saint Elliot’ and ‘the Supreme Gentleman,’ an exemplar of how men who ‘can’t get’ girlfriends (or can’t attract the sexual partners of their fantasies) should conduct themselves. Feminist author and anti-misogyny activist Jessica Valenti notes that in incel forums, references to Rodger have become a kind of shorthand for attacks on women that are motivated by a sense of revenge for having been ‘rejected,’⁹ and some of the posters on these message boards have ‘advocated rape as a means to end their celibacy.’ Troubled by the media tendency to dismiss this growing incel violence against women as isolated incidents,¹⁰ she argues that we should instead be speaking of them as ‘misogynist terrorism,’ a characterisation that would highlight the preventability of the radicalisation that is occurring in these communities, and in other related forums dedicated to ‘men’s rights activism’ and ‘pickup artists’ (Valenti). ‘While these movements differ in small ways, what they have in common is an organized hatred of women,’ Valenti contends.

In cases where we have first-person thoughts promulgated in media, they typically express and amplify Rodger’s point of view, not the perspectives of the two young women minding their own business at a bus stop. Chanel Miller, the young woman who was first presented to the world—infamously, in the entitlement propaganda and apologia that victim-blamed *her* in order to excuse *him*—as Emily Doe, author of the most viral victim impact statement of our time, has given us a corrective to this usual course of events in her 2019 memoir, *Know My Name*. Miller recalls her first foray into the police report taken in the aftermath of the sexual assault on her by Brock Turner:

In the report, all the people he’d kissed were named *girls*, but because he’d assaulted me, I was never called *girl*, only *victim* . . . [as in] *He was having a good time with VICTIM and stated that she also seemed to enjoy the activity.*

(Miller 45, emphasis in original)

If you followed the reporting and commentary on this case back in 2016, you might recall that the two Swedish graduate students who came to Miller’s rescue that night reported that their initial suspicion of something being wrong was provoked by her unmoving body. She was unconscious. But, according to Turner, she ‘seemed to enjoy’ lying unconscious on the ground behind a garbage dumpster while he digitally penetrated her. Miller recalls the police report as the moment in which she first realised that Turner’s defence strategy was going to be ‘to prove that to his knowledge, the sexual act had been consensual. He’d force moans into my mouth, assign lecherous behavior, to shift the blame onto me,’ she concluded (46). She described the

feeling of being a rape victim in a criminal process organised around the accused's presumed innocence as 'like watching wolves being clipped off their leashes while someone whispered in your ear that meat has been sewn into your pockets' (Miller 46).

Yet another analogy plays out in her account of the casual, pervasive harassment she encountered from strange men in public space as she worked to put her life back together after the rape: each comment 'felt too subtle to be consequential, like a tiny thumbtack inserted into a thick tire . . . [but over time] pockmarked with thumbtacks and nails . . . [she] felt the tire becoming misshapen, lopsided, deflating' (Miller 80, 86). One question recurs repeatedly throughout her book: why is it our job to manage this harassment? This challenging of the 'safety work' that receives more systematic scholarly analysis in Fiona Vera-Gray's *The Right Amount of Panic* is most pointed in Miller's observation that:

It is [a woman's] job to know how to handle the stream of bombs, how to kindly decline giving her number, how to move a hand from the button of her jeans, to turn down a drink. When a woman is assaulted, one of the first questions people ask is, *Did you say no?* This question assumes that the [default] answer was always yes, and that it is her job to revoke the agreement. To defuse the bomb she was given. But why are they allowed to touch us until we physically fight them off? Why is the door open until we have to slam it shut?

(83, emphasis in original)

Running through our cultures and our news feeds alongside the constant judgement of women's self-policing are the numerous sexual assaults that only sometimes come to the attention of the law that is supposed to, as the American cliché has it, 'serve and protect' us all. When assaults become indictments, and then court cases, they also too frequently become instances of rape culture in which teenage boys and young men are given light sentences for sexual assaults because they 'come from good families' or 'have promising futures.' Miller describes this as a perception that 'his future [is] patiently waiting for him to step into it,' a privilege-drenched departure from the understanding most of us have of our desired futures as projects that each of us needs to build, to earn (281). There are so many instances of this kind of sentencing—biased concern for boys' futures rather than girls' futures—that a 2019 report on yet another such story began: 'File this one under "where have we seen this before"' (Wang). Sexual entitlement, when combined with 'authority' entitlement to set the terms of interaction, to be the priority, means that a woman who pursues legal remedies is pushed to 'think hard about what this will mean for his life, even though he never considered what his actions would do to her' (Miller 288).

And this entitlement is learned behaviour; in the wake of Turner's 2016 sentencing to a six-month prison term (he served three months) for his

vicious assault on Miller—an attack that took two bystanders to stop and hospitalised her—his father was quoted as saying that the sentence was ‘a steep price to pay for twenty minutes of action out of his twenty-plus years of life’ (Miller 232). Miller recalls that this comment helped her make sense of Turner’s persistent evasion of responsibility for the rape he committed against her: ‘[h]e had lived shielded under a roof where the verdict was never accepted, where he would never be held accountable’ by a father who did not see his son’s actions as either violent or criminal (232). Indirectly referencing toxic masculinity’s influence over even putatively objective and neutral social institutions, Susan Brownmiller observes in *Against Our Will* that,

[t]he real reason for the law’s everlasting confusion as to what constitutes an act of rape and what constitutes an act of mutual intercourse is the underlying cultural assumption that it is the natural masculine role to proceed aggressively toward the stated goal, while the natural feminine role is to ‘resist’ or ‘submit.’

(385)

How to be a woman: *Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel*

Susan Brownmiller remarks on the teaching value of our fairy tales:

As a lesson in female sexuality, Sleeping Beauty’s message is clear. . . . The prince is the only one who can awaken the princess. She cannot manage this feat by herself. . . . Thus is female sexuality defined. Beautiful passivity. Wait, just wait. Prince Charming will soon be by; and if it is not Prince Charming but the Big Bad Wolf who stands at the door, then proper feminine behavior still commands you to stay immobile.

(310)

In stark contrast with the messaging Prince Charming provides about what it means to be a ‘real man,’ fairy tales tell little girls that being a woman is about waiting to be chosen, and then managing the chooser’s expectations gracefully. Perhaps the most deeply shocking aspect of that socialisation is how early it cuts into female psyches. I can recall reacting to the world through that messaging as a child, even when I was so young that I couldn’t understand why I was experiencing my reactions as imperatives. In possibly the earliest example, which I think must have been when I was about six years old, I went on a cross-neighbourhood excursion with a friend who lived down the road from me in the Auckland suburb of Glendowie that was my childhood stomping-grounds. It was so long ago that I cannot remember my friend’s name; I remember only where she lived in relation to my childhood home, and that it was a hot summer day. We journeyed to the far side of the neighbourhood, further than I had ever been on my own, so we could swim in the pool at her cousins’ house.

There we were, by the pool, just hanging out and enjoying ourselves, when one of the cousins appeared. He was a boy slightly older than we were, not authoritative or unwelcoming or even particularly assertive in his personality, but my afternoon with my friend suddenly, weirdly, shifted into us being his audience as he screwed up his courage to try the diving board. ‘Just jump,’ I recall advising him, although I also recall not much caring whether he did or not. (I don’t remember his name either; I’m as satisfied about that memory lapse as I am ashamed of not remembering my friend’s name.) About a week later, she told me that her cousin liked me, thought I was ‘cool’ (or maybe the terminology of the day was ‘neat’; pardon my unreliable narration, but I don’t remember that detail either), and at that moment my lack of interest in her cousin and my sense that she had been the significant human in my interactions that day vanished utterly. A boy had expressed interest in me, and it was suddenly very important to understand what I had done ‘right’—so that I could keep doing it, I guess? Over time, that incident got buried under piles of newer memories until the day, decades later, in a women’s studies classroom when it bubbled up as I searched for an anecdote to illustrate how early a girl can internalise the idea that what makes you valuable is being approved of by boys. It’s a trivial example in many respects, but it astounds me to realise how natural that thinking—that a boy was (should be) interesting to me because I was interesting to him—already was to me at such a young age.

In keeping with Brownmiller’s observation that one might wait for Prince Charming but then end up having to be sweet and compliant to the Big Bad Wolf, I look back at the life I lived before I discovered feminist theory in graduate school, and I realise that many of the corrective lessons my society taught me as a girl and as an adult woman were less about how to unthink harmful thoughts than they were about how to not speak unsanctioned or unpopular thoughts. I still reflexively default to thinking a lot of those harmful things, even if I think I don’t believe them. This is the essential harm of social conditioning: it instils messaging years before our cognitive capacities to think critically have developed, and when we do finally develop the tools to critique our (instilled) beliefs, they have settled so deeply into our minds and have come to feel so natural that critical examination amounts to tearing away at our (perceived) identities.

For me, this is exemplified nowhere more clearly than in my engagement with Adrienne Rich’s essay, ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.’ Rich offers an extensive analysis of the ways in which feminist theory has erased or failed to engage with lesbian experience of our social world, recovers some incredibly valuable history of lesbian communities and other groups of women who have resisted traditional heterosexual marital arrangements, and inventories the social strategies that have been instituted to convince women that heterosexuality is our only option. I teach this essay regularly in women’s studies and gender studies courses, and I have grown to love and appreciate the very unsettling challenge it poses to women like

me, who identify as sexually oriented/attracted to men. I feel this orientation as ‘just how I am,’ and yet I recognise all of the characteristics of male power that Rich borrows from Kathleen Gough’s analysis of family structure to show us how heterosexuality is constructed as compulsory and imposed upon us (638–640). It *is* social conditioning, and I *do* experience it as natural. Both of those things are true, yet they exist in tension with each other. Each time I wrestle with the unnerving idea that I am living a sexuality that is not my own, that is something that I might not have chosen in a less heteronormative world, I gain a deeper appreciation for Rich’s dissection of the social construction of usefully compliant and male-identified women.

Rich’s commentary on Gough’s inventory identifies and elaborates compulsory heterosexuality’s training program for how to be a woman, the mechanisms that convince many women of their vulnerability and of the futility of adopting any attitude other than the passive acceptance of male authority (see Gough 69–70). These include obvious strategies, such as using direct violence to force women into male-oriented sexual activity and to punish anything that is suggestive of lesbian orientation. The training also uses structurally violent systems of control, such as an economic system that pays women less than men, hampers our ability to be financially self-sufficient, and demands as a condition of getting and keeping a job that one conform to ‘feminine’ standards of dress and presentation.¹¹ There are also structurally violent systems of law and social custom that place the primary responsibility for child care on women—it is disproportionately mothers, rather than fathers, who take time off work when a child is home sick, and statistics show that when a couple divorces, the woman’s household income typically decreases while the man’s typically increases¹²—and place primary responsibility on women for ‘staying safe’ in public spaces—that is, for not getting raped. And this training is embedded in culturally violent societies that discourage and denigrate women as artists, musicians, writers, scientists, and philosophers, sorting us instead into categories of muse, groupie, or object of study—in short, cultural messaging that tells us that women cannot be symbol-makers or manipulators, that we are merely symbols to be manipulated by and for others.¹³

One of the ways that cultural acceptance of toxic masculinity works to produce complicit femininity is by inculcating the idea that sexually active women are somehow more questionable—more deviant, more irresponsible, more dishonest and anti-social—than sexually active men. It is not just that being ‘a slut’ is a bad thing; it’s that sluts are understood to be ‘bad’ (morally inferior) people. No one really wants to be, or think of themselves as, a bad person; even the most sociopathic people I have known in my life have versions of reality they tell themselves in which they are the (misunderstood) heroes. So, clearly no young woman would *really* want to be thought of as a slut. For young men, on the other hand, social capital often gets constructed very differently; they get to be the sexually active problem their girlfriends or would-be girlfriends are charged with managing.

Time and again, when I was running anti-rape consent education programming on college campuses in the United States, I would encounter student attitudes that demonstrated an unquestioned, internalised acceptance of male dominance as the baseline of ‘normal’ sexuality: policing of one’s own body image, sexual identity, and gender identity, and that of other students; slut shaming; and resignation about perceived male tendencies to engage in sexual manipulation or predation. Both young men and young women would engage in analysis of sexual ethics that was underpinned by the view that women have the responsibility for occupying the moral high ground of sex: saying no, being good, keeping a relationship ‘functional’ (which seemed, much of the time, to amount to ‘him not cheating on me’). ‘Promiscuity’ is something we shame women for only because we have in place a set of harmful ideological commitments (patriarchal gender roles) that mete out social status to men and women in terms of the roles we ascribe as masculine and as feminine. We accept that it is valuable for a man to have experience and for a woman to have purity, and we shame members of each gender if they don’t meet those expectations.

What we should instead be acknowledging is, first, that sex drive, like every other human characteristic, is something that exists on a spectrum across which individuals are arrayed regardless of their gender, and second, that girls who grow up in a culture that tells them they are valuable for their capacity to perform sexually will engage in that behaviour (for which they are subsequently shamed) in an effort to get access to social capital. This is what we teach them with women’s magazines featuring articles on ‘how to please your man’ and girls’ magazines that promise them that the right lip gloss will get them a boyfriend. We teach them complicity—in ways that self-abnegate, and in ways that denigrate others. Part of the harm this gender-role messaging does to boys’ conceptions of masculinity is to cut, early and deep, a bifurcation in the young boy’s psyche: sex on one side, love on the other. It cuts into girls’ psyches too, of course, as sex on one side, love on the other—just differently. Because the process of ‘growing into’ (being deformed into?) femininity requires a girl to objectify herself—both to compete with other girls as rivals for the potential boyfriend, and to self-police so that she isn’t shamed out of consideration as ‘girlfriend material’—she is effectively pushed towards seeing her life’s path as determined by her ‘choice’ of how she relates to men: as the object of sexual desire or the object of love.

We see this paucity of choices for women illustrated in a conversation during the first season of the Hulu television series version of *The Handmaid’s Tale* in which Commander Waterford expresses the view that women have a biological destiny of procreation we should all live out (episode 5: ‘Faithful’). ‘What else is there?’ he asks. June, the title handmaid who, in being assigned to his household, has become ‘Offred’ (his given name is ‘Fred,’ and the handmaids of Gilead are renamed, in each new assignment, ‘Of-the assigned Commander’s name’) responds: ‘love.’ Strictly speaking—to the extent that we recognise women as human beings—neither

answer is correct: human beings have diverse interests and preferences, and the idea that this diversity can be compressed into a single destiny is nonsense. But in fictional Gilead, the patriarchal–authoritarian state that has installed itself after a group of home-grown terrorists overthrew American democracy, women’s single biological destiny is an article of faith—biblical faith, because, as Atwood explains in her introductory essay to the 2017 reissue of her novel, ‘[t]he regime uses biblical symbols, as any authoritarian regime taking over America doubtless would: they wouldn’t be Communists or Muslims’ (xvii).

The fertility crisis that forms part of the backstory of the novel and television show is explained as the punishment of American society by an angry God, and the women who—relatively speaking—are privileged and rewarded in the new regime, the groups I see as culpably complicit, are the ‘winners’ in the new regime’s management of fertility. The wives of the Commanders are promised babies as rewards for their loyalty, and are given ‘dominion’ over their households in exchange for their collaboration with a state that no longer permits them to read, to participate (openly) in political decision-making, or to work outside the home. They and their husbands enact some of the most emotionally devastating acts of linguistic violence in the Gilead story-universe: the namings (renamings) of the babies that the handmaids bear and hand over to the wives.¹⁴ Babies are given names by the women who bring them into the world (the handmaids who are impregnated through a process of ritualised rape), and then the wives, asserting possession, give the babies new names by which Gilead recognises them.

This presentation of ‘privileged femininity’ underscores the point that Connell and Messerschmidt make about hegemonic masculinities being, not a description of actual lived experiences, but models that ‘express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires’ (838). The Commanders’ wives are all presumed to have motherhood as their goal, a goal that, in circumstances of widespread infertility, the institution of the ‘handmaid’ role is designed to fulfil. They are also presumed to endorse norms of monogamy, thus the institution of the euphemistically named ‘ceremony,’ in which the Commander’s wife holds ‘her’ handmaid down during a ritualised monthly rape by the Commander during what has been identified as the handmaid’s window of fertility.

The other privileged group of women in Gilead, the aunts, are promised a limited access to authority: management of the handmaids who are forced to provide the wives with the promised babies. The aunts, who are permitted to read and write in the course of their administrative duties, run the institutions that, drawing from biblical lore, are officially called Rachel and Leah Centers. Unofficially, these places where fertile women the regime has rounded up are held when not ‘assigned’ to a household are referred to as ‘the Red Centers,’ because the handmaids wear red, a colour that represents the blood of childbirth and, as Atwood notes, ‘is easier to see if you happen to be fleeing’ (xvii). Early in season 1 of the television show,

the handmaids' duties were explained by Aunt Lydia to the handmaids-in-training at the Red Center through the biblical story of Rachel, the infertile wife of Jacob, who favoured her over his other wife—Rachel's sister, Leah (episode 4: 'Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum'). 'Give me children, or else I die,' says Aunt Lydia, quoting the passage of Genesis in which Rachel demands of her husband that he impregnate her handmaid so that 'she shall bear upon my knees [and] I may have children through her' ('Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum').¹⁵

The aunts are depicted as serving for a variety of reasons: some, Atwood tells us, are 'true believers,' others are 'sadists' or 'opportunists' (xvi).¹⁶ This too mirrors real life;

women will gang up on other women . . . will gladly take positions of power over other women, even—and, possibly, especially—in systems in which women as a whole have scant power: all power is relative, and in tough times any amount is seen as better than none.

(Atwood xvi)

There is a cynical power calculus on display in the conduct of the wives and aunts, implicitly acknowledged by Commander Waterford when he tells June/Offred they were trying to build a better society: 'Better never means better for everyone. It always means worse for some' ('Faithful'). For the some who participate in 'better,' that can be enough. At least in part, women's failure to contest social institutionalisation of sexism and misogyny is a refusal: women who benefit from regimes that exploit other women have, as Atwood notes, a vested interest in disavowing gendered solidarity.¹⁷

In this same episode, we see also the other type of complicity that I want to analyse as germane to traditional gender scripts women are given: the accommodation that many of us perform in the course of our lives simply to survive and/or make life bearable. This is not accommodation that I want to name as blameworthy or grounds for condemnation of the women who make such choices; it is 'complicity' in a value-neutral sense, if that is possible. It is a 'going along' with the power structure, but it is the kind of going-along that is performed in circumstances where the woman has few options and is doing what she can to not harm or exploit others less powerful than she. The woman who is initially introduced to us as 'Ofglen 2' (whose real name, Lillie, is revealed late in season 2) instructs June (who is herself 'Offred 2'¹⁸) not to 'mess this up' for her, disclosing that, pre-Gilead, she 'used to get fucked behind a dumpster just so [she] could buy a sixth of Oxy[contin] and a Happy Meal' and now she has 'a safe place to sleep every night and . . . people who are nice to [her]' ('Faithful'). Objectively, Ofglen 2's life in Gilead is better than her previous existence as a homeless, drug-addicted prostitute, but even her willingness to accommodate herself to the new system has its limits: as events progress, she does get pushed to the point where she defies the establishment and loses first her tongue, then

her life. In her example, we see that, for some women, complicity, even with survival dangled as the reward, can become too high a price to pay.

The fertile women who are forced into the ritualised sex slavery justified by biblical Rachel's exploitation of her own maid, Bihlah, only really have two options—submit or die; they are the population most ruthlessly driven to enact complicity-as-survival. Señora Castillo, the Mexican ambassador who visits the Waterford household as part of a trade delegation, asks June/Offred, 'Did you choose to be a handmaid?' (episode 6: 'A Woman's Place'). One might argue that, of her severely limited options, yes, June did choose this—as a way of staying in Gilead and tracking down the daughter taken from her during her attempted escape at the outset of the story. But June herself later tells the ambassador, 'I didn't choose this. They caught me. I was trying to escape' ('A Woman's Place').

We are later introduced to less overtly brutal, but no less desperate, gambles on complicity made by the women who work as prostitutes in puritanical Gilead, the jezebels who staff the illicit nightclub/hotel/brothel that June/Offred is smuggled into on multiple occasions (episode 8: 'Jezebels'). These women—some of whom are former prostitutes who have transitioned to the new regime; others, former academics and professional career women—are described by the Commander as women who couldn't assimilate (and presumably preferred this fate to working the toxic wasteland of the colonies). 'I'm told you can have quite a good conversation with some of them,' Waterford tells June. Episode 8 ('Jezebels') closes with June listening to the music box with the little ballerina in it that had been given to her by Serena Joy, and vowing, 'I will not be that girl in the box.' And yet, throughout the show, she does, after multiple escape attempts, each time choose to put herself back into the box/prison that is Gilead to find a way to get her daughter, Hannah, out too. So many of us choose life in a box, often for equally valid reasons.

Making the choice to stay isolated, in a box, in circumstances like the ones the handmaids, marthas, and jezebels find themselves in—serve or die—makes sense on an individual level. But, to return to the question I raised in a note in the previous chapter, it is hard to understand why women as a societal sub-population have not built supportive community spaces in response to widespread sexism and misogyny on the same scale at which we see racial, ethnic, and religious minorities building protections against hostility and discrimination. There is the point that Atwood noted in discussion of what motivates Gilead's aunts: the scramble for scraps of power, even at the expense of more powerless individuals. This, though, seems like both only a partial answer and an answer that substitutes description for explanation. It does not explain why, to put the point in Simone de Beauvoir's words, women fail to contest male sovereignty (7). 'Proletarians say "we,"' Beauvoir tells us; 'So do blacks' (8). But, unlike these groups,

[w]omen—except in certain abstract gatherings such as conferences—do not use 'we'; men say 'women,' and women adopt this word to refer

to [our]selves . . . [we] live dispersed among men, tied by homes, work, economic interests, and social conditions to certain men—fathers or husbands—more closely than to other women.

(8)

This analysis mirrors the one given by Adrienne Rich: we ‘have no past, no history, no religion of [our] own . . . no solidarity of labor or interests’ (Beauvoir 8). At the risk of seeming to offer a pat answer—for I do not think what I am saying here is at all a simple or easy solution—this seems to me to be the legacy of feminism, left by Second Wave radical feminists to the Third Wave of activism: to build solidarity in ways that women and girls can envision a welcoming community that makes space for each of us, in our individuality. If we consider the (re)building of social space as an ultimate goal of, for instance, movements to dismantle rape culture, we can see, I think, both the potential power and the enormous amount of work that lies before us in this global ‘me too’ moment; it can be—if we make it—a movement to transform our societies, and our consciousnesses.

Cultural anthropologist and queer theorist Gayle Rubin discusses this question of how women are taught to think about ourselves in her influential essay, ‘The Traffic in Women.’ Rubin grounds this part of her larger discussion in Freudian psychoanalysis which, she argues, is a powerful theoretical tool in our efforts to understand the gendered nature of human sexuality. She presents an account of Freud’s theory of sexuality in which ‘the creation of “femininity” in women in the course of socialization is an act of psychic brutality,’ and argues that ‘it leaves in women an immense resentment of the suppression to which they were subjected’—an anger for which we have few outlets of expression (Rubin 196). ‘One can read Freud’s essays on femininity as descriptions of how a group is prepared psychologically, at a tender age, to live with its oppression,’ she asserts (Rubin 196). We are told the biological capacity some of us have for procreation is a destiny that all of us must fulfil, if we are to be ‘real women,’ and that this is what constitutes and justifies our subordination to men. We are given no resources to question this destiny, to resist it, or to replace it with something that an individual woman might feel suits her better.¹⁹ It is small wonder, then, that Rubin understands ‘[t]he psychoanalytic theory of femininity [as] one that sees female development based largely on pain and humiliation,’ and believes that ‘it takes some fancy footwork to explain why anyone ought to enjoy being a woman’ (197).

Trained into a sometimes painful and humiliating complicity with a cultural and social framework that tells us either that we are unsuited for anything else or that we will bitterly regret choosing lives that do not centre around having children, we are also raised to be purveyors of deception.²⁰ Beauvoir’s account of how girls are socially constructed into women points out that we are taught to hide our romantic and sexual attractions (to not be thought too eager or forward), to hide our emotions (to not be thought too

needy), to hide any desires we might have to lead or to run things (to not be thought too pushy), to hide any effort or burden that femininity places on us (to not be thought too artificial), to hide, even, evidence that we menstruate (342–349, 369). All of this makes it difficult for a woman to live any life of integrity and self-awareness that is not oppositional and seen by others as deviant. But, as I observed in my introduction to this book, living in a state of conflict and alienation is a painful experience: it deprives us of our psychological need for validation from others. Compared to the prospect of a constant fight to articulate your own view of yourself as a distinct individual in a world that tells you that you are (or should be) just like every other woman—look at her, she’s happy; what’s the matter with you?—living in a box starts to look almost easy.

Sara Ahmed’s meditations on living a feminist life similarly position complicity as a kind of exhaustion or unwillingness to endure alienation. ‘These are complicated scenarios,’ she says:

you can receive some benefits by adapting yourself to a system that is, at another level, compromising your capacity to inhabit a world on more equal terms. . . . for many women, becoming willing to participate in sexist culture is a compromise, even if it is not registered as such, because we have been taught (from past experience, from what we come up against) that being unwilling to participate can be dangerous. You risk becoming alienated from all of the existing structures that enable survival.

(Ahmed 36)

The failure or refusal to even see or name the sexism and misogyny that is widespread in most of the world’s cultures, let alone build independent communities of support that could give us refuge from those phenomena, can be explained as occurring because ‘resistance to recognizing something might be a way of coping with or living with that thing’ (Ahmed 36). It is not always, perhaps not even often, a case of failing to care about our own well-being or that of the other women in our lives; I think of *The Handmaid’s Tale*’s Serena Joy when I read Ahmed’s observation about women who do society’s work of policing other women: they ‘become the rod as a way of avoiding the consequences of being beaten’ (158).²¹ Perhaps because (most) women have, throughout history, been shut out of power so thoroughly that we have not developed the trappings or the habits of self-sufficiency, it is harder than we suppose it ought to be to separate the sadistic aunts Atwood spoke of from the colonised wives and mothers and the cowed handmaids. Ahmed speaks of the unwillingness to be disruptive—to be the figure she labels ‘the feminist killjoy’—as a kind of fragility, and connects accommodation to self-preservation. ‘We might . . . decide not to become a killjoy in certain moments, because the costs would be too high,’ she speculates; ‘we would break what we need to hold on to, a relationship that we care about, a person we love, a world we cannot let go of . . .’ (Ahmed 171).

On not being a princess: *Little Red Riding Hood, and other paths through the woods*

‘We have been stalled in a maze of false dichotomies,’ Adrienne Rich tells us (659). She concludes her analysis in ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’ with the observation that:

[T]he absence of choice remains the great unacknowledged reality, and in the absence of choice, women will remain dependent upon the chance or luck of particular relationships and will have no collective power to determine the meaning and place of sexuality in [our] lives. As we address the institution [of heterosexuality] itself, moreover, we begin to perceive a history of female resistance which has never fully understood itself because it has been so fragmented, miscalled, erased. It will require a courageous grasp of the politics and economics, as well as the cultural propaganda, of heterosexuality to carry us beyond individual cases or diversified group situations into the complex kind of overview needed to undo the power men everywhere wield over women, power which has become a model for every other form of exploitation and illegitimate control.

(Rich 659–660)

It is worth quoting her concluding comments at such length because they give us an overview of the challenges we face in the project of creating other paths through the enchanted woods that is our social world—‘enchanted’ because we see and interact with gender roles that are distortions of the complexity and diversity of individual human beings. We can all be more than the aspirations that have been inculcated in us through fairy tales and other cultural propaganda. Part of what we will need, as we map out these other paths possible to us, is a rethinking of the social relations I have been describing in this chapter, a rethinking that brings an end to the world in which masculinity is the defining feature of those who rule and femininity is the defining feature of those who submit.

Articulating life paths beyond the corrosive power relations of dominance and submission is the project of a lot of contemporary feminist theory and adjacent ethics scholarship. A world without dominance is, in fact, another point of convergence between feminist theory and peace studies; as a manifestation of cultural violence, assertion of dominance is one of the behaviours that theorisation of nonviolence is widely concerned to contest. Australian masculinity theorist Rob Cover, drawing on Connell’s work on masculinities and on American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler’s ethics of nonviolence, identifies vulnerability as the ground of the Butlerian ethics that asserts itself against dominance and submission: we all inhabit bodies that are exposed to the world and each other in ways that make us easily harmed, make our lives precarious, and we are all also

dependent upon others for the conditions in which we can sustain our lives (Cover 442; Butler 31–32, 43–46). Because vulnerability is part of our shared human experience, ‘we are compelled to engage with others in ways which are responsible and responsive to that vulnerability; that is, in relations of non-violence,’ asserts Cover (442).

Extending Butler’s articulation of vulnerability into a discussion of sexual ethics, he tells us that ‘the capacity to recognise vulnerability of the other through vulnerability of the self is a way of thinking about ethical relationships’ (Cover 436). In the context of his discussion of how ‘hypermasculine’ men (high-performing team-sport athletes) relate to women, ethical sexual behaviour, and sexual violence, development of this capacity is a way of challenging the sense of inviolability that is often part of masculine identities. But I think his formulation of the Butlerian ethic of vulnerability is also useful in shedding light on the power of ‘me too’ as a way for women to respond to each other as we grapple with the politics, economics, and cultural propaganda Rich has dissected for us. ‘Me too’ is a way of recognising my own vulnerability when I am confronted with your story, and seeing your vulnerability through seeing my own. It is not a solution in itself, not a panacea, but it is a first step on a path to a world in which we all have more choices, more autonomy, and more compassion for the ways in which the jagged edges of our world have wounded, even broken, some of us. This empathy expansion is part of what I understand Sara Ahmed to be drawing our attention to when she says, in her discussion of feminists’ fragility in a hostile world, that ‘[p]erhaps feminism is how we pick up the pieces’ (171).

‘To be engaged in the creation of a world for women is to transform what it means to be women,’ Ahmed says (224). She contends that ‘[t]he history of woman is impossible to disentangle from the history of wife: the female human [is presented] not only as *in relation to* man but as *for* man’ (Ahmed 224, emphasis added). Writing, like Rich, from a lesbian-feminist standpoint, Ahmed’s mapping of a new path for social relations, a way of being in a world that is not populated by princes and princesses, is a vision of a woman-centred, woman-identified world. ‘Woman identification,’ she explains, ‘. . . is about refusing as women to identify with male culture. To refuse to identify is to withdraw your own energy from relationships to men’ (Ahmed 226). Amplifying the call Rich makes in ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’ for women to reorient our capacities for love and care away from men and towards other women—encapsulated in Rich’s use of the term ‘lesbian continuum’—Ahmed crafts her own call ‘not as taking the sex out of lesbianism (by putting friendships between women on the same continuum with sexual relationships) but as a call to redirect our attention’ (227). ‘To attend to women, we have to unlearn how we have learned to screen women out,’ she says (Ahmed 227).

I want to acknowledge that there is indeed an uncritical way that heterosexual feminists can approach Rich’s concept of the lesbian continuum that

Ahmed rightly calls out in her rejection of putting women's friendships on the same plane with women's sexual relationships; it can trivialise the sexual orientation of some women to our own sex, and can erase the political and ethical implications of that orientation, themselves an important strand of at least some lesbian feminism. I hope I am not committing that error. What I want to hypothesise as possible, however, in the creation of a more woman-oriented world, is space—not co-identical with, but linked to, the space Rich and Ahmed are carving out—a space for a 'me too' solidarity among heterosexual and lesbian women. I am conscious of the troubled history that mainstream strands of feminism ('white liberal feminism') have produced in this regard: lesbian feminism has been both erased and colonised at different points in feminism's cultural evolution in both the United States and Canada, for example. But there is a sharedness of women's experiences with patriarchy that is broader than an uncritical claim to 'sameness,' and it is in this sharedness that I position my hopes for an attending to women, an unlearning of our screening out of women, that can include heterosexual women who are willing to learn ethically and politically from the insights of lesbian feminism. After all, as Ahmed notes, '[e]ven to withdraw your energy from relationships to men will then be pathologized as hatred of men' (226). She follows this observation with the comment that '[t]his is why the lesbian appears so regularly as a man hater' (Ahmed 226), but the fact is that heterosexual women too are commonly accused of hating men if we live self-sufficiently and show any overt commitment to mentoring and economically supporting other women as a matter of political principle (for instance, deliberately choosing to patronise woman-owned businesses or work with female professionals wherever possible). Perhaps our paths through the woods will necessarily diverge at some points, but we do have some grounds for common cause.²²

One point of divergence in the project of building a world more hospitable to women can be identified by drawing American feminist essayist Rebecca Solnit's work into this discussion. Solnit's 2014 book *Men Explain Things to Me* had been on my reading list ever since the word 'mansplaining' was coined from its title, and when I finally turned to it as a resource for this book, I was struck by—not surprised, exactly, but keenly appreciative of—the fact that two of the high-profile rape incidents that had drawn me into thinking and writing about rape culture—the Delhi bus rape and the Steubenville High School rape—had also had a galvanising effect on her writing about gender relations. Her views about men, women, patriarchy, and feminism resonate with my own; notably, we are both committed to the view that patriarchy, as an ideology of male dominance, needs to be clearly delineated from men as a population, all of whom are harmed in some ways by patriarchy—even those few who benefit—and many of whom are allies in feminist struggle. Solnit herself notes that '[g]ay men and lesbians have already opened up the question of what qualities and roles are male and female in ways that can be liberating for straight people' (58), and both of us acknowledge our own good fortune in having kind, principled, loving men in

our lives. So, while it arguably makes sense for lesbian feminists to commit themselves to what Ahmed labels ‘woman identification,’ perhaps even up to and including withdrawing from relationships with men (Ahmed 226),²³ for heterosexual feminists it is important, I think, to make the distinction between ‘male culture’ and men.

‘Women’s liberation has often been portrayed as a movement intent on encroaching upon or taking power and privilege away from men,’ Solnit observes, ‘as though in some dismal zero-sum game, only one gender at a time could be free and powerful’ (35). ‘But,’ she continues,

we are free together or slaves together. Surely the mindset of those who think they need to win, to dominate, to punish, to reign supreme must be terrible and far from free, and giving up this unachievable pursuit would be liberatory.

(Solnit 35)

This liberation, for all of us as individual human beings, could be a sharing of social power, not the role reversal that anti-feminists depict: the implausible dystopia in which women would rule over men and expect the same submission from them that patriarchy has historically demanded of us. The power sharing that Solnit describes as feminism’s ideal would need to be ‘a happy medium between these poles to which the genders have been pushed, a warm equatorial belt of give and take where we should all meet’ (5). This is a vision of the world in which men and women are all acknowledged as bearers of human rights, in equal measure—rights that confer respect, recognition, and full participation in public life (Solnit 14). Fighting misogyny, patriarchy, and rape culture does not demonise men—at least, it should not, if we are fighting on the ground of basic human rights. To assume that men will be harmed by a social movement for gender equality is to endorse a very dim view of men, and what a healthy masculinity is (or could be).

The need to think more deeply and carefully about healthy identities for men and boys is increasingly a feature of Anglophone feminist discourses about misogyny. Solnit’s take on the matter is that

[t]here’s something about how masculinity is imagined, about what’s praised and encouraged, about the way violence is passed on to boys that needs to be addressed . . . Kindness and gentleness never had a gender, and neither did empathy.

(34)

Jessica Valenti, similarly, points out the multiple ways in which denials of misogyny, patriarchy, and rape culture don’t just endanger girls and women; they short-change boys and men. We are, she says:

failing to raise them to believe they can be men without inflicting pain on others, failing to teach them that they are not entitled to women’s

sexual attention and failing to allow them an outlet for understandable human fear and foibles that will not label them ‘weak’ or unworthy. Not every attack [on women] is preventable, but the misogyny that drives them is.

(Valenti)

This attention to the ways that misogyny is produced through how boys are (inadequately) taught to be men demonstrates the need for comprehensive dismantling of patriarchal social structures. We need to be building more than a climate of respect and egalitarianism in sexual interaction; body image, media representation, workplace equality, and parenting (versus mothering and fathering) all contribute to ethical orientations that allow each of us to see and accept that who we are to each other, as individuals, has been shaped by our gender identities, but is not reducible to the very rigid gender scripts we have inherited. We need to be pushing back against patriarchal expectations by, among other things, challenging the stigma of being a sexual assault survivor; telling stories of trauma and survival; being willing to have vulnerable, emotionally revealing conversations (in itself an act of resistance to rape culture, which doesn’t know what to do with emotion other than to mock it as weakness); celebrating mutuality; and disrupting traditional gender roles through affirming the value of strong women, kind men, and whole people. Each of these things is being advanced in ‘me too’ discourses that I will be looking at in the chapters that follow, and all of them, taken together, are capable of bringing us to a deeper understanding of the gendered violence of our world. It is, in Solnit’s words, a matter of ‘look[ing] at the abuse of power as a whole rather than treating domestic violence separately from rape and murder and harassment and intimidation, online and at home and in the workplace and in the streets’ (14).

As paradoxical as it might seem to some, it is crucially important to the cause of gender equality that we notice gender, as opposed to trying to build out our social systems as ‘gender neutral.’²⁴ Feminist peace studies theorist Betty Reardon observes that ‘for both boys and girls the first socially encountered other, a person they perceive as being different from themselves, is usually of the other sex’ (7). We learn early to see gender identities as differences, and to believe that these differences are naturally occurring, totalising in the characteristics they produce, and unbridgeable; many of us spend our entire lives acting on those lessons and beliefs. Yet, as legal scholar Martha Minow has theorised, what she calls ‘the dilemma of difference’—what differences matter, in what contexts, and for what reasons—is only really a dilemma because of ‘powerful unstated assumptions about whose point of view matters, and about what is given and what is mutable in the world’ (13).

First among the assumptions she names that I think trip us up in thinking about gender is the view ‘that “differences” are intrinsic, rather than viewing them as expressions of comparisons between people’ (Minow 32); that is, difference, as a concept, is relational in ways we habitually

fail to appreciate. This is a point that Catharine MacKinnon makes too, in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*: to say that women are different from men says as much about who/what men are as it does about who/what women are (37). Second, ‘typically we adopt an unstated point of reference when assessing others’ (Minow 32), a view that some of us, as subjects (persons), are marked by descriptions of our race or gender or other relevant ‘differences,’ whereas others are ‘unmarked subjects’ who provide the point of reference and therefore need no qualifying descriptors. These ‘unmarked subjects’ are the ‘norm’ against whom all others are judged as persons whose personhood might be contested and needs to be asserted to be accepted. In a world structured by Western hegemony, this norm is the straight, white, able-bodied cis-gender male human being whose human rights do not get called into question by his clothing, his drinking habits, or his past decisions about whom he socialises with and how.

Finally, when we add ‘an assumption that the existing social and economic arrangements are natural and neutral’ (Minow 33), we end up with a rhetorical universe in which people who are ‘different’ are demanding that the world be recreated to fit their/our ‘special needs.’ For those who assume that the status quo is the way it is because of a social contract to which all parties had previously consented, our justice claims look like a wilful disregard of neutrality and freely chosen social relations. Rape culture looks like a trumped-up accusation by wilful and vengeful women who are trying to take from men the power and status they have earned. Identifying each of these assumptions and mapping them onto a world that has been constructed out of millennia of male dominance shows us how men’s authority entitlement and sexual entitlement continue to function in the present, and could reasonably continue to function in a gender-neutral future (one that refuses, in its studied neutrality, to recognise the role of gender in producing privilege or marginalisation). We can only arrive into a more gender-equal future by naming and addressing the existing inequalities—for instance, the way that #YesAllWomen are at risk of violence from #NotAllMen. And, of course, we need better stories to guide our path to this better future. Chanel Miller gives us a snapshot of a ‘counter-script’ for masculinity when she speaks of the Swedish graduate students who rescued her from Brock Turner’s assault:

I learned that before they had chased Brock, they had checked on me. Masculinity is often defined by physicality, but that initial kneeling is as powerful as the leg sweep, the tackling. Masculinity is found in the vulnerability, the crying.

(123)

The ways in which Minow’s analysis of unstated assumptions reveals power relations that have been congealed in our everyday habits of thought parallel the critique of power and knowledge that Gayatri Chakravorty

Spivak weaves into her landmark essay that I referenced at the beginning of this chapter, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ Spivak, one of the most influential voices in postcolonial thought, explores the role of power in constructing knowledge: the legitimisation of some perspectives as purveyors of knowledge (the colonising Europeans), and the subjugation of others (the colonised populations of the Third World/Global South). ‘It is well known,’ she says, ‘that [in his book, *Madness and Civilization*, French philosopher Michel] Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century’ (76). ‘But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative of history in Europe as well as in the colonies?’ she asks; ‘What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine?’ (Spivak 76). The marginalisation of the ‘other’ (the subaltern) in relation to the unmarked subject is effected in part through what Foucault is calling epistemic violence: what we speak is not considered knowledge; we are therefore effectively epistemically voiceless, unable to speak.

What is suggested to me by Spivak’s figure of the vast two-handed engine chewing up the diverse array of things that might previously have counted as knowledge in order to spit back at all of us the coloniser’s point of view as *the* knowledge is that the condition of possibility for any reclamation of our own speech/knowledge is recognition of the normativisation processes of (privileged/powerful) men’s knowledge. We have to see how they set themselves up as the epistemic standard to have any hope that we can learn how to speak back to their knowledge, against their knowledge. And we have to challenge that standard. ‘Language is power,’ Solnit tells us;

You can use the power of words to bury meaning or to excavate it. If you lack words for a phenomenon, an emotion, a situation, you can’t talk about it, which means that you can’t come together to address it, let alone change it.

(129)

This is why it is so important that we have words like ‘mansplaining,’ words that allow people to name, and begin to understand, the problems they are wrestling with. The fairy-tale equivalent here would be the questions that Little Red Riding Hood poses to her grandmother-wolf—what big ears you have? what big teeth you have?—questions that help her identify the dangers of the situation she finds herself in. And this is why the two little words ‘me too’ have such potential; as I noted earlier, they name the sharedness of experience that can point us towards how to understand—and therefore, how to dismantle—the complex exercise of power that rape culture exerts over women.

In her concluding essay of *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit opines that, ‘the future of something we may no longer call feminism must

include a deeper inquiry into men' (150). 'Feminism sought and seeks to change the whole human world,' she argues;

many men are on board with the project, but how it benefits men, and in what ways the status quo damages men as well, could bear far more thought. As could an inquiry into the men perpetrating most of the violence, the threats, the hatred—the riot squad of the volunteer police force—and the culture that encourages them.

(150)

When she wrote these words in 2014, she finished the passage with the tantalising thought that perhaps this process was already underway. I think the way that 'me too' discourses have taken hold of the popular imagination in many countries shows that she is correct in that assessment—and gives further credence to her positioning of feminism as, to use a phrase she borrows from geology and biology, a 'punctuated equilibrium': 'a pattern of change that involves slow, quiet periods of relative stasis interrupted by turbulent intervals' (Solnit 133).

I think too that her prediction that the movement we now call feminism might develop in the future under a new label is prescient. I was living in Canada in 2005 when the laws about marriage changed, and marriage became a union of two adult persons instead of a union between a man and a woman. Then, in 2006, I moved to the United States to take up my first appointment as a university professor and I was living there, ten years later, in 2015, when that country's marriage laws also changed. Solnit is right that language is power; for most of the time that I was paying attention to the campaigns in both countries to change marriage laws, the thing that was being fought for was called 'same-sex marriage,' and I remember the moment when I *knew* that the change in US law was going to happen. It was the point at which I realised the news I was reading and hearing was no longer speaking of same-sex marriage and was now referring instead to 'marriage equality.' Over the years that I have been teaching gender studies, I have encountered many students who understand that, as Solnit puts the point, 'feminism is not a scheme to deprive men but a campaign to liberate us all' (153), but have objected to the label, sometimes suggesting that 'humanism' (a term with a history all its own) would be a better name. I suspect we will know that we are beyond the patriarchal world of princes and princesses when we find ourselves, at some future point, speaking not of the ideology of feminism but of the widely accepted principle of gender equality. In order to get to that future point of human social evolution, however, we need to stop accommodating ourselves to patriarchy and instead commit ourselves to undermining it—using subversion strategies that I discuss in Chapter 5 as 'culture-jamming'—so that it crumbles into an irrelevant, impotent, discredited idea that will no longer have the power to fuel rape culture.

Coda: culture-jamming *Snow White's* gender roles

What's wrong with this story? Snow White escapes the circumstances in which she has been pitted against another woman in a competition over which of them most successfully conforms to society's beauty norms, only to end up playing the role of mother-substitute to the seven dwarves who give her shelter. She has the potential to be more than her pretty face and more than her ability to do endless domestic chores and unceasing emotional labour. What she needs is the freedom to rethink everything she has been taught about women's roles in life, and find a life-path that works for her.

What if the story unfolded this way instead?

Once upon a time, there was a young princess who lived in a palace with her vain, appearance-obsessed stepmother, the queen. It wasn't really the queen's fault that she was so concerned with her looks; she lived in a world where that was just how women were evaluated, and it was her looks that had brought her to the attention of the now-deceased king who had transformed her from commoner to queen. The princess, Snow White, knew all that, and felt quite a bit of sympathy for her stepmother, who—if she was lucky—was going to age and, because of social beliefs the kingdom had about women, would be seen by her society—and sadly, herself—as less worthwhile as she became less conventionally beautiful. Snow White also knew that many people thought she resembled her own mother, who herself had been a great beauty when she was still alive.

As she grew up, Snow White became more concerned that her stepmother was beginning to see her as a rival in this attractiveness competition she didn't even want to be part of. This belief the queen had, that beauty and value were the same thing, was depriving Snow White of the only family she had, and, as the queen's jealousy and competitiveness grew, was making Snow White fearful for her safety. She tried to downplay her looks, and she tried to avoid her stepmother, but nothing seemed to diminish the queen's growing paranoia that her stepdaughter would become more beautiful than she. It was all quite ridiculous really, in Snow White's mind; her stepmother was so invested in being attractive to men, but she showed no interest in any particular man. She just had this compulsive need to be adored and admired—not for actual accomplishments, but for her looks. It was funny, and sad, and increasingly dangerous. Snow White knew she had to leave before things progressed to the point that she would no longer be able to convince the queen that she wasn't a threat.

Her birthday was approaching and she would be coming of an age when the princes of neighbouring kingdoms would start seeking to ally their kingdoms with hers through marriage. That was a bit repulsive too, Snow White thought; it made her feel like a commodity, there for other people to judge and to use. It wasn't just that she was repelled by all of the very serious

discussion at court about how good a marriage she could make by using her beauty and the wealth of the lands she would bring with her; the princes who had started to visit were pompous, and shallow, and boring. All they talked about was their wealth and her beauty. Her real distaste for the idea, though, was her fear that she would lose her sense of herself as a person, that she would turn into the kind of woman her stepmother was: needy of reassurance about her beauty and dependent on male adoration. She just couldn't live that life, which meant she just couldn't stay.

So, early one morning, she set out from the palace, with no particular destination in mind. She had her warmest cloak and her sturdiest boots, the horse who had been her constant companion from the time she was a foal, and, tucked safely into her saddlebags, some food she had scavenged from the kitchen, a few coins, and the contents of her jewellery box. As she rode, she realised that she hadn't really planned her escape into her new life very well. She had known for a while now that she was going to have to leave, but because she had been reluctant to acknowledge the necessity, she hadn't gathered any of the life skills that would come in handy. As night fell, she was getting tired and would have liked to stop and rest by a fire, but she didn't know how to make one.

That first night was miserable; she rode slowly, letting the horse conserve her energy, but they were both tired. By the end of the second day, Snow White's food had run out. There was plenty of grass for her horse, and water for them both, but Snow White couldn't eat grass. If only she had gotten one of the groundskeepers at the palace to teach her how to hunt, she thought. But it wouldn't have done any good; she didn't know how to make the fire she would have needed to cook anything she might have caught. If only she had paid more attention to what the kitchen staff had said about the mushrooms and berries in the woods. Surely some of them were edible; she just didn't know which ones. Maybe by the next day she would be far enough away from the palace to risk stopping at an inn for food, she thought. She would have to be careful that no one recognised her; it had been bad enough being the compliant and obedient ever-more-beautiful princess in the queen's palace, but it would be intolerable if she were returned to the queen as a rebellious runaway. She'd put me in the dungeon, for sure, mused the no-longer princess.

As darkness fell, she saw a faint light coming through the trees lining the wooded side-road she and her horse were travelling. A house? Maybe a house with a bit of food to spare in exchange for a coin? She was hungry enough to dismount and lead her horse quietly through the woods to investigate. It *was* a house, a small house, a cottage. She tied the horse's reins to a tree, fished a coin out of one of the saddlebags and approached the door, willing her stomach to not embarrass her with its very unladylike growls of hunger. Just as she was screwing up the courage to knock, the door opened and a slight figure exiting in a hurry bumped into her. Snow White had spent her life as a child in the company of adults, and even as she approached her

own adulthood, she was not what you would call tall. It was an uncommon experience for her to tower over anyone. Well, not tower exactly, but the figure who had just bumped into her only came to her shoulder.

Mutual apologies out of the way, the slight figure introduced himself (herself? Snow White wasn't sure and didn't want to be rude) as Bashful. Jokingly, Snow White introduced herself as Hungry, and asked if the household had any food they would exchange for a coin. Grinning in appreciation of the joke, Bashful invited her in and introduced her to the others: Doc, Happy, Sneezy, . . . Snow White wasn't sure she'd be able to keep their names straight. One of them—Dopey, maybe? or was that Bashful again?—got a bowl out of a cupboard and served up some game stew with bread. It was delicious, the tastiest meal Snow White had eaten in recent memory. When she was finished, she thanked them all for their hospitality and offered her coin, but they refused to take it. 'There must be some way I can repay you?' she asked. 'You could do the dishes,' one said irascibly . . . ah yes, that would be Grumpy. Her memory was better now that her stomach was full. 'It'd be nice to have a real girl looking after things in the kitchen,' he continued; 'Bashful usually does that work but he's not even that good at being a girl.' Snow White had never washed dishes before, but it seemed like a fair trade and she muddled through well enough. (Bashful hovered near her elbow, helpfully offering tips in a way that made clear he was used to doing this household work for the other men, dwarves, they had called themselves.)

Sleepy yawned, and the other dwarves started to prepare for bed. Snow White rose to leave, and Doc, who seemed clearly to be the head of the household, asked her where she was intending to spend the night. 'My horse is tied up outside,' she explained; 'we'll just make our way back to the road and keep travelling.' The dwarves would not hear of that plan, insisting that she stay the night. 'You can sleep on the floor,' Grumpy said. 'The fire will keep you warm,' Happy observed. 'You can have my blanket,' Bashful offered, blushing furiously. 'Oh, that's not necessary,' Snow White insisted. 'I'll go unsaddle my horse and I can use the saddle blanket.' That night was the first time she had ever slept on a floor; it wasn't terribly comfortable, but Happy was right about the fire keeping her warm.

When she woke the next morning, the cottage was quiet and seemingly empty. Someone had tended the fire as she slept and it was now giving off too much heat for her to stay so close to it while wrapped in such a warm blanket. As she stretched, the door of the cottage once again opened unexpectedly and this time a slight figure entered: Bashful, again. 'The guys are off to work in the mines,' he explained. 'I hate going down into them every day so I volunteered to stay home and keep you company; Grumpy was convinced you'd rob us blind if we left you alone.' 'I would not!' Snow White stoutly insisted. 'I know,' said Bashful. 'I don't need money,' she explained; 'I'm the princess.' 'I know,' said Bashful; 'I recognised you because you're so beautiful.' Snow White sighed heavily. 'I wish I weren't. If I were plainer, maybe I would have been able to stay at home in the palace, and not have

had to run away like I had done something wrong.’ The next thing she knew, she was pouring her heart out to the sympathetic dwarf, telling him all about her jealous stepmother, and the mirror she was always staring into and muttering at, and the suitors, and how much she hated being treated like a side of well-marbled beef, and how she just was not going to live like that anymore.

Bashful listened with a wistful expression: ‘you’re brave, and I wish I could do what you’re doing,’ he finally said. ‘Remember how I almost knocked you over last night?’ he asked. She nodded. ‘I was desperate to get away from them after dinner last night,’ he explained; ‘they had been teasing me again because I don’t like the mines and prefer to spend my time here by myself, taking care of the cottage. I’m by myself a lot of time,’ he continued. ‘I just don’t feel all that comfortable around the other guys—I’m different, and they don’t seem to realise that they’re teasing me for something I can’t help, but I do.’ He told Snow White how much he dreamed of going away, living a different life, being a different self. ‘I like your self,’ she said, ‘and you don’t seem uncomfortable around me.’ ‘No, you’re like me,’ Bashful agreed, ‘—you’re different too. Only, maybe different in a different way. The other dwarves expect me to be a guy like them, and I look like I am, but I don’t feel like I am. Inside, I feel . . . different. Like, not a guy.’ ‘I’m not a guy, either,’ Snow White agreed, ‘but I’m also not much of a girl, not by other people’s standards. I don’t want to be beautiful, I don’t want to get married, I don’t want to have babies, I don’t want to run a household where I take care of everyone and slowly fade into invisibility until I’m nothing more than an appliance.’

‘So what *do* you want to do?’ Bashful asked. ‘I don’t know,’ Snow White answered. ‘That’s why I need to leave the kingdom. I need to go someplace where these expectations about what I’m going to do, and think, and look like, just because I’m a girl, aren’t thrown in my way all the time, some place where I can stretch out and breathe, and think for myself about what kind of person I want to be and what kind of life I want to live.’ ‘That sounds *amazing*,’ Bashful said, a little bit dreamily and a little bit mournfully; ‘I wish I could go to that place too.’ ‘You could come with me,’ Snow White offered; ‘we could go together.’

Notes

- 1 The ‘unwomen’ are those who, because they are not valuable to the state in any other way, have been sent to ‘the colonies’ to clear, and presumably reclaim, land that has been contaminated by industrial pollution and nuclear disasters. This is a slow death sentence that, like the quicker death sentences of hanging and stoning, is deployed as a threat to keep the valuable women in line. The resonances of the original novel and the early seasons of the television show to the exploitation and abuses of power that are being articulated under the ‘me too’ umbrella are coincidental—the novel was published in 1985; the television show was commissioned in 2016, and two seasons were ordered before any of the

reporting or social media that brought #metoo to popular awareness. (Season 1 was both filmed and released in the pre-'me too' era; season 2 was filmed contemporaneously with the first 'me too' allegations in the United States; and Atwood's sequel and subsequent seasons of the show were all released into a cultural context infused with 'me too' discourses.) But, as Atwood observes in an introduction for a (pre-'me too') February 2017 reissue of her novel, she wrote imbued with a commitment to 'not put any events into the book that had not already happened' (xiv). 'So many different strands fed into *The Handmaid's Tale*—group executions, sumptuary laws, book-burnings, the Lebensborn program of the SS and the child-stealing of the Argentinian generals, the history of slavery, the history of American polygamy . . .' (Atwood xviii). Gilead is 'anti-prediction,' created by Atwood in the hope that it will not come true (xviii), but in themes and attitudes, it is a world that is a searing, albeit highly stylised and dramatised, account of many women's lives.

- 2 The APA report defines 'traditional masculinity ideology' as 'the dominant (referred to as "hegemonic") form of masculinity that strongly influences what members of a culture take to be normative' (6), and defines 'gender role strain' and 'gender role conflict' as, respectively, 'a psychological situation in which gender role demands have negative consequences on the individual or others' (2) and 'problems resulting from adherence to "rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles . . . that result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self"' (3). The guidelines outlined in the report have as their goal 'enhanc[ing] gender- and culture-sensitive psychological practice with boys and men from diverse backgrounds in the United States' (2), so they are necessarily culture-specific. Similarly, Connell's hegemonic masculinity is historically specific; 'gender relations [a]re historical, so gender hierarchies [a]re subject to change' (Connell and Messerschmidt 832).
- 3 Even in non-Abrahamic traditions—Greek and Roman mythology, the Hindu pantheon, and less personified belief structures like Buddhism and Shintoism—we find patriarchal figures that command a level of obedience and assert an authority reminiscent of God the Father.
- 4 'Orientalism' is the term coined by Palestinian-American cultural theorist Edward Said to describe the European and American ('Western') racism that variously disparages and romanticises 'Eastern' cultures by depicting them as unchanging, decadent, mysterious, and populated by men and (stereotypically, veiled) women whose thoughts and values are 'other,' always foreign and (supposedly) largely incompatible with Western liberalism, modernism, and human rights.
- 5 Spivak makes the point that *sati*, the practice of a Hindu widow throwing herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre, 'was not practiced universally and was not caste- or class-fixed' (93). As her careful analysis makes clear, *sati* was also not well-understood by the British would-be rescuers of Indian women.
- 6 'Doxxing' is the practice of publishing personal identifying information about individuals—in these cases, home addresses and telephone numbers—on the internet so that strangers can threaten that individual's sense of privacy and personal safety. It is direct violence on the part of the individuals who post and share this information, but it is structural violence insofar as platforms like Twitter are designed and maintained in ways that make consequence-free transmission of harmful information possible. Preference for the free-speech rights of

online misogynists over the safety and security of the women they are targeting is cultural violence.

- 7 One of the most surprising things, for me, about Chanel Miller's 2019 memoir of rebuilding her life after being sexually assaulted by Brock Turner was the discovery that there was an actual link in her lived experience between Rodger and Turner. I had associated them, in my mind and in early sketches of this discussion, only as similar tokens of a type—the sexually entitled American college student—but Miller had been a graduating student at University of California, Santa Barbara and had been physically present in Isla Vista during the weekend Rodger committed his murders. She describes vividly in her memoir the ways in which sexually motivated violence against women coloured her fears for her personal safety in the lead-up to Turner's trial (Miller 87–91).
- 8 One might point to social media phenomena like the recent 'wife guy' cluster of men who have gained online recognition by posting about their wives, and argue that this trend exists in opposition to, and undercuts, both online misogyny and toxic masculinity in general. It is true that wife guys do not display the hatred of women that has been implicated in real-world violence, but, as a *New York Times* think-piece on the phenomenon notes, these men are exploiting 'a rather sexist tradition—of men gaining social status through the physical appearance of their wives—and pitch[ing] it as a newly enlightened stance' (Hess). The author of the piece, Amanda Hess, notes a similarity between the wife guy and the incel: where the incel 'has crafted a whole online persona around his nonexistent sex life . . . [and feels] entitled to a relationship with a woman, the wife guy seems to expect to be congratulated for entering into one.' His online adoration of his wife is not really about *her*; it's about him, and aims at enhancing his status.
- 9 I put this word in scare quotes because it is not clear from their posts that any of them have actually put any real effort into trying to form a relationship and been subsequently rebuffed. Many of the posters seem to channel their time and energy into claiming victimhood because they are not being actively pursued by stereotypically hot, eager, young women, and the gunmen they lionise seem to have only approached women—or, in Rodger's case, sprayed them with Starbucks latte—with hostility and violence, some of it deadly. As journalist Stassa Edwards puts the point, the incel claim to victimhood is 'engendered solely by women exercising autonomous choices,' something that is simply not licensed in traditional/toxic masculine views about what/how women should be. The women who have been killed by the men incels hail as their heroes 'were stand-ins for abstractions, for women who had erred by not submitting to some natural order, some hierarchy of gender meant to be determined by these men alone, meant to satisfy their needs' (Edwards, 'Saint Elliot Rodger').
- 10 The 'isolated incident' explanation usually hinges on identifying the perpetrator of violence as mentally ill or troubled, but this explanation ignores the fact that mentally ill people are vastly more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators, and that troubled people do not exist in vacuums. Rebecca Solnit quotes the observation of a friend of hers that 'the ill brain' will fixate on 'the surrounding culture's illness' in attempts to make sense of the situation in which one finds oneself (122). In a violent, misogynist culture with easy access to guns and an online community that valorises your violence as striking a blow for all 'involuntarily celibate' men, we would see precisely the kinds of violent gendered hatred we are seeing now.

- 11 I once, in my early 20s, waitressed in a hotel restaurant whose human resources department required all female staff (the employee handbook in which this was written called us ‘ladies’) to ‘wear a little make-up to highlight your femininity.’
- 12 These statistics include the fairly well-known estimate from the late 1990s (see Peterson, cited in Leopold) that American women (those who have become single mothers, post-divorce) suffered an estimated 27% decline in household income following a divorce whereas their former husbands’ household incomes increased up to 10% (because they are now paying child support instead of splitting family expenses). Andress and Bröckel found similar results following divorce in German families (for a detailed analysis, see Leopold).
- 13 When I was first studying philosophy, during my undergraduate years in university, I recall an older male professor once singling out the women in a mixed undergraduate–graduate class of both genders, telling us that if we worked very hard and were very lucky, we too might be able to get jobs in this field I loved so much. At the time, I and my friends were merely annoyed and contemptuous at how patronising he was, but when the ‘me too’ moment erupted in the United States and I found myself obsessively reading online accounts of women who had been driven from academia for things like not wanting to have sex with a dissertation advisor or an influential teacher or colleague, I realised he had actually been correct about the ‘lucky’ part. Of that group of friends—all highly intelligent, driven people who aspired to academic careers—I am the only one I know of who is still in academia; the academic aspirations of at least two of the women in that group did not survive the male professorial attention they encountered at that institution.
- 14 One way to see the world of *The Handmaid’s Tale* as tapping into the deconstruction of toxic masculinity and complicit femininity that I understand as a significant aspect of the ‘me too’ challenge is by tracing the instances of linguistic violence in its universe, particularly those that involve naming, renaming, and not naming. We can see the priorities of patriarchy in the fact that the men who are servants are still addressed by their pre-Gilead names, whereas the handmaids are not (unless they are between assignments, in the limbo of the Red Center). The ‘marthas’ (household servants) don’t have names as fully as the male servants do—they are called by their names to their faces but defined by their social roles in conversations that wives and commanders have with each other, where they typically get referred to generically as marthas. They clearly don’t need to be ruthlessly suppressed in the way the handmaids do; they’re just residually erased. The ‘jezebels’ (sex workers), like handmaids, have names other than their pre-Gilead names, but there is some ambiguity about whether their new names are chosen by them or are assigned. There is also the linguistic violence of category labels: gay and lesbian people are hunted down and condemned as ‘gender traitors’ (indicative of a brutal, overt compulsory heterosexuality); and the general, non-elite population, the masses, are referred to as ‘econopeople’ (suggestive of their lives being expendable within this regime). Then, of course, there are the ‘unwomen’ I have already mentioned, analogous to the ‘unperson’ label George Orwell deploys in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for people who, once deemed inconvenient by the state, ‘did not exist . . . had never existed’ (44).
- 15 This cast of biblical characters plays a foundational role in the propaganda of Gilead: the Christian terrorist group that constituted and now rules Gilead is called the Sons of Jacob.

- 16 Like all of the castes of women in this universe, however, aunts are shown as capable of breaking free of the bad bargains they have made. In season 1 of the television show, there is a brief reference to an aunt who escapes from a nearby Red Center and makes her way to Canada where she gives an anti-Gilead interview to the *Toronto Star* newspaper ('Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum'). Serena Joy, characterising herself as naïve, observes that she expected better from an aunt. Likewise, there is a passing reference later in the season to the arrest of 'a ring of marthas,' the presumably non-fertile women whose compliance and skill sets have qualified them to perform the role of household servants (episode 10: 'Night').
- 17 In a nod to the closeness to real life of this story-world, I want to acknowledge the 'meta-textuality' that runs throughout the Hulu television version, in particular: there is teleplay and co-producer credit given to Dorothy Fortenberry in the show's credits, and in the episode 4 reference to the escaped aunt, Serena Joy suggests to Commander Waterford, 'Have Fortenberry send a written response' ('Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum'); in episode 5 June/Offred recalls a poem, 'You Fit Into Me,' that, in real life, is a Margaret Atwood poem ('Faithful'); and in episode 2's depiction of their first scrabble game, the commander's tile pick to see who goes first is A and June/Offred's is M, a clear reference to Margaret Atwood's initials—MA ('Birth Day'). What is probably unintentional, though, is that these initials constitute a common shorthand among *Jezebel.com* commenters when discussing misogyny, and men and women's divergent perceptions of the social world: a post that says only 'MA' means 'Margaret Atwood' and refers to her observation that 'men are afraid women will laugh at them; women are afraid men will kill them' (Edwards, 'The Internet of Dead Girls').
- 18 Offred 1, the first handmaid assigned to the Waterford household, is unnamed in both the novel and the television show. Her assignment ended with her suicide, which is shown in flashback in season 1, episode 8 ('Jezebels').
- 19 We are, in fact, given poisonous propaganda to the contrary. I have had conversations with young female graduate students—brilliant, capable, ambitious young women—who wrestle with self-doubt about their life choices because they have been exposed to patriarchal messaging like the pop psychology advice served up by internet 'guru' Jordan Petersen who tells them, almost in the same breath, that while he experiences his own career as deeply rewarding, they will find their efforts to build a career unsatisfying and probably unsuccessful. If they do succeed in building careers for themselves, he informs them, they will find it difficult to do their 'real' job as mothers, and if they follow the lead of women like me, who have chosen to not have children, and end up childless and not in a relationship by the time they reach 40, they will be 'lost souls.' This 'one size fits all' life advice for young women is, to put it mildly, unhelpful. To put it less mildly, it is patronising and misogynistic.
- 20 'You do that so well,' observes Commander Waterford, when June lies to him in season 1 of *The Handmaid's Tale* that the baby she is carrying is his (episode 10: 'Night'). Of course she lies well; her life depends on that ability.
- 21 The context for this is Sara Ahmed's reworking of a traditional German folktale, 'The Willful Child,' told by the Brothers Grimm. Ahmed's version reads:

Once upon a time there was a child who was willful, and would not do as her mother wished. For this reason God had no pleasure in her, and let her

become ill, and no doctor could do her any good, and in a short time she lay on her death-bed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her arm came out again, and stretched upwards, and when they had put it in and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go to the grave, and strike the arm with a rod, and when she had done that, it was drawn in, and then at last the child had rest beneath the ground.

(66–67)

- 22 I am using the ‘paths through the woods’ metaphor here as a way of continuing to link fairy tales with the ideology of rape culture, both to make my explicit argument that fairy tales are a messaging device that contribute to this offensive and harmful ideology and to make my implicit argument that rape culture ideology is itself a fairy tale (insofar as it is a story ‘about the world’ that is not true). That said, I do want to acknowledge and endorse Rebecca Solnit’s observation that ‘[t]he road is a neat image, easy to picture, but it misleads when it tells us that . . . change and transformation is a linear path’ (140).
- 23 What troubles me about some ways of understanding ‘woman identification’ is that they foreground relationships with men that are sexual–romantic in nature, and leave in the background all the many relationships with men that both lesbians and heterosexual women have with brothers, fathers, uncles, nephews, co-workers, and all the other male human beings who populate our individual social circles.
- 24 Here I am making the same point, for the same reasons, as proponents of anti-racism who point out that ‘not seeing colour’ is not an effective anti-racism strategy: if you ‘don’t see’ someone’s race, you are quite likely overlooking something that person would consider a significant part of his or her identity; and if we all run around studiously ‘not seeing colour’ in societies with systemically racist pasts and presents, then we deprive the people who are harmed by that racism of a language in which to identify and articulate the harms they are suffering.

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3 *And it was love at first sight . . .*

The spectrum of problematic sex

'Real' rape and really bad dates: *as she slept, he leaned forward to kiss her*

Sooner or later, once we've discussed the wider culture that allows it to flourish and the types of people such a culture produces, we need to start talking about the vicious, disgraceful act itself: rape. What are we talking about, when we turn to this topic? I am theorising it throughout this book as one kind of harm that exists alongside sexual harassment, objectification, and exploitation, within the broader category 'sexual violence'—so named to capture the peace-studies connotation of violence as inclusive of both individual acts and social forces. Because many of the harms I want to count as sexual violence require more nuanced culpability stories than 'individual attacker terrorising individual victim,' I am working from the view that challenging rape culture effectively requires us to acknowledge *both* harms to the individual who is raped *and* the contribution each assault, each act of violence, makes to cultural conditions that normalise violence as 'a thing that happens to women' (even when the victim of the particular act of sexual violence is not a girl or woman, but a man or a boy).

Histories and surveys of feminist theorising of rape present these kinds of divergent views—'rape as a harm is individual in nature' versus 'rape, and persistent threat thereof, harms women as a group'—as markers of ideological divides between liberal feminism and radical feminism (a divide that appears most tangibly in Second Wave discourses) and as markers of a generational divide between Second Wave and Third Wave feminisms. I am old enough/young enough to occupy that uncomfortable space between generations: I remember the world of my childhood as the world the Second Wave feminists changed, and I am enduringly grateful for their contributions, but I also work every day with young people who are building new politics and advancing new (Third Wave) views on how to combat gendered violence. I see the world changing, and I see 'me too' conversations about powerful abusers being made accountable at a cultural level for their abuses as a culmination of Second and Third Wave discourses and activism around sexual violence.

As I am concerned to show throughout the following history—a weaving together of German author Mithu Sanyal’s 2019 history, *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo*, and Rebecca Solnit’s ‘me too’-threshold essays in 2014’s *Men Explain Things to Me* with the classic history Brownmiller bequeathed us in *Against Our Will*—the history of the law’s efforts to enunciate the harm of rape—even the *crime* of rape—has been abysmal. While Third Wave feminism has been criticised for turning away from ‘the political sphere’ and retreating into culture-change activism (see Gilling 102–103, for an example), I think—from a peace-studies perspective—that interrogating and challenging cultural violence can be a ‘change-strategy’ equally as effective as the preventative or protest measures that are aimed against direct violence. Solnit’s history of generational transition observes that feminists of the Second Wave

defined and named whole categories of violation that had previously been unrecognized . . . [after which] the abuse of power was a serious problem, and . . . the authority of men, of bosses, husbands, fathers—and adults generally—was going to be questioned.

(Solnit 109)

This is the legacy that is being claimed by ‘me too’ movements: the Second Wave’s radical feminism may have seemed to fade, but in many cultures it left behind generations of girls and women who submit less habitually to male authority and feel more empowered to demand that authority make itself accountable.

Sanyal notes, however, in her timely and comprehensive book that, ‘[r]ape is a special case, always’ (70).¹ This special case is ‘deeply entangled with the way our society thinks about and creates gender’ (Sanyal 155),² a view of gender norms that we might dismiss as old-fashioned but for the fact that

all these outdated norms still reverberate through our present discourse. The bulk of our ‘rape knowledge’ is based on [unstated] ideas about masculinity and femininity that most of us would dismiss as plucked out of thin air if we knew what we were referring to.

(Sanyal 18)

Her point here about unacknowledged rape myths is drawn from analysing the role that feminism-insensitive scholarship and women’s magazines play in gender socialisation, but it is a message also embedded in fairy tales; Susan Brownmiller, for instance, tells us that “‘Red Riding Hood’ is a parable of rape’ (310). Even though (as I discussed at the end of Chapter 1) rape is something that can and does happen to men at the hands of women, just as it can and does happen to women at the hands of men (and within same-sex encounters), it is the crime that Sanyal argues we are most likely to think of as gendered and, at least in part because of these gender assumptions that

we do not adequately interrogate, it is also the crime we are most likely to confuse with non-criminal relations: sex (8).

‘What does it say about our culture that it’s so hard for us to speak about rape other than as a crime that *only* men do to *only* women—even though that’s not the whole story?’ Sanyal asks (8). What this says, I think, is that the toxic masculinity and complicit femininity I analysed in Chapter 2 are pernicious. Even as feminist arguments for gender equality and millennial notions of gender as non-binary are permeating our cultural discourses, we are still living social relations that are structured by gender assumptions that retain their force—as Martha Minow has argued—precisely insofar as they remain unspoken and unanalysed. Sanyal observes that there is still a social belief that women are shaped by (or into) a ‘feminine *trio infernale*: being passive, being dominated, being rapeable’ (71). And, she continues, legal and psychoanalytic thinking about rape have congealed around the view that ‘[i]n the unlikely event that a woman felt a sexual urge, . . . she wouldn’t have to rape a man, because no man would say no to sex’ (Sanyal 18).³

Indeed, this gendered thinking is so pervasive and so entrenched that ‘[s]exual violence is often referred to not as a specific crime but as an inherent risk of being a woman,’ Sanyal asserts; ‘When we say *rape* we think of aggressive men and fearful women’ (4). Rebecca Solnit names the process of normalisation through erasure, in her *Men Explain Things to Me* essay on rape, ‘The Longest War’ (which begins with her own accounts of the very incidents that awoke me to my existence in rape culture), observing that rape is ‘almost never treated as a civil rights or human rights issue, or a crisis, or even a pattern’ (21). ‘If we talked about crimes like these and why they are so common,’ she says,

we’d have to talk about what kinds of profound change . . . [the United States], or nearly every nation needs. If we talked about it, we’d be talking about masculinity, or male roles, or maybe patriarchy, and we don’t talk much about that.

(Solnit 23)

What Solnit is anticipating here is that we would, in fact, need to be having the kinds of conversations that ‘me too’ has been provoking. And what she is drawing on, as one of the arguments that rape *is* a civil rights and human rights matter, is the brutally clear definition of rape that Susan Brownmiller offers from the standpoint of *female* subjectivity:

To a woman the definition of rape is fairly simple. A sexual invasion of the body by force, an incursion into the private, personal inner space without consent . . . constitutes a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity and is a hostile, degrading act of violence.

(376)

In yet another essay from *Men Explain Things to Me* ('Worlds Collide'), Solnit dissects the term 'sexual assault': 'If that term confuses you,' she says, 'take out the word "sexual" and just focus on "assault," on violence, on the refusal to treat someone as a human being, on the denial of the most basic of human rights, the right to bodily integrity and self-determination' (Solnit 45). Rape, like all forms of sexual violence, is, in its worst impacts upon victims, 'sexually invasive dehumanization' (Anderson 643). Arguing that in all its forms, violence is 'first of all authoritarian,' Solnit describes it as a 'system' premised on the idea 'I have the right to control you,' and explains that this is 'why so many intimate-partner murders are of women who dared to break up with those partners' ('The Longest War' 26–27).⁴ Seeing forced or coerced sex (rape) as both violence and abuse of power is crucial for understanding the conflicting cultural narrative that we are negotiating in this current 'me too' moment: the entrenched patriarchal mythology that rape is an inevitable consequence of men's sexual desire and women's sexual attractiveness is being challenged by generations of people who have also been exposed to what Sanyal labels the 'new rape story' provided by anti-rape Second Wave feminist activists like Susan Brownmiller (26). 'When the anti-rape movement arrived on the scene, they . . . [took] all these [patriarchal] convictions and reveal[ed] them across the board as *rape myths* whose existence was proof of the fact that we lived in a *rape culture*,' Sanyal says (26). 'She wanted it and I couldn't help myself' was exposed as the cover story for the way rape functions in the 'dominance story' Catharine MacKinnon tells of the gender hierarchy: dispensing with mythology reveals rape motivation as 'I wanted it so I took it.'

In my previous chapter, I linked a sense of entitlement to public space to toxic masculinity and a sense of responsibility for sexual ethics to complicit femininity. Both of these narratives (gender scripts) emerge in the Second Wave and Third Wave histories I am weaving together here. Sanyal's *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo* provides a history of how complicit femininity developed, through her consideration of the question of why and how it came to be the case that 'a woman's sexuality . . . [was] put in place of everything that made her herself' (37)—how, in other words, women's humanity was reduced to our sex lives, and we all became, potentially, somebody else's sex crime. The answer she gives to that question of the reduction of our humanity to our sexuality lies in the history of Western thought about the concept of honour, which she exemplifies in the story of the rape of Lucretia in the sixth century BCE (Sanyal 37–39).

Because a woman's honour was co-extensive with her virtue (understood as her virginity, her monogamy, or her celibacy, depending on her social role and her age),

only a woman—possessed something that could be stolen or destroyed by rape. This was all the more precarious as her place in society was

determined by her honor: if she lost the one she lost the other, which often meant her livelihood as well.

(Sanyal 38)

In Sanyal's telling, Lucretia was threatened with rape by a man who had lost a wager with her husband about whose wife was more virtuous, and he wanted to take his revenge by taking her reputation as a virtuous woman from her. She initially repelled his attempt, declaring she would prefer to die, but he threatened to kill both her and a male slave and stage their bodies as if they had been interrupted in the act of adultery. Seeing no way out of being violated, Lucretia submitted, presumably with an ethical desire to spare the unnecessary loss of life (the slave who would have been killed). After the rape, she called her husband and her father to her chamber, confessed the rape to them, and killed herself. 'Lucretia had lost her honor by being raped and could only get it back by getting rid of her defiled body,' Sanyal concludes (39). 'From Lucretia[s] suicide] it was only a short step to the statement that "rape is a fate worse than death"' (Sanyal 41). Within the subsequent development of a Christian ethics and its entrenchment into the social world of 'the West,' Lucretia's emotional reaction to her rape continued to be praised, but her suicide became a problem:

Augustine considered it appropriate that a woman would long to die after a rape—in fact, the quality of her stolen honor was measured by the vehemence of her death wish: the bigger her desperation, the bigger her erstwhile honor. She just was no longer allowed to put that wish into practice. At best, she would waste away and die through no fault of her own . . . To stop mourning would be to admit that her honor hadn't been so great after all.

(Sanyal 45–46)

In Brownmiller's analysis, we see the authority-entitlement narrative: an assumption of male right to female bodies, a 'doctrine of perpetual consent,' that extends out of a socio-legal history stretching back into 'Biblical' times, where she locates the emergence of what she calls women's 'domestication by protective mating' (16). 'Female fear . . . was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of woman by man,' she hypothesises; the pervasive threat of attack was what motivated a woman to seek protection by allying herself with one man (Brownmiller 16). But, '[t]he historic price of woman's protection by [one] man against [all other men] was the imposition of chastity and monogamy,' she notes; 'A crime committed against her body became a crime against the male estate' (Brownmiller 17)—*she* mattered only because *he* owned her. Brownmiller's account of the origin of compulsorily heterosexist, male-dominated households suggests, however, that the high prices of chastity and monogamy paid by women bought precious little of that actual protection. She recounts a world in

which a woman identified as having had sex with a man who was not her husband was labelled an adulteress, regardless of whether the incident in question had been something to which she had consented (Brownmiller 19). This intention-insensitive definition of adultery raises the possibility that Jesus Christ's injunction in John 8:3–11—'he who is without sin, let him cast the first stone'—can be interpreted as Jesus offering the mercy of reprieve from stoning to a 'sinful woman' who may in fact have been a rape victim. The possibility that one could be attacked and then face deadly punishment as a result of socially sanctioned victim-blaming is a compelling reason why women would 'choose' to seclude themselves in the households of their fathers, husbands, or sons, as was historically the case in Levantine and Mediterranean societies of the West's ancient world. If going outside exposes you to risk of attack *and* capital punishment, it *is* better to stay inside. But, to be clear, this is not protection by one's husband; this is protection by social isolation, by putting the public spaces of the world off limits for women.

When we turn to the question of how rape has been dealt with as a legal matter, we see a core insight of (English) common law at work: while the many and varied legal codes and legal orders that have regimented human societies typically reflect the interests of the conquerors, rulers, and *philosophes* who imposed them, they also reflect the cultural understandings of their time and place. (A code that does not resonate with popular conceptions of harm and justice gets circumvented or misapplied.) So, when we reach back into the past to explain how, for example, rape laws evolved, we have to infer cultural understandings through the interpretive lenses of the concepts we understand to have been at work. As Sanyal puts the point,

rape is only coded as such when it corresponds to . . . preconceived ideas of what constitutes a 'real rape'; thus the law [and the understanding of the law] can only be as effective as the cultural narrative upon which it is built.

(47)

Thus, choice of interpretive lenses is instructive: to interrogate the history of rape laws through the concept of honour, as Sanyal does, is to produce an interestingly different history than if one interrogates it through concepts of property and ownership, as Brownmiller does.

There is overlap, of course; for instance, it is Sanyal who tells us that '[e]ven the oldest law known to us, the Code of Hammurabi, treated rape as the theft of virginity' (41). It is also Sanyal who cites Roman emperor Justinian's law of the sixth century CE, in which '[rape] was seen as a crime against the woman herself as opposed to a crime against her husband' (211). She deems it 'noteworthy that there was no marital rape exemption [in this law], so a husband could be prosecuted for raping his wife' (Sanyal 211), a historical data-point that asserts itself as anomalous when held up to the history of marital ownership that both Brownmiller and Solnit see

as *the* story to be told of women's suppressed bodily autonomy (and, by implication, our suppressed personhood). They both turn to more recent British legal history for emblematic pronouncements on the authority of a man over his wife. Brownmiller cites 17th-century English jurist Matthew Hale's assertion of the marriage contract as a woman's perpetual consent: 'A husband cannot be guilty of rape upon his wife for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind to her husband, which she cannot retract' (Brownmiller 380). Solnit similarly cites 18th century jurist and commentator on English law William Blackstone: 'By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law . . . legal existence of the woman . . . is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband' (56).

Moving from the ancient world to the era that Magna Carta enthusiasts hail as the birth of individual rights, we see consensus between Sanyal's history and Brownmiller's on the significance of England's 13th-century Statutes of Westminster. Both of them understand that change in English law's treatment of rape as shifting the nature of the crime: by stipulating a time period after which the Crown could prosecute even if the victim declined to press charges, the Statutes reconfigured rape as 'no longer just a family misfortune and a threat to land and property, but an issue of public safety and state concern' (Brownmiller 29). Sanyal concurs that this is the moment in English law at which rape becomes 'a crime against the state, and not against an individual or against a family,' an evolution which, she notes, did not take place in her native Germany until 1871, when rape was reclassified as an 'offense against the community' (55).

There is, as Brownmiller documents, real progress in English law at this point in history: conceiving of rape as a matter of public safety, not female virtue, blunted the force of the defences that 12th-century common law had made available to an accused man—I had sex with her on a prior occasion (if she consented once, she'd do it again); or I had sex with her that she consented to, and now she's being vindictive or manipulated; or I wasn't there; or she left some detail out of her complaint (26–27). The law began to recognise rape as something more than the 'theft of virginity' that Hammurabi's Code had sought to punish, and this meant that now 'matrons, nuns, widows, concubines and even prostitutes' could seek redress (Brownmiller 28). In addition, the Statutes stipulated offenses we have come to know as 'statutory rape,' sex crimes that are still crimes even when the woman or girl consents (for instance, sex with a person the law recognises as a child, too young to consent) (Brownmiller 29). This legal attention to parity in who counts as a rape victim and to the idea that a crime might have taken place even if consent were coerced or claimed by the accused prompts Brownmiller to observe that 'tangentially and in retrospect [we can interpret the Statutes as] a recognition of women's rights; [even though] its inexorable, historic purpose had been to consolidate political power in the hands of the king' (30).

The ‘she really wanted it’ defence open to the 12th-century English rapist was not entirely invalidated by 13th-century reforms. The worldview that held ‘all women secretly wanted to be ravished’ continues to have force in law insofar as legal codes around the world still require victims to prove their lack of consent through overt resistance (Sanyal 45).⁵ In Western legal codes,

[t]he idea that violence was welcome . . . was still ingrained in law until the 1970s. In a rape case, the woman had to prove not only that she’d physically resisted her assailant, but that she had kept up her resistance constantly throughout. After all, she could have been inexplicably and mysteriously aroused after her ‘natural coyness’ had been overcome.

(Sanyal 11)

Even today, a requirement that the victim resist continues to be a feature of some countries’ legal codes, and blatant victim-blaming continues to ground criminal defences and media coverage.⁶ Notoriously, Japan’s 2017 revision of its rape laws—the first since rape became a crime there in 1907—continued to insist that, in order to secure a sexual assault conviction, victims must prove they fought back or, alternatively, prove that violence or intimidation made resistance impossible (Osaki; Liotta). By contrast, however,

[i]n 2018, Sweden again decided to be a trailblazer by passing a bill that sex without consent constitutes rape . . . Under the new law, a person must now consent to sexual activity with words or clear body language.

(Sanyal 179)

This effectively transforms legal questions about sexual assault from demands that a victim prove the sexual activity was unwanted into demands that both parties be able to attest to demonstrations of their partner’s willingness.

Legal reforms, however necessary or progressive, are not sufficient to combat rape myths, however; cultural understandings of events are enshrined not just in law but in individuals’ beliefs also, in what Sanyal describes as ‘a fixed set of perceptions about rape,’ that Second Wave feminism challenged:

Some will be familiar by now: rape is sex, and women say no when they mean yes. Victims are beautiful young women whose attractiveness arouses men⁷ . . . or loose women who provoke men willfully and get their just [desserts]. Either way, the victim is at least partly responsible for getting herself raped, because she asked for it by wearing a miniskirt. Deep down, women want to be taken against their will. . . . No woman can be entered against her will if she puts up a real fight (but, paradoxically, no woman can really defend herself against a male attacker, so it is better not to try at all and thus avoid getting hurt). Real rape is incredibly rare, while false accusations of rape are epidemic

because the complainants are hysterical, want to get back at a man who rejected them, or want to account for an illegitimate pregnancy. Rapists are foreigners, outsiders, psychopaths . . . [and] Rape occurs outside, not in the home; victim and perpetrator are unknown to each other. Perpetrators are the stranger behind the bush.

(26)

It ought to be clear by now to anyone who has given even cursory attention to the question of who gets raped and why, that all of these ‘perceptions’ (rape myths) are false. In particular, in the matter of attempts to explain rape through the theoretical lens of evolutionary biology,

[a]nthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists from all over the world point out that it isn’t just women of childbearing age who are raped; that the probability of becoming pregnant as the result of rape is statistically lower than that of consensual sex—erectile dysfunction and lack of ejaculation are the rule rather than the exception in rape; that many pregnancies from rape are not carried to term; and that the evolutionary advantages of being born under such stressful circumstances are questionable anyway.

(Sanyal 5)

But, as I have already noted, these beliefs about the circumstances and justifications of rape are pernicious: a 2017 survey of students at the Japanese university where I worked for part of the time I spent writing this book found that 70% of respondents agreed that going alone with someone to his or her home amounts to consenting to have sex, and a further 23.6% (multiple responses were permitted) agreed that getting drunk amounts to consenting to have sex.⁸

While it is true that both incidence and understanding of rape vary across cultures and over time—‘rape and sexual violence are deeply rooted in specific political, economic and cultural environments’ (Sanyal, quoting Joanna Bourke’s *Rape: A Natural History*, 3)—it also seems reasonable to make the general claim, as Sanyal does, that rape is (an extreme form of) ‘*dysfunction*, in its sexual variation’ (155). ‘Sex isn’t disconnected from all other spheres of human existence; sexuality is woven into the fabric of our cultural reality,’ she observes (Sanyal 155–156); and that fabric is patriarchal in most parts of the world. Because patriarchal cultures normalise authority of men over women, and because—as Solnit asserts—violence is a feature of authoritarian reasoning, the compulsory heterosexuality of these cultures is also going to normalise sexual violence, coercion, and the primacy of men’s desires over women’s choices. This is how we come to have such dysfunction as ‘rape culture’ in countries as different from each other as Japan, the United States, Germany, and New Zealand.

One of the things that I think Sanyal's history of rape makes admirably clear is the relation of our beliefs about rape (our inclination to accept and perpetuate the rape myths handed to us by our cultures) to variations in data collection and reporting of statistics. For the entirety of the time I spent working in rape-eradication and consent-education efforts on American college campuses, I was working within a discursive environment that presented sexual assault as something that happens far more frequently to women than it does to men, even as it was simultaneously acknowledged that sexual assaults of all kinds are significantly under-reported. For instance, in her discussion of how the term 'rape culture . . . helped us stop pretending that rapes are anomalies,' Rebecca Solnit cites a common statistical estimate that 'a fifth of all American women (and one in seventy-one men)' are rape survivors (130–131). This one-in-five figure for women is not drawn from crime reports; typically, when presented as a claim about American women, it is a projection onto the entire population of results that have been derived from surveys of university students.⁹ Under-reporting, widely acknowledged as very difficult to estimate, appears to vary significantly, depending on the jurisdiction: it is estimated that only about 23% of American victims of sexual assault report the attack to police (Kimble and Chettiar), a figure that drops even further in Japan to a staggering 4.3% (Ito). This means that we really have no evidence to substantiate assumptions that sexual violence is happening mostly to women at the hands of men, and as I spoke with students, I began to develop a view that these 1-in-5 and 1-in-71 figures would be a lot closer to parity if we could just reduce the stigma around being a victim of sexual assault. That is, I came to believe that destigmatising reporting would give us both more accurate numbers, overall, *and* an understanding of sexual violence in which men and boys were quite possibly just as likely to be victimised as women and girls. What I have learned from Sanyal's book is that social stigma is not the whole story about why under-reporting happens on such a massive scale; her presentation of survey data suggests there is also an enormous problem in how sexual assault is defined in the surveys from which we draw our projections of the scope of sexual violence.

Historically, Sanyal tells us, in many jurisdictions, both law and society were committed to the view that 'only women could be raped and only men could be rapists' (7). Increasingly, this gendered thinking is changing: she notes that Sweden moved to make its rape laws gender-neutral as long ago as 1984 (Sanyal 7). In the realm of data collection, gender-neutral language pertaining to victims generates unexpected results, of the kind we see in the 2012 National Crime Victimization Survey done by the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (an annual survey of households, asking about crimes they have experienced). 'In 2012, 38 percent of sexual violence victims were male—while up until then the numbers had stayed in the 10 percent zone,' Sanyal reports (125). 'How could this be explained?' she asks (Sanyal 125).

What had happened is that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had changed the definition of rape

from ‘the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will’ to ‘the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.’

(Sanyal 125)

That, in and of itself, was enough to produce a statistical picture of sexual violence with even more gender parity among victims than I would have predicted. But, Sanyal cautions, ‘even the “gender-neutral” wording of the Sexual Offences Act in [the United Kingdom], like the FBI definition in America, is only neutral in regard to the victim’ (7); both law and statistics-gathering still too frequently assume that ‘one needs a penis to be able to commit rape’ (Sanyal 19).

Consider, however, the implications of a survey that does not make this assumption:

the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey by the Centers for Disease Control, one of the most comprehensive surveys of sexual victimization conducted in the United States to date, [which] included ‘being made to penetrate’ into their list of ‘nonconsensual sex.’ Suddenly the difference between the numbers of female and male victims—those were the only genders listed in the survey—shrank to less than 1 percent: 1,270,000 women and 1,267,000 men had been victims of unwanted sexual intercourse in those twelve months.

(Sanyal 125)

What these numbers show is that ‘we can’t treat male victims as the exception that proves the rule any longer’ (Sanyal 125). ‘[T]he figures for “being made to penetrate” . . . had been disregarded in the other statistics. However, this is the kind of sexual violence men are most likely to experience and women are most likely to perpetrate’ (Sanyal 126–127). Taking notice of this as a way in which someone can be sexually assaulted reveals the existence of myths about male rape (just as Second Wave feminism exposed myths about female rape): ‘that female-perpetrated abuse is rare or non-existent; that male victims experience less harm; . . . that for men all sex is welcome anyway; and that “real men” can protect themselves’ (Sanyal 126). If, as part of the project of dismantling rape culture, we are going to get clear on what rape is, we need to see the ‘non-consensual’ in all permutations of sexual encounters: ‘Sleeping Beauty’ would be no less violative and creepy if it were a princess who had made her way through the brambles to kiss a sleeping prince. In Sanyal’s words, ‘we should reconsider how we speak about rape and gender, and stop unthinkingly . . . [assuming] it is always something

only men do to only women' (132). This is a standard more rigorous than gender-neutrality (which refuses to take note of gender as an identity characteristic); this is gender *inclusivity*—in thinking about who is a victim of sexual violence, and also who is a perpetrator.

We *should* reconsider, and we *should* stop assuming, but those are quite difficult things to do. In coming to terms with why gender-neutral thinking about rape requires so much critical attention to the assumptions we are habitually inclined to make, we ought to recall the point I made at the end of Chapter 1 about pervasive discursive failure to distinguish between consent and arousal. I contend that this is an example of the particular epistemic injustice that Miranda Fricker theorises as hermeneutical injustice. Fricker herself explains this injustice through an account of how Second Wave feminist activism and consciousness-raising helped develop awareness of sexual harassment, both by the individuals who experienced it and by society at large. Sexual harassment, in the 1970s—like female-perpetrated rape today—was 'previously ill-understood by the [victim] herself [or himself], because collectively ill-understood' (149). Although central (systematic) cases of hermeneutical injustice require a 'structural inequality of power' such that one is hermeneutically marginalised as a consequence of being a member of a disadvantaged group (i.e. being a woman), Fricker thinks that 'there can be cases of hermeneutical injustice that are not part of the general pattern of social power . . . but *incidental*' (149, 156).¹⁰ '[I]ncidental cases will tend to involve hermeneutical marginalization only fleetingly and/or in respect of a highly localized patch of the subject's experience,' she says, and therefore, 'stem not from any structural inequality of power, but rather from a more one-off moment of powerlessness' (Fricker 156). Men who have been sexually assaulted are neither confused about being rape victims nor disbelieved as rape victims because of membership in an oppressed or disadvantaged group (what Fricker speaks of as the 'structural inequality' suffered by women, racial minorities, gender-nonconforming persons, and other vulnerable 'targets'), but they *are* victims of hermeneutical injustice when they struggle to articulate just what was wrong about the sex they had that they (implicitly, at least) know they didn't consent to.¹¹ It could also certainly be the case that a particular man understands very well that he had been aroused but had not consented; in Fricker's theory, he might still be the victim of hermeneutical injustice to the extent that others to whom he tries to communicate his experience do not understand or accept what he is trying to explain (Fricker 157).

The particularly epistemic harm of gendered thinking about rape is that it impoverishes our collective knowledge base—as Fricker puts the point, 'it renders the collective hermeneutical resource *structurally prejudiced*'—because it 'issue[s] interpretations of [a] group's social experiences that are biased because insufficiently influenced by the subject group' (Fricker 155, emphasis in original). Being dismissed or invalidated as a producer and conveyor of knowledge—a testimonial injustice insofar as one is not

believed; a hermeneutical injustice insofar as what one is trying to explain is unintelligible to others—‘tends to knock your faith in your own ability to make sense of the world’ (Fricker 163) and actually impair a person’s ability to *be* epistemically competent. This epistemic harm is also an ethical harm because, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Fricker’s history of rationality as the constitutive feature of humanity persuasively demonstrates that being denied participation in the community of knowers amounts to being denied recognition as a human being (43–44). Testimonial and hermeneutical injustice share the ability to harm us in this way, Fricker explains (168). ‘But,’ she continues,

in other respects their primary harms are utterly different. The wrong of testimonial injustice is inflicted individual to individual, so that there are immediate questions to be answered concerning the hearer’s culpability or non-culpability . . . By contrast, hermeneutical injustice is not inflicted by any agent, but rather is caused by a feature of the collective hermeneutical resource—a one-off blind spot (in incidental cases), or (in systematic cases) a lacuna generated by a structural identity prejudice in the hermeneutical repertoire. Consequently, questions of culpability do not arise in the same way. None the less, they do arise, for the phenomenon should inspire us to ask what sorts of hearers we should try to be.
(Fricker 168)

Culpability arises in a different way in hermeneutical injustice because we cannot be blamed for not having the concepts we don’t yet possess; social efforts at progress in human rights, solidarity, and empathy are all large-scale collective education efforts. The question of how we teach ourselves to become better hearers is one that Fricker wrestles with throughout *Epistemic Injustice*; it requires us to develop ‘testimonial sensibility’ that takes notice of how we are socially positioned as hearers of the person who is speaking, being critically aware of how our respective places in the social hierarchy of the cultures in which we reside make some concepts and some credibility judgements difficult—or, at the outer limit, inaccessible (Fricker 90–92; 169–170). Initial incredulity as a response to a man’s effort to speak about his experience of sexual victimisation, difficulty in accepting ‘me too’ revelations about how pervasive sexual aggression against vulnerable women and men is in various industries and societies, the surprising gender parity in sexual violence emerging from surveys constructed within gender-inclusive conceptual frameworks—all of these are typical reactions to reports that our collective knowledge base struggles to hear as accurate representations of social realities. And they can be hard to map onto the conceptual/discursive frames given to us by liberal feminist–radical feminist and Second Wave–Third Wave distinctions (rape as a harm to individual autonomy versus rape as a cultural or structural violence against women).

But, as Sanyal reminds us,

The women's movement fought for the recognition that 'the first thing in working with women who have experienced sexual violence, is the acknowledgment that what happened to them *did* happen . . . and that it was wrong.' That remains a crucial first step. But it has to go further.
(quoting Ariane Brensell, 77)

One of the places it has to go is into greater academic and popular scrutiny of how many more people get raped than our crime statistics suggest, how varied are the acts of sexual violence that meet definitions of 'rape' and how varied are the victims *and* perpetrators of that violence,¹² and how much more cultural support work we need to do to restore the voices and the social worlds of those harmed by sexual violence ('rape culture'). Another of the places it needs to go is into the fray of what counts as 'problematic sex': the ways in which coercion and manipulation seep into sexual relations that we don't want to label rape, what psychologist Nicola Gavey has theorised as 'technologies of heterosexual coercion' (see 'Technologies and Effects').

There is a spectrum of non-consensual sexual experiences that ranges from vicious sexual torture (that is self-evidently wrong) all the way to encounters that end with one of the participants feeling violated and the other, if they believe the encounter to have been consensual, feeling genuinely confused. All points on the spectrum are problems—all of the sexual activity in which mutual assent is not present (i.e. rape) *and* also the sexual activity in which absence of assent/consent may be sufficiently less clear that labelling it rape is genuinely questionable or controversial (the so-called 'grey areas' that 'me too' discourses have begun to confront)—and we need to concern ourselves with the needs and lived emotional realities of all of the victims. These spectrum-points are not all 'the same thing,' of course, but each of them is harmful to the human beings whose capacity to choose was impaired or disregarded.

For those of us who are, to use Fricker's terminology, hearers who are concerned to practice hermeneutical justice, one crucial challenge is to learn how to hear the harm. Another challenge is to learn how to hear differences in interpretations of where on the spectrum of problematic sex a particular act of sexual violence is most appropriately located, and learn how to intervene constructively into resulting (often regressive and victim-blaming) debates about whether any given harmful encounter meets preconceived notions of 'real rape' or is just a 'not that bad' date. What I hope that speaking about a spectrum might show us is how implicit paradigms of rape can generate conflicting or variable evaluations. This spectrum is a frame in which *all rapes* are rape and *all sexual predation* should be condemned, and *in addition*, attention is extended to 'grey areas' of sexual interaction in which one partner 'gives in' to pressure from another—because of a socialisation into

politeness or passiveness (as Brownmiller identifies the lesson of ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Little Red Riding Hood’), or to avoid provoking violent conflict, or out of a socialised belief that this sex is something that the acceding partner owes or should want to have. Consideration of ‘grey area’ sex—problematic but not obviously rape—is the topic I turn to in the next section.

Coercion and harassment: *‘You must come and see me next Sunday; I have already invited guests . . .’*

The fairy-tale reference that subtitles this section heading is from a slightly more obscure tale than those that form what we might think of as ‘the princess canon’: the Brothers Grimm version of ‘The Robber Bridegroom.’ Their telling of a German folk-tale (story number 40 of their *Household Stories*) has many variations and is often linked to victim-blaming ‘Bluebeard’-style tales in which young women are killed because they give in to their curiosity. In this Brothers Grimm tale, a young woman is betrothed by her father to a man she does not know and does not trust.

The man, her future husband, insists she pay a visit to his house, which she is reluctant to do, and eventually does so only because of persistent pressure from him (what gender norms present as a stereotypical dating situation: he asks, he plans, the encounter occurs in his ‘territory’ or comfort zone). As in the more well-known ‘Hansel and Gretel,’ she marks her path to his house so she will be able to find her way home (showing her to be a sensible woman, the kind who doesn’t leave her drink unattended in a bar). Once there, she is warned by an old serving woman that her intended husband is indeed a wicked man, part of a band of murderers who lure young women to their lair to kill and eat them (again, a sensible woman: she listens to warnings, and practices female solidarity). Thanks to the help of the old serving woman and her own ability to stay quiet while she witnesses the band of murderers killing and consuming another young woman, she manages to escape, and thanks to her own precautions in marking her path to the house, she and the old woman make their way through the darkness to the safety of her father’s house. Much later, on her wedding day, when her robber bridegroom urges her to share in the communal story-telling at the wedding feast, she tells the story of what she experienced that night, and with the assembled guests as witnesses, she produces a finger of the dead girl as evidence that she is telling the truth (but take note of what she needed to produce as evidence to be seen as a truthful woman). Because it is a fairy tale, the robber bridegroom and his fellow murderers are punished.

At first glance, this seems fairly obviously to be one of the fairy tales that Susan Brownmiller categorises as ‘parables of rape’ (310); the group cannibalism at the robber bridegroom’s lair stands in for gang rape, and the robber bridegroom’s dismissal of the tale the young woman tells at their wedding feast as ‘only a dream’ represents the dismissal of women’s testimonies that

Miranda Fricker theorises as testimonial injustice. Extending the metaphor, we can perhaps see the wedding feast as the stand-in ritual for a legal accusation and trial process. As a parable of rape—demonstrating what is consensual and what is not—this tale is arguably ambiguous: the young woman did not choose her husband but she did take him seriously enough as her future husband that she agreed, however reluctantly, to visit his house. Even after she escaped, knowing who he was, she played along with the social conventions all the way up to participating in the wedding feast. As a parable of rape, this is a messy story. And, as a symbol of how we need to subvert and shift cultural narratives, a messy story is exactly what we need. Early on in American ‘me too’ conversations,¹³ attention expanded out from ‘powerful men doing illegal and violent things’ to include side-discussions of ‘entitled men doing ethically compromising things.’ The ‘messy story’ side-discussion of ‘normal’ heterosexual dating conventions, while criticised as muddying the conversational waters, is some of the most necessary and conceptually valuable consent conversation the ‘me too’ social critique is producing.

Perhaps most prevalent among the critiques levelled at ‘me too’ as a global movement is that it ‘has gone too far.’ We need, in each instance, to interrogate and clarify what ‘too far’ means; anyone who has studied revolution or politically unstable governments knows that a lot of necessary truth lies in territory that is ‘too far’ for many to travel into comfortably. That a truth—or a story of any relation to reality—makes us uncomfortable does not mean it ought not be spoken. Indeed, I think we need to learn to appreciate, as a strength of ‘me too’ movements, that they are pointing us towards opportunities to develop greater tolerance for messy stories. Especially when it unfolds online, a ‘me too’ story (or, in the case of Alyssa Milano’s Twitter invitation, a #me too story) is messy; personal narrative is often difficult to frame coherently, and social media platforms typically give a poster astonishingly little control and ownership over their own story. As Sanyal notes, ‘social media follows its own rules and patterns, escalating a lot quicker and shriller into victim-blaming and dehumanizing of the accused respectively’ (50). This messiness is often perceived as grounds for nullification by those who approach interpersonal interaction as if it were governed by legally implementable and determinable rules; ‘messiness is hard to judge, so let’s not give ourselves that hard work,’ goes the thinking. When ‘me too’ demands that messy stories be told, and be heard, and even be taken seriously, it becomes a threat to our desire for easy judgements. But this engagement is a difficult task that we should take on *precisely because* it gives us the possibility of extending our awareness (and our empathy) further into narratives that are now calling to account not just abuses of power but abuses of privilege. This is a moment that everyone who works for social justice and human rights needs to note with appreciation as a moral step forwards in societies reckoning with ‘me too’—a moment in which privilege is explicitly held accountable.

The significance of ‘me too’ extending its narrative spotlight beyond rape accusations, into the ‘bad dates’ that many women encourage ourselves to see as ‘not that bad,’ is that it reveals the mundane and pervasive characteristics of low-level sexual violence that women report experiencing (persistent harassment for sex in the confines of a dating encounter, for example). Ordinary women’s dissection of their everyday expectations of appropriate conduct in romantic relationships demonstrate the ongoing relevance of psychologist Nicola Gavey’s 1992 study of ‘heterosexual coercion’—which she defines as sets of lessons and social norms heterosexual women use to regulate our own behaviour (and make sense of it) in ways that benefit men (‘Technologies and Effects’ 325). Gavey interviewed a small number of Pākehā [white New Zealand] women about their experiences with men in intimate-partner and ‘not that bad’ dating contexts, and drew on those interviews to illustrate how technologies of sexual coercion operate. Her very clear finding was that women conform to gendered behaviours—passivity, withdrawal, accommodation of male desire—that are normalised within their cultures and social circles. Conforming to a romantic partner’s will and setting aside one’s own preferences can, in liberal-transactional analyses, look like consensual interaction, but cumulative experience of men’s sexually self-interested behaviours as sexual aggression and low-level sexual violence can convince heterosexual women that rape is ‘only the extreme manifestation of a more pervasive coercive heterosexuality’ (Gavey, ‘Technologies and Effects’ 325–326).

When a story—about dating, about rape, about why an experience is given one label or the other—is told and it subverts expectations held by the listening community, it unsettles. One way to deal with being unsettled is to retreat. Another is to move into a space of interrogation—to listen carefully, to take people at their word when they speak of how they feel, and to critically assess power relations and social privileges when they speak of what they did. ‘Women involved in heterosexual encounters are also engaged in self-surveillance,’ Gavey tells us;

[we] are encouraged to become self-policing subjects who comply with the normative heterosexual narrative scripts which demand our consent and participation irrespective of our sexual desire. Thus, while women may not engage in conscious and deliberate submission, disciplinary power nevertheless produces what can be seen as a form of obedience. While the individual male’s behaviour in the interaction is not insignificant, the operations of power involved may transcend his particular actions.

(‘Technologies and Effects’ 328–329)

A ‘me too’ perspective and engagement with messy stories can be a social-discursive space in which male social capital (especially in interactions marked by gendered inequality) and heterosexist gender scripts are

interrogated, and male behaviour is scrutinised in greater detail. The opportunity this attention provides is a conversation about (typically) gendered norms of behaviour that need to be renegotiated: in ‘me too’ engagement with ‘not that bad’ dating, in ‘me too’ attention to workplace harassment, in ‘me too’ attention to stories of predation, assault, and other forms of sexual violence in all of the public and private spaces of human lives.

Gavey’s willingness as an interviewer to let the subjects tell their own messy stories, and then to develop a descriptive framework through which to analyse power and dominance, makes her analytic framework valuable for thinking about the account given by a young New York City female photographer of her September 2017 date with comedian Aziz Ansari. ‘Grace,’ as she is named in the *babe.net* publication of ‘the worst night of her life,’ tells a ‘me too’-era messy story that illustrates how interaction some people might not label coercive (interaction, we might even agree with Ansari, that appeared consensual) can nevertheless be experienced as dehumanising, even abusive. Dismissed in some corners of social media as a miscommunication between someone who thought she was going on a date and someone who thought he was getting casual ‘groupie sex,’ the *babe.net* exposé called Ansari to account, not for the sexual violence Harvey Weinstein was accused of, but for a lesser infraction of entitled insensitivity. Like the women whose experiences Gavey theorises as heterosexual coercion, ‘Grace’ compromises, evades, and deploys a mix of gendered diplomacy and straight talk to convey her unwillingness to have sex that evening. ‘Ansari built his career on being cute and nice and parsing the signals women send to men and the male emotions that result and turning them into award-winning, Madison Square Garden-filling comedy . . . [including] routines [that] paint him as the kind of guy who strikes out because he *actually respects* women,’ notes Katie Way, the *babe.net* contributor to whom ‘Grace’ told her story (emphasis in original). Way continues:

Grace mentioned the glaring gap between Ansari’s comedy persona and the behavior she experienced in his apartment as a reason why she didn’t get out earlier. ‘I didn’t leave because I think I was stunned and shocked,’ she said. ‘This was not what I expected. I’d seen some of his shows and read excerpts from his book and I was not expecting a bad night at all, much less a violating night and a painful one.’

The rape-culture landscape in which their encounter took place—what both ‘Grace’ and Ansari ‘knew’ going in—included things like their own accounts of their sexuality and relationships, and how they represent those aspects of self to others; how media and culture represent sexuality and relationships; pornography, sex manuals, and sexual humour; religious teachings and school sex education; laws referencing sexuality and sexual violence (‘Technologies and Effects’ 329). Each of them responded to the other through expectations they had been culturally conditioned into. This

includes expectations for what the other person will think of their behaviour, which is likely why ‘Grace’ did not consider screaming and running out of his apartment as one of her options when she asked Ansari to back off, he agreed to, and then sat down on his couch and gestured at her to perform oral sex on him. She may have been trying to be agentic, but she was still subject to social conditioning about, for example, how not to be a raving lunatic. For his part, Ansari may not have been openly coercive—just horny and insensitive—but one cost to him of symbolising the ‘woke babe’ in American comedy circles is the need to maintain awareness of ways in which he might be enacting his own privilege. None of this is about law and rape trials; it’s about the difficult process of learning to be a better human being.

A number of the elements of the ‘robber bridegroom story as dating script’ are present in ‘Grace’s’ story; it was a stereotypical dating situation: Ansari asked her out, and he planned the details so the date took place entirely within his ‘territory’ or comfort zone—meeting at his apartment for wine, deciding which nearby restaurant to dine at, deciding how quickly to leave the restaurant, returning to his apartment for more wine. Despite being victim-blamed by commenters on the *babe.net* story as a deficient and careless gatekeeper, ‘Grace’ was the sensible woman: she was accommodating and polite when given white wine instead of the red she preferred and when Ansari decided that dinner in the restaurant was over; she was nice in her first few rejections of Ansari’s sexual invitations (‘maybe next date’); and she was explicit in her communication to him about not wanting to feel forced and not being ready to have sexual intercourse with him. She is also the woman who is truthful yet not believed; the article includes screenshots of their messaging that ‘prove’ she is not lying. No evidence other than his own written statement is put forth to document Ansari’s version; he gets to speak for himself. This is gendered exercise of power; as Rebecca Solnit observes in her discussion of ‘mansplaining,’ women are represented to ourselves through cultural stereotype—the vengeful woman, the distracted or ‘ditz’ one, the manipulative, self-interested one, the silly, easily-influenced-by-trends one—as being unreliable narrators of our own experiences (7). ‘Grace’ speaks for herself, but with a language she was taught to use to placate and appeal to men, and she has to speak repeatedly to be heard even once.

Applying Gavey’s theoretical frame for explaining how a woman might feel coerced in heterosexual romantic and relationship encounters, we can see persistent evidence of gendered norms of behaviour being used to manipulate ‘Grace’ into serving Ansari’s interests. The first category of coercive and manipulative behavioural norms is knowledge about what is ‘normal’ or ‘expected’—what I discussed earlier as the ‘rape-culture landscape.’ The second category Gavey identifies is whether the woman (person) feels she has the language to say ‘no,’ and is heard when she does say ‘no’: ‘Grace’s’ narrative makes it clear that she began immediately after their first kiss to

put Ansari off gently, and progressed to very clear verbal identification of herself to him as ‘feeling forced.’ The third category considers whether a woman (person) perceives herself as choosing to act/not act on her own desire or whether she is ‘just letting him’ do things to her. Much of the victim-blaming levelled at ‘Grace’ was predicated on her having a robust ability to choose, despite social norms of women deferring to men’s wishes, and the heightened value that celebrities’ wishes and desires are accorded in American culture.

Gavey’s fourth category assesses the extent to which ‘Grace’ might have believed there was some penalty attached to being non-compliant in this encounter: for many women in a man’s apartment, politeness is strategic and the point is to avoid provoking anger or overt violence. There is also the latent pressure of power—the extent to which being bad-mouthed by a celebrity might harm her budding career as a photographer connected to the American entertainment world—which is the set of previously invisible pressures that ‘me too’ is inviting us to recognise as coercion, as a structural violence of hierarchical and culturally influential workplaces. Also built into the ‘rape-culture landscape’ is Gavey’s fifth category: existence of a perceived obligation to be nice, to be kind or nurturing, or to go with the flow of what (he thought) was clearly happening (a set of pragmatic safety and social benefit calculations that Liz Kelly has named as ‘safety work’ and Chanel Miller talks about as the bomb-defusing work assigned to unaccompanied women in public spaces). Finally, Gavey identifies as a precondition for resistance the possibility that a woman (person) might recognise her own unwillingness and manoeuvre the situation in a way that makes it feel safe to act on that unwillingness—as ‘Grace’ did when Ansari finally called a car to take her home after her repeated insistence that she wanted to leave.

In many ways, this story fits within Gavey’s framework precisely because it is typical and (in the eyes of many) appears innocuous. But it is, as told, a story that reveals sexual violence as more pervasive within dating schemas than societies have previously openly acknowledged. (In peace studies terms, this is to say that we have begun to interrogate the structural and cultural violences built into dating contexts.) In addition to the epistemic harm women suffer from being told that our testimonies of our lives are not sufficient to establish narrated events as true ones, there is also the discrediting and blaming that is heaped upon those who do speak (Solnit 108). ‘Grace’ was being brave in telling her messy story, but she was still undermined by commenters as a knowledge-producer in the conversation about what took place on her date and scrutinised for whether she had the right to tell her story the way she told it, a harm that Miranda Fricker would consider both epistemic and social. Ansari’s response to the *babe.net* story was, ‘oh, sorry, I thought it was consensual,’ and was effectively the end of conversation. Continued assertion of an alternative narrative erodes ‘Grace’s’ credibility by casting her as a reputation-smearing accuser (a further epistemic and identity harm to her).¹⁴

As Tanya Serisier observes in her analysis of feminist narrative politics, some rape narratives can be understood as either feminist or feminised versions of the ‘hero’s quest’ narrative-pattern theorised by Joseph Campbell (52). Serisier points out that despite the prevalence of ‘dominant masculine versions of the hero’s quest . . . there is an alternative tradition of feminine heroes, beginning with Scheherazade, narrator and protagonist of the *1001 Nights*, who make use of language and stories to win their victories’ (52–53). Margaret Atwood’s narrating handmaid and journal-writing aunt in her dystopian Gilead similarly manipulate language, as a survival strategy and as a means of performing (and affirming) one’s own existence through speech—as do many of the central characters of feminist fiction in modern and contemporary literary traditions. As women’s studies scholars, historians among us, reach into the past to find figures like Scheherazade who symbolise how speaking can save your life, we also reach back to find other iconography of women’s experiences of structurally and culturally violent worlds. In debates about whose version of a story is more credible, we have no more perfect figure of stereotypical female experience than Cassandra, the Trojan prophetess whose predictions were disbelieved.

Rebecca Solnit tells us that ‘in the most famous version of the myth, the disbelief with which [Cassandra’s] prophecies were met was the result of a curse placed on her by Apollo when she refused to have sex with the god’ (116–117). An ancient source, a commentary on the *Aeneid*, discloses more graphically that, unable to take back the gift of prophecy he had bestowed upon Cassandra, Apollo ‘poisoned’ it by spitting into her mouth. This punitive act of retaliation, rendering her as the legendary prophetess who speaks the truth and is never believed, also produces Cassandra as a historico-literary emblem of the voices that have come to be identified with ‘me too’ discourses. Even now, with ‘me too’ and social media making messy stories more visible, the response to women presenting testimonies less organised than legal briefs is still, far too often, about blaming of the person who is speaking of their pain for the incident(s) that caused the pain, full-scale denial and gaslighting (manipulating the person into understanding your version of events as their reality), and sceptical ‘what about’-ing that equates to slut-shaming and a refusal to consider victimisation in circumstances where (someone’s) credibility cannot be established. The person we decide to believe doesn’t even have to be the person who is actually telling the truth, just the person who seems most believable. Given that our cultures routinely diminish the credibility of marginalised groups, especially ones they can label ‘weak,’ credibility favours the privileged, those who can mobilise rape myths to evade accountability. What ‘me too’ messy stories are revealing, then, is testimonial injustice at work in a world in which Cassandra speaks and is not just disbelieved but systematically harassed.

Miranda Fricker says, ‘persistent cases . . . of wrongful epistemic exclusion could, especially if they are also systematic, genuinely inhibit the development of an essential aspect of a person’s identity’ (54). Her philosophical

analysis of epistemic injustice helps to explain why we should pay attention to women's testimonies that 'me too' discourses are taking up and increasingly interrogating beyond standard dismissals as 'bad dates.'¹⁵ Claims that these not-rapes are nevertheless problems that need to be worked out, into a social consensus of new and improved sexual ethics, are often dismissed as coming from 'women who want to play the victim card,' a posture of dismissiveness that I think is wrong, unfair, and short-sighted. For those who are speaking only of problems and solutions that take place in legal contexts, messy stories—what Anglo-American philosophy of law would recognise as 'penumbral cases'—are frustratingly immune to tools of interrogation and due process, so must be put outside the bounds of discussion. For the rest of us, however, these messy stories can be an invitation to extend our boundaries of understanding and learn to see injustices that had previously been invisible to us, as structural or cultural violence. If we were to take up the challenge they pose, messy stories could be part of facilitating rather than inhibiting essential epistemic development.

Fricker's worry about persistent exclusion suggests that unwillingness to give a woman's testimony a thoughtful hearing could inhibit the development of her sexual autonomy: if she can't be trusted to recognise and describe the situation she finds herself in, how can she be held to account for her choices? As I read her analysis of epistemic injustice, it is indeed possible to experience secondary harm (identity-impairment, for example) as a consequence of the primary harm of being excluded from knowledge production. It also, I think, makes sense to see impaired or arrested autonomy as another attenuated harm. Excluding a woman who is telling a messy story from participation in communities of knowledge-production means excluding her from membership in communities of truth-telling; her socially constructed identity as a credible speaker of her own experiences is foreclosed, and this makes it even more difficult for her to pick her way through the cultural messaging about what men want from women in sexual behaviours. This, in turn, impairs her path to sexual autonomy, the capacity to make thoughtful, informed choices for which she can and should take full responsibility. Instead of ruling out people who are not telling coherent stories, people who are choosing messiness, we could be practicing the 'learning to hear' justice orientation that Fricker recommends. Engagement with details that don't fit, motivations that don't make sense, interactions that puzzle, is not just an orientation that creates social space in which she learns to speak for herself responsibly; it is also a space in which we are challenged into development of greater cognitive capacity for complexity and nuance (which itself appears to be related to emotional capacity for empathy). Both a cultural context more conducive to sexual autonomy and social patterns of discourse that appreciate and encourage complex and challenging narratives will require us to examine what Sanyal describes as 'grey areas where comfortable sexuality ends but rape hasn't yet started,' areas she says are really markers of 'sexual illiteracy' (Sanyal 157). In her view, 'sexual and relationship ethics are an integral part of the discussion about sexual violence, but they are not

the same thing. We must address them both if we really want to change our sexual and emotional culture' (Sanyal 182).

A stage theory of saying yes: *the princess's choices*

One way to see the history of anti-rape activism as joining Second Wave and Third Wave feminisms in a common project is to tell a story of the history of consent education. Through such a story we can see the work we need to do—the renegotiation of gender and socialisation that 'me too' messy stories open up for us—as being not-new at all. Those who either champion or dismiss 'me too' as a new way of doing things fail to see the decades of labour that have been poured into making this paradigm shift possible. The metaphors of stage theory and paradigm shift rest against each other uneasily here; I draw on them to tell consent education as a story that largely picks up from the history of rape I surveyed earlier in this chapter and brings us all the way to this current moment's promise of a different worldview with respect to sexual violence. The history of rape is almost necessarily a legal story: because the idea that a woman might have sexual preferences and make sexual choices is relatively new in many cultures, rape had been understood as a property violation one man might commit against another man (a crime), and consent took a long time to spread as a relevant concept, in either social or legal discourse. As the concept has spread throughout popular discourse, it has followed patterns of development that look like the classical model of stage theory as it appears in the study of human development: each entity goes through each stage of development in the same order, even if there is individual variation in the matter of when a given entity enters or exits any stage.

In this 'stage theory of saying yes' that I am offering, we begin after the history of perpetual consent has been put to rest and law has given us its doctrine of presumed consent: assuming someone has said yes unless a 'no' can be proven.¹⁶ In these social conditions, we move, through sustained and furious activism, into a discursive space where 'no' simply must be taken seriously and respected. This sustained and furious work to normalise a (woman's) right to say no is one of the campaigns we remember today as the legacy of Second Wave feminism—although I have already noted the much longer history of sustained work in African-American communities, and it is always possible to find pockets of history that can strike one as startlingly relevant or modern.¹⁷ In the cultural narratives of many English-speaking developed nations—the United States and Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand are the countries I have in mind—this stage takes place against a backdrop of broad and radical social reforms in the 1960s and 1970s. It is marked by the writings of Susan Brownmiller, Catharine MacKinnon, Germaine Greer, Andrea Dworkin, among others, but also by the community organising that produced domestic violence shelters and women's refuges, Take Back the Night marches, women's and gender studies

programmes in universities, and by the popularisation of feminist critiques of pornography, rape culture, and subordination of women to men. In the United States, as I have noted previously, the impact of this cultural change on the university was assisted by Title IX prohibition of gender discrimination in student populations. While Title IX's first and most obvious reshaping of university life was funding an explosion of women's sports teams, it also provided a justification and a framework for institutional policy-making in the area of sexual misconduct on campus. Administrative units responsible for student well-being complied with reporting requirements for on-campus sexual assaults, developed investigative committees and processes for responding to complaints, and harnessed the power of women's studies programmes and activist students to publicise consent education campaigns promoting the message that 'no' means no.

But eventually, the 'no means no' model that we adopt as a corrective to presumed consent proves inadequate. What happens in cases in which someone does not say 'no' because they are sleeping? Or unconscious? Or the person does not say 'no' because everyone knows you don't say no to daddy, or auntie, or your boss? Mithu Sanyal observes that education campaigns in that stage reinscribe gender norms by 'teaching girls to say no, and boys to accept the no' (Sanyal 157). Being a gatekeeper whose 'no' is respected is no less social labour than being a gatekeeper whose 'no' is ignored (although the outcome is almost certainly less traumatic), but the 'no means no' framework renders an obvious question unaskable: what if girls want to say yes? Although the writings of many Second Wave feminists are replete with observations about the coercive implications of gendered social roles,¹⁸ the consent education story tends at this point to shift its attention to an emerging Third Wave of feminism in these same developed nations during the 1990s.

Often still not well-understood by feminists of earlier generations, the Third Wave has been characterised by what I would argue is an engagement with structural and cultural violence. They have concentrated, one might say, on pulling up the roots of rape culture rather than chopping down its weeds. Derided in American cable-news circles as earnest and joyless, lacking some requisite ability to enjoy their youth, university students in the early Third Wave (millennials) nevertheless participated in an evolving array of conduct and consent codes designed to perform and/or verbalise consent at each progressive step of their sexual activity. Antioch College's 'Sexual Offense Prevention Policy' (SOPP), introduced in 1990, was the forerunner of these campus efforts to operationalise consent; however mockable or ham-fisted the SOPP seemed to some at the time, it has created a campus community that affirms the SOPP code as norms of respect and accountability for personal behaviour, and it has inspired 'yes means yes' codes that bill themselves variously as enthusiastic consent, communicative consent, and affirmative consent (Rosman). This advocacy of unambiguous communication of desires and consents is not only an American endeavour, nor

even an anglophone one; the ‘Believe Campaign’ students I worked with in Japan had crafted a sophisticated programme of consent education out of resources they had encountered on study-abroad semesters, including the now-ubiquitous but always charming ‘consent is like a cup of tea’ video commissioned by Thames Valley Police (UK; see May and Brian).

When ‘me too’ reporting and hashtags first impinged on American public consciousness in late 2017, they arrived into an ongoing contestation of sexual ethics that had evolved to the stage at which the standard is no longer just to hear the ‘no,’ but to solicit a ‘yes.’ This ‘affirmative’ model is an improvement over the previous way of thinking, but many of its articulations still build in regressive gender scripts (toxic male sexual entitlement to solicit the now-mandatory ‘yes’ and complicit/conflict-avoidant female gatekeeper obligations to justify that ‘yes’) that permit a coercive and deeply upsetting incident like ‘Grace’ had on her date with Ansari to be described as his attempt to ‘get to yes.’ Sanyal explains this weakness as a consequence of the education model’s aim: a ‘yes-means-yes . . . focus is on avoiding unwelcome contact, not on teaching people how to navigate a self-determined sexual life’ (162). One of the critical contributions ‘me too’ has made to discourses on dating and sex is to demand an accounting for the role of social capital in delivering a privileged man’s desired ‘yes.’ It has also exposed the persistence of regressive social norms that make women the guardians of our virtue—which, unlike Aristotelian accounts of (male) virtue as an expansive set of moral and intellectual capacities that need to be nurtured and practiced, is reduced in women to a virginity–monogamy–celibacy triad. And it has exposed pervasive socially conditioned impulses to blame those to whom sexual violence happens for not having done their gatekeeping labour properly.

As ‘me too’ critically interrogates social norms that affirmative consent (yes-means-yes) education has not adequately challenged, it gives us a persuasive argument for moving beyond affirmative consent models. It even gives reason for hope that some of our cultures—again, with and thanks to the hard work of activists—might move into a social space in which sexual self-determination is seen as a significant feature of socially responsible adult human existence.¹⁹ My years of anti-sexual assault work on American college campuses have given me a profound appreciation for all of the work that has been poured into the creation and development of all these stages of consent education. The models and workshops through which consent has been taught have saved lives. Literally. I know that. Until ‘me too’ entered my awareness, I thought these affirmative models (personally, I favoured the label ‘enthusiastic consent’) were the best that we could reasonably hope for. I continue to endorse their emphasis on articulating one’s thoughts to partners and on the unambiguous performance of mutual interest.

My sense that affirmative/enthusiastic consent was the best standard we could articulate began to shift as I engaged myself with the messy story of ‘Grace’ and Ansari, and with the stream of commentary it provoked. The

crucial question that sharpened my thinking came from a column on a site the *Washington Post* sponsors to engage with readers who have a Third Wave feminist bent: Latina journalist Amanda Alcántara asked whether consent is a matter of ‘wanting’ or ‘letting.’ I had already been thinking about the crucial role that mutual desire needs to play in intimate-partner relationships, and this sharp question about the very implications of the word ‘consent’ helped push my thinking forward, helped me to see that the next stage I think we need to propel ourselves towards is a discourse grounded in mutual wanting.

In theory, there is no terminological argument for swapping out references to ‘consent’ for references to ‘mutuality’: the Latin words out of which ‘consent’ was constructed (*con-sentire*) urge us to ‘feel together’—which is exactly the implication I am reaching for in my thinking about mutuality. But the connotations of words are not limited to philosophical implications of their origins; they also include associations—some easily apparent and explicable, others more historically idiosyncratic—that cultures and individuals develop over time. Connotations also direct us to particular contexts of application: one thing I am wrestling with throughout writing this chapter is how to wrest this discussion of sex and its consent-choice terminologies away from the legal context that so much of the discourse assumes. Much of the effort to shift our thinking into a quest for, say, welcomeness or mutuality—or even to sensibly apply an affirmative-consent standard—is met with criticisms that assume legal remedies and penalties.²⁰ Defenders of Ansari, for instance, point out that his actions towards ‘Grace’ did not amount to sexual violence and he should not be accused of rape. He was *not*, in fact, accused of being a rapist; he was accused of being a pushy, insensitive, entitled man. The *babe.net* article was not describing a crime; it was describing a depressing and all-too-familiar really bad date. It is on the spectrum of problematic sex, as rape is on the spectrum, but—importantly—rape and bad dates do not occupy the same point on this spectrum. The article did not do all the hard work it might have done in asking us to think about why we dismiss dates like this as part of the fabric of our worlds, as bits of the spectrum too insignificant to bother with, but its timing gave readers the ‘me too’ critical resources to dissect social norms and gender scripts that produce undesirable outcomes such as—to borrow Gavey’s phrase—heterosexual coercion.

The project of dismantling rape culture, eliminating it as a form of structural violence, does not consist only in reviewing our institutions and structures (the legal world, for instance) to make sure they are not perpetuating structural violence. We should be doing this, yes, but there is a broader scope to this project as I see it. In order to meet the problem of sexual violence at its roots, in the cultural violence of oppressive and harmful norms and scripts, we need to move beyond consent models of thinking about sex—even as we recognise that they have served us well and recognise that they continue to save and heal lives in more ruthlessly patriarchal societies

that are only now moving into, or still moving through, what we think of as outdated discursive models. Whatever we call it—another honing of the consent label, or an outright swapping into language of mutuality—this new model of thinking about how to have sex that is *not* on the ‘problematic’ spectrum needs to be something like what Linda Martín Alcoff outlines in *Rape and Resistance* as the need to develop sexual subjectivity that supports agency and desire for all of us. This point is also made by Sanyal, who argues that ‘people who know what they want and need are a lot better at respecting other people’s desires and boundaries as well as their own’ (162).

Although I feel a bit of pragmatic impatience at the thought of what to call this stage-model that lies beyond consent—I want the norms of mutuality and agency and responsibility for one’s desire, and will take them under any label that doesn’t undermine them—I also see a powerful role for language in conveying behavioural expectations of consent-models.²¹ Sanyal’s account of author Bini Adamczak’s proposal that we consider the merits of sexual discourse adopting the word ‘circlusion’ (antonym to ‘penetration’) is suggestive here:

‘Both words signify the same physical process but from opposite perspectives. *Penetration* means to insert something or to put something in. *Circlusion* means to surround or to clasp. That’s it. But it allocates activity and passivity inversely.’ Adamczak argues that it should be easy to introduce this neologism, as ‘circlusion is already part of our everyday experiences. Just think of the net that catches the fish, the mouth that chews the food, the nutcracker that [crushes] the nut . . . Circlusion enables us to express sensations that we’ve always been experiencing,’ thereby changing not only language but the concept of sexuality.

(Sanyal 19)

Despite the undeniable appeal of subversive language, the priority for this dismantling project must be development of models of sexual ethics that are grounded in a celebration of mutuality, and that allow all sexual agents to own their own desires (and lacks), speak authentically of wanting (or not), and learn how to negotiate mutually agreed-upon ways of satisfying these wants. All of this development work will need new norms affirming the value of characteristics we have previously devalued in cultures around the world: strong women, kind men, and whole people. (I don’t mean to suggest here that, for instance, only kindness should be valued in men or that kindness should only be valued when practiced by men; what I am urging is that we retire traditional gender prescriptions in favour of robust appreciation of self-determination/autonomy and nurturing and responsibility-taking wherever they occur, in persons of any gender.) Learning to value in anyone character traits that had previously been rigidly gendered will open up societal space for more individuals to live lives less constrained by stereotypes. Coupled with an agentic and

empathetic model of sexual consensus, I think this could produce less sexual violence and fewer victims.²²

‘Consent is currently the best tool we have to interact as equals,’ Sanyal concludes from her analysis of sexual violence, but, she warns, ‘it is more complex than it may initially seem. Because consent is always bound up with other social norms’ (159). The various stages that societies straining towards gender equality have moved through—from the emergence of consent as a legal concept, to the insistence that ‘no’ means no, to the insistence that only ‘yes’ can mean yes—have introduced women’s interests into social discourses about sex: women’s desire is more readily accepted these days, even if our capacity to report it accurately is doubted. But we still have not shifted the gatekeeping burden that toxic masculinity and complicit femininity have heaped upon women. Women like ‘Grace’ are blamed for poor management of men’s desire *and* are deemed incapable of honest testimony. This acceptance of disparate burden is part of the gendered social consensus—part of the whole spectrum of problematic sex, from rape to bad dates—that ‘me too’ is exposing and calling on us to either justify or reform.

The specific sites of reform I see ‘me too’ opening up for us—the work that needs to be done—are in our expectations (for ourselves and for the others we share our societies with) about how we listen, how we speak, and how we judge (ourselves and others). Both Miranda Fricker and I would want to see her ‘learning to hear’ justice orientation practiced widely, as a corrective to the credibility deficits suffered by the many groups of people our social worlds deem unreliable in a range of ways. Fricker’s discussion of the role of listening in virtue epistemology, her corrective for epistemic injustice, contributes to a growing body of literature across academic disciplines about the importance of listening and being listened to in achieving our goals, and is only tangentially what I have drawn out here as an ethical practice of greater sexual knowledge.²³

Learning to speak, to talk, to tell stories is also part of this work we need to do. Telling one’s story, messy or otherwise, talks the end of rape culture into being in two ways: it reveals to similarly situated listeners that they are not alone and it reveals to differently situated listeners ranges of social experiences they would not otherwise know. I have mentioned at length in my discussion of messy stories my opinion that ‘me too’ can teach us to be better judges of testimony, but I think we also need to work on being better judges of what care people need.

In the next chapter, I tell stories of how ‘me too’ emerged as a discursive space in which women could speak of the many ways we are subjected to gendered injustices, and one of those foundational stories is the history of Tarana Burke’s consent education work transforming into ‘me too.’ Burke speaks movingly of the creation of her outreach organisation as an attempt to redress what she saw in herself as a failure to offer empathy to someone who needed it, and her gloss on ‘me too’ manifests a deep commitment to empathy, and empathy-training. Empathy that assists self-determination is a

matter of learning to filter our speech through the ethical screen that journalist P. Sainath urges upon us: 'recall the face of the poorest and weakest person you have met, and ask yourself how the action you contemplate will place him or her in greater control of his or her life' ('Nero's Guests' 53:31–53:47).²⁴ To varying extents, each of us can develop ourselves as better listeners, better speakers and better judges of social and sexual ethics, but we do need to keep in mind Fricker's caution that '[s]hifting the unequal relations of power that create the conditions of hermeneutical injustice (namely, hermeneutical marginalization) takes more than virtuous individual conduct of any kind; it takes group political action for social change' (174). It is to that group action that I turn in the next chapter, a history of 'me too' and its global challenges of women's social conditions.

Coda: culture-jamming consent violations in 'Sleeping Beauty'

What's wrong with this story? Sleeping Beauty has been asleep for a hundred years. The life she had known and everyone she had loved are all gone. The kiss that will awaken her will reveal to her that she is utterly alone in the world, and the first new person with whom she might make a human connection will be someone who has just kissed her without her consent. That's really not a great basis on which to rebuild one's life.

What if the story unfolded this way instead?

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom with no king, no queen, and a castle that no one could see anymore. It was overgrown with sharp-thorned brambles, and the legend that the people of the kingdom passed down through the generations said that a beautiful princess lay inside the castle. She had been cursed, the legend explained, by an evil fairy who had intruded on her christening as a baby, and who had condemned the princess to prick her finger on a spinning wheel as a young woman and fall into a slumber that would last for 100 years. According to the legend, the spell could only be broken by a lover's kiss. The king and queen had been distraught when the fairy's curse came to pass despite all their efforts to protect their daughter from spinning wheels, so they had scoured the kingdom for another fairy, one who could cast another spell that would protect their beautiful sleeping daughter once they were no longer alive to watch out for her. She would lie in her bed peacefully for the entire length of time of the evil fairy's curse, and the castle would be protected by a profusion of thickly grown, dangerous brambles that could only be penetrated by the pure of heart. No one alive today in the kingdom knew for certain how much time the princess had been sleeping, but the brambles had grown so thick that some people had started to doubt that there even was a castle inside the thicket.

In this kingdom lived a young man who had heard tellings and re-tellings of this legend all his life. From the time he was a boy, the story of the

princess had resonated with him; he felt sorrow for her and for the king and queen, for the lives that had been disrupted by the fairy's curse. His own parents, who were also deceased, had been similarly protective of his well-being, making sure that he learned to read and write, and to cook, and to mend fences, encouraging him to become self-sufficient at an early age. He supposed that the story spoke to him because the king and queen's efforts to protect their daughter sounded like something his parents would have done. Now, he and his grandmother, his mother's mother, lived on a little plot of land that they had inherited from his parents; they grew vegetables and tended sheep and lived a quiet, comfortable life in a little house that had a view of the bramble thicket in the distance.

For years, as he and his grandmother cared for the sheep and the vegetable garden, he would take time out from his labours to gaze at the brambles and wonder to himself about how much of the legend was true. Was there a castle inside the brambles? Was there a princess inside the castle? What would happen when the hundred years was over? Would she just wake up on her own? The legend said that a lover's kiss would awaken her, but was that only a loophole to free her from the curse before the hundred years had elapsed? Maybe the kiss wasn't necessary? Sometimes he would share these questions with his grandmother, but she wasn't much interested in questioning the legend; she just liked to re-tell it the way it had been told to her. She was a loving and capable woman, but she didn't have a philosophical mind. Not many of the people the young man knew did have that kind of mind, so he mostly kept his questions to himself. They became a game he played with himself in the evenings, after his work was done. He would sit outside his house, beside the vegetable garden, and watch the bramble thicket in the distance slowly fade into indistinct darkness as the dusk sky turned into night and his mind ground the jagged edges off his questions.

One morning he woke up and just knew somehow that this day would have a different rhythm to it than all his other days. It wasn't a planting day, or a harvesting day, or a shearing day, or a market day. It wasn't even a fence-mending day or a holiday. It was different from all his routine days, and different from the special days too. He didn't know why it was different, or how he knew—it just was. Today was the day that he was going to satisfy his curiosity about the legend. He was going to ride to the bramble thicket and inspect it for himself.

It was a long ride, but the day was beautiful: warm, but not uncomfortably so, with a breeze rising and falling like the gentle breathing of the land itself. He could hear birdsong everywhere. When he arrived at the brambles, it was midday, so he ate his lunch in their shadow, watered his horse, and found her a secure, shady spot to rest under an old tree nearby. Then he approached the brambles. The thorns looked viciously sharp, like they would tear his flesh if he touched them, but when he reached out a tentative finger to touch one, the whole bramble the thorn was attached to shifted and opened a space for him. He touched another, and another. He could scarcely believe

what he was seeing, but there was quite clearly a path that had opened up, just wide enough for him to pass through the brambles to a grassy clearing inside. And there was the castle. The brambles were so high that he had to tilt his head all the way back to see the sky, but they had not grown into the castle in the way that weeds invade an abandoned house; they were simply a protective barrier around this still fully intact building. He passed through what looked like the main entrance and started exploring the quiet, dusty hallways and staircases. If the castle was real, maybe the princess was too.

She was. And she was beautiful. She seemed to be sleeping so peacefully that the young man wondered why any lover would want to disturb her. He was drawn to her, yet he did not want to break the peace that had settled over her. As he marvelled at her beauty and the calm that the evil fairy's spell had unexpectedly brought to her, he noticed that the table beside her bed had a letter propped on it. There was no envelope, no seal; it was open, to be read by anyone in the room. It was a letter from the princess's parents, the long-dead king and queen, explaining to the princess what had happened to her and what they had done to protect the castle as she slept. It ended quite simply, 'we love you.' The spirit of care that flowed from the letter brought tears to the young man's eyes, and he knew immediately what he could contribute to the princess's well-being. Fishing his 'thoughts and questions only I am interested in' notebook and a pencil out of his shirt pocket, he ripped out a blank page and wrote his own note to the princess. 'The people of your kingdom love you too,' he wrote; 'any person in my village will help you if you come to us when you awaken.' He drew a map of the route he had taken this morning to get to the castle and marked the village's relative position using the sun as a directional guide so that she would know to travel east. He drew a schematic map of the village, with all of the locations he hoped she might feel comfortable approaching: the market where food and clothing were sold, the inn where travellers stayed on their way through town, and—he hoped this wasn't presumptuous—the house in which he and his grandmother lived, where he assured her there would always be a hearty meal, guest quarters, and transportation at her disposal.

Then he left, passing through the brambles as easily as when he had entered. The ride home was long, and by the time he had fed, groomed, and stabled his horse, dusk was approaching. His grandmother was happily puttering in the kitchen; it was her night to prepare their evening meal. So he poured himself a cup of wine, and went out to the vegetable garden to watch the bramble thicket in the distance slowly fade into indistinct darkness.

Notes

- 1 In this formulation, it seems clear that Sanyal is acknowledging Susan Sontag's observation in a 1967 essay, 'The Pornographic Imagination,' that ever since Christianity took hold of what has become known as Western civilisation, 'everything pertaining to sex has been a "special case" in our culture' (213–214). Sontag's

point here will be familiar to those conversant with Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis' (Volume 1, 11–12).

- 2 Sanyal quotes Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer, authors of *A Natural History of Rape*, offering a particularly tone-deaf justification for the thesis of their book: 'People everywhere understand sex as something females have that males want' (Sanyal 5); she also quotes feminist critic Laurie Penny's scathing analysis of the messages about femininity in glossy 'lifestyle' magazines: "'No" is one of the most erotic things a woman can say . . . Real men don't want women to want what they want' (Sanyal 12). In both of these cases, rape is elided into sex (or 'sexy').
- 3 For men, on the other hand, '[m]any physicians considered rape immoral but unavoidable and, if there were no prostitutes available, "infinitely preferable to the perils of masturbation," since regular sexual discharge was indispensable to men's health' (Sanyal 13). A (specious) medical preference for rape over masturbation (self-pleasure theorised as self-abuse, or violence directed towards oneself) explains crimes against humanity like World War II Japanese military sexual slavery (widespread trafficking and exploitation of 'comfort women') on the assumption that it's better to inflict violence or harm on someone else than on yourself. (There is, of course, no philosophical argument for why it is acceptable/better to inflict on someone else something that you yourself would prefer not to experience.)
- 4 This particular aspect of violence against women—that it disproportionately (relative to men's experience of violence) occurs at the hands of an intimate partner (husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend), former partner, or close family relation—is a fairly common finding in all surveys of violence that organise their collected data by the gender of victims. See, for instance, Fyers and Ensor's *The Homicide Report*, a publicly searchable database of homicides occurring in New Zealand between January 2004 and March 2019 (<https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2019/the-homicide-report/#>); its analysis reveals that half of all female homicide victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner and that these killings were more likely to be premeditated or planned than spontaneous or unintentional. This contrasts with the male homicide victims in the report who are statistically more likely than women to be killed by a stranger in (often alcohol-fuelled) spontaneous episodes of violence.
- 5 See Chapter 1's extensive endnote that surveys nation-state variation in legal treatment of rape and some tangential sexual violences.
- 6 As recently as 2019–2020, shamefully sexist and victim-blaming defences have been used, in court and in media, to shield defendants of 'sex crimes' from responsibility; the Auckland murder (not rape) trial of the killer of Grace Millane exemplifies this holdover of 13th-century thinking. Millane, a young British woman who was holidaying in New Zealand, was last seen alive in CCTV footage of her and a man she had met online. When her body was found several days later at a dump-site far from the hotel she was seen entering, her killer claimed she had consented to 'rough sex,' her death had been a tragic accident, and he wasn't to blame, truly. His cover story was painstakingly picked apart in the trial that ended with his guilty verdict, but that did not stop the media from breathlessly picking up the story of Grace's Tinder date and generating an endless stream of opinions about whether a '50 Shades' defence is an acceptable legal strategy.
- 7 Sanyal quotes German cultural studies theorist Gesa Dane as saying, 'There is even evidence that women perceived as being "plain" or "obese" are less likely to be believed, and are therefore less likely to report a rape' . . . the 'who would want to rape her anyway?' scepticism that is a significant driver of under-reporting (Sanyal 71).

- 8 The survey was done by a group of students who were founders of Believe Campaign Soka, a consent-education group modelled on the bystander intervention initiatives organised in the United States to address the widespread problem of sexual assault on college campuses. A Japanese-language graph of their survey results can be found at <https://believecampaignsoka4.wixsite.com/belivecampaignsoka/2017>. Another more informal questioning of students at a different Tokyo university in 2019 elicited the following observations:

‘In Japan, there is a cultural characteristic of women that they cannot say no. They know they have rights to say no, but the cultural atmosphere does not allow them to do so. Therefore, it is really difficult for Japanese women to [speak] up about the rights of women since I know many people who did it were attacked socially.’; and

‘In Japan, there is a saying, “iya-yo iya-yo, mo suki-no uchii,” which means that when women say no, they’re actually thinking yea, and so I thought it expresses the patriarchy in Japanese culture’; and

‘Although one may never have had been assaulted sexually, we experience this “culture” in social values such as using “assault” quantity to “measure attractiveness of yourself,” like people telling you that the reason you got harassed is because you are “attractive” or some girls feel unattractive because they have never been sexually harassed . . . I think this strongly comes from complicit[y] of women and men to feel “better” about this reality.’

(Nicholls)

- 9 See, for instance, the discussion of psychology professor Mary Koss’s originary work in 1976 surveys of Kent State (Ohio) university students in Alexandra Rutherford’s *Behavioral Scientist* analysis. In other jurisdictions, similar figures are produced by surveys of households and individuals (‘The Crime Survey for England and Wales’ done by the UK’s Office for National Statistics and the Amnesty Switzerland survey done by the GfS Bern Institute).
- 10 Systematic hermeneutical injustice is defined as ‘the injustice of having some significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource’ (Fricker 155). General hermeneutical injustice (including incidental), on the other hand, is defined as ‘the injustice of having some significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization’ (Fricker 158). One can be marginalised as an individual without necessarily participating in a marginalised group identity.
- 11 Fricker makes a point of telling us, about the systematic-incidental distinction she is making in cases of hermeneutical injustice, that ‘the fact that a hermeneutical injustice is incidental does not mean that it is not ethically serious’ (158). His ‘hermeneutical participation is hindered in respect of a significant, if highly localized, patch of his social experience, and for this reason his case qualifies as a hermeneutical injustice. The injustice does not stem from any structural identity prejudice—on the contrary, he suffers the injustice not because of, but rather in spite of, the social type he is’ (Fricker 158).
- 12 One of the most interesting elements of New Zealand psychologist Nicola Gavey’s 2019 revision of her 2005 book, *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*, is its organisational structure as an overlay of her 2019 commentary on her previously published text. This structure, which uses extensive footnoting and

parenthetical interjections to update statistical data and to re-think conclusions in light of new evidence, is at its most significant as feminist-academic scholarship in its 2005/2019 ‘conversation’ about how rape of a man by a woman fits in to conceptual paradigms that shape feminist anti-rape activism.

- 13 The *babe.net* story I discuss in this section as analysable through Nicola Gavey’s early work on coercive dating norms is a representative example. It contains January 2018 reporting of events from September 2017, that just pre-dated ‘me too’ revelations against Harvey Weinstein.
- 14 American philosopher Kate Manne offers similar observations about male sexual entitlement and testimonial injustice inflicted upon women in her May 2020 analysis of Tara Reade’s sexual assault allegations against Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee in the US presidential elections in November 2020. Manne argues that the well-documented accusations of inappropriate touching on his part signify ‘the same sense of privileged male entitlement that often underlies more serious sexual breaches, including sexual assault of the kind Reade alleges’ (‘I Believe Tara Reade’).
- 15 I am speaking here, throughout this section of the chapter, of sexual encounters that are only thinly, technically consensual, the not-rapes that women nonetheless report feeling socially coerced into out of varying combinations of a female-socialisation pressure to be accommodating and fear of antagonising the man.
- 16 I begin my ‘stage theory’ analogy at ‘presumed consent’ because I have picked up from where I left off in the first section’s history of rape. That history was the law’s recognition that rape was not a property crime—that there was a person for whom the sexual act might or might not be violence depending on whether they had consented. Once a female person has emerged within the legal realm that adjudicates the male world of property use and misuse, consent is a feature of the act that must be either presumed or documented. Pervasive male dominance throughout the cultures of the world makes presumed consent—inference by male judges and jurors of the victim’s state of mind—an obviously coherent status-quo position. Mithu Sanyal notes that ‘[m]ale force and female reluctance were an integral part of the construction of “normal” sexuality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ and women were thought to feign resistance in order to stoke men’s desire (9). Because ‘resistance’ was understood as bound up in flirting and courting practices, the law ‘needed [a woman’s] “utmost resistance” to prove that the perpetrator’s force had been violence, as opposed to welcome force, i.e. that he had raped and not ravished her . . . [and] the victim had to uphold her massive physical resistance *throughout* lest others conclude that she had, at some point during the act, changed her mind and consented (Sanyal 53). In a social world that sees women as asexual and manipulative, a doctrine of presumed consent does offer paths to legal judgement that would be socially coherent.
- 17 In her history of consent, Mithu Sanyal notes the existence of ‘Celtic law (approximately 1000 to 55 BCE) . . . [which] recognized two types of rape: forcible rape and rape of a woman who couldn’t consent (due to intoxication or mental illness)’ (52). This legal recognition of capacity to consent suggests an understanding of personhood and autonomy consistent with the landmark 2018 Swedish law that defined as rape any sex devoid of consent (Sanyal 179).
- 18 Indeed, as Rebecca Solnit observes, ‘[t]he feminism of [the 1980s, the “Late Second Wave”] is often dismissed as grimly antisex because it pointed out that sex is an arena of power and that power is liable to abuse and because it described the nature of some of that abuse’ (108).

- 19 Mithu Sanyal notes that ‘the right to sexual self-determination is important for all human beings—indeed, so important that it is considered a Sexual Human Right’ (Sanyal 37).
- 20 Reducing social interaction to questions of how justifications and defences might be marshalled in a court of law misses the point of the (messy) everyday give-and-take negotiation I am trying to capture in this discussion. For similar reasons, I argue in the next chapter that ‘me too’ discourses, challenges, and movements are not ‘carceral feminist’ in their commitments—not necessarily. In the United States, Harvey Weinstein’s ‘me too’ accusers did use ‘carceral’ mechanisms of the state—arrest, trial, conviction—to pursue what they thought justice would look like; Al Franken’s and Joe Biden’s ‘me too’ accusers have not.
- 21 I give this question of the subversive power of language sustained attention in Chapter 5, where I identify and advocate for the subversive power of culture-jamming practices.
- 22 The question of how we might respond to the attenuated harm of impaired or arrested sexual autonomy that I drew out of Fricker’s articulation of epistemic injustice is more difficult. Some harms cannot be corrected, healed, or compensated for. They are inflicted, and the person upon whom they are inflicted then wears those scars—until they fade, which they sometimes don’t. This is not a problem we should hand-wave past—and to be clear, I do not think any of the ‘me too’ conversations we are having these days are doing that—but it is important to acknowledge that healing does have its limits. Even if impairments to sexual autonomy are permanent and cannot be healed, however, even if all we can do is prevent future impairments, dismantling rape culture still seems like a very worthwhile investment in better social futures.
- 23 Listening as a tool that will build better outcomes is discussed extensively in peace studies literature, in particular but not exclusively by theorists of restorative justice, like Howard Zehr, and theorists of conflict transformation (rather than resolution), like John Paul Lederach. Listening is also the focus of a great deal of work in improvisation theory, driven as it is by metaphors of music. My own prior work on an ethics of improvisation rests crucially upon the concept Ellen Waterman and Julie Smith name ‘listening trust’—a sustained engagement with (musical) ideas suggested by another (fellow musician), not just as a mark of respect for the other person but as a way to learn new ideas. This implied appeal to curiosity is what, for me, pulls Fricker’s corrective for hermeneutical injustice into conversation with a mutuality model of sexual consent: talking to a sex partner about what they want is caring for your partner, but it is not just that. It is also learning about your partner.
- 24 Sainath’s speech is an account of the epidemic of debt-driven farmer suicides in rural India, but much of what he has to say about self-interest, apathy, and their roles in producing human misery applies to rape culture.

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4 *Until it wasn't anymore . . .*

How 'Me Too' came to work

Women speaking out: *who are we hearing?*

As I write my way through chapters organised around stories I want to consider as ways we—helpfully or unhelpfully—think through rape culture, I become increasingly curious and self-conscious about how my terminology (my decision to use 'sexual violence' as an umbrella term under which to gather the bits and pieces that comprise this culture, for instance) might be received by readers. I worry most about the appearance that I am shifting from rape to sexual harassment as from apples to oranges, even as I remain firmly convinced that my discussion is *not* changing the topic, that 'sexual violence' is a concept encompassing coercions within workplaces and coercions within bedrooms. It has been reassuring, then, to think of my focus in this chapter through Cornel West's dictum that 'justice is what love looks like in public' (232): in this way of thinking, harassment is the face of sexual violence when it shows up in the workplace and other public spaces. Sexual harassment appears as a 'public face' of sexual violence, and sexual assault appears as a 'private face,' so for those who ascribe to public-private distinctions, these behaviours do—unhelpfully—appear to be different things. My decision, in this book, to deploy a category with the definitional scope of 'sexual violence' was precisely to incorporate both spheres—to dissolve them in the way that radical feminists of the Second Wave did, and the way that #metoo did in its invitation to women who had experienced either form of violence.¹

'The personal is the political,' argued Second Wave radical feminists in the United States—among them, Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Susan Brownmiller—who interrogated pornography, sexualised harassment and humiliation in the workplace, and rape, all from the standpoint of (female) subjectivity forced into performing submissiveness in order to survive.² Viewing all of these phenomena through a 'feminist peace studies' lens permits us to see each of them—sexualised 'entertainment,' workplace conditions, and pervasive undermining of personal autonomy—as structures through and around which women's performance of femininity is constructed, and into which that femininity is (sometimes coercively)

channelled. It reveals the violence in each of them as a way of enforcing rigid hierarchies of value that diminish some people's 'menus of life choices' (opportunities to direct the course of their own lives) for the benefit of other people—another way of describing Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence. Because it challenges us to think about how and why hierarchies are gendered (which is to say, to think about how sex/gender and power meet in different institutions and cultures), a feminist peace studies analysis also gives us insight into the scope and commonality of the violences presented in the narratives that began #metoo: the *New York Times* and *New Yorker* reporting about Harvey Weinstein's decades-long sexual predation of vulnerable women who worked for him. (The ability to see patterns of violence in these stories and the struggle to see what the patterns mean, what they say about workplaces, is something that the *Times* reporters Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey wrestle with in *She Said*, their account of breaking the Weinstein story.) The ways in which women have been made vulnerable to male power are numerous, and many different histories can be told of all of them. While different histories of Second Wave feminism—and more recently, 'me too' movements—are written from different standpoints, and emphasise different actors and events, Linda Hirshman quite aptly observes in the course of her history of sexual harassment that '[t]he fight to extend the notion of meaningful physical self-ownership has been ground zero at every stage of feminism' (28).

Hirshman's history is one in which the story of sexual harassment is told as American feminist history, and 'me too' is told as a workplace story, in a narrative starting from the twin origin points of Kantor and Twohey's journalistic exposé of Harvey Weinstein and of Alyssa Milano's tweet launching #metoo (x). Despite our standpoint differences, Hirshman's take on the movement that I understand as global gendered resistance to predatory power structures is a valuable complement to much of the analysis of America's 'me too' reckoning, foregrounding the harassment piece of this cultural awakening where so many other analysts and commentators foreground the assault piece of it. That said, Hirshman's decision to tell 'the story of women's 50-year battle against sexual abuse and harassment' (Hirshman xi)—in which Second Wave feminism develops the concept of sexual harassment—invites us to think of sexualised workplaces as a uniquely modern problem. When we tell and hear histories of women organising against sexual harassment as something that started in 1970, the legacy of protest that stretches back through the 20th century and around the globe is obscured. In 1909, Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai was denouncing sexual predation of vulnerable female employees by their bosses.³ A couple of years later, in 1911, socialist women in the United States were organising garment workers' unions in response to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that killed 146 mostly immigrant women, and socialist women in Europe were organising the very first International Women's Day. And well before that, as Hirshman herself observes, '[i]n 1833

the black female abolitionist Maria W. Stewart invoked women's rights to control their bodies as a foundational reason for abolition' of slavery in the United States (249). All of these defences of women's rights to earn a livelihood, and to control what we earn, respond to a history of gendered oppression that Second Wave resistance itself was drawing inspiration from.

It is some of this earlier history—forgotten, erased, cast aside—that Kristen Ghodsee recovers in *Second World, Second Sex*, her account of a sophisticated solidarity forged between eastern European women's-equality advocates of the former 'Second World' and women working within Soviet-aligned African states during the post-World War II period of hegemonic struggle between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the 'Cold War'). She herself describes her project as 'a political act of resistance against an entrenched narrative that downplays and delegitimizes the contributions of women from the state socialist countries and their many socialist allies in the developing world' (Ghodsee 242). The entrenched narrative she rejects is the same one Hirshman adopts as an implicit frame: a history in which the great progressive strides towards women's liberation and gender equality were made by American women of the Second Wave.⁴ The counter-narrative Ghodsee offers as a correction of the historical record is one in which the Soviet bloc and the Soviet-aligned, post-colonising and developing nations of the Global South 'pressured the United Nations to deal with women's issues and, by extension, forced male politicians in the West to take those issues seriously' (242). Without the organising done by 'women's activists from the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe,' Ghodsee argues, 'the issue of women's rights would never have garnered the attention of male politicians on either side of the Iron Curtain' (2). In fact, she notes, in support of her history, 'President John F. Kennedy created his Commission on the Status of Women in direct response to the supposed threat of Soviet science and technology, fearing that the communist commitment to women's education and employment gave them an upperhand' (Ghodsee 234). 'The seeds for the second wave women's movement were thus planted and watered with US fears of communist superiority,' she concludes (Ghodsee 234).

Although the radical-feminist projects that made American feminism of the 1960s and 1970s seem like a whole new way of thinking about women, and men, and gender equality were nourished by the work of Soviet and 'Third World' women, there was no global outreach, no international women's movement. Ghodsee explains that

'feminism,' as it was known at the time in both its western European and Russian variations, was considered suspect as the ideology of upper-class women who strove to further their own interests without concern for general social injustices and inequities.

The rhetoric of a 'global woman's movement' was, and still is, popular, but Ghodsee echoes postcolonial feminism's critiques of sisterhood-solidarity when she observes that there is an enormously complex reality being elided when we speak of a single movement: 'women's activism ha[s] been influenced by a wide variety of vastly differing political projects, and it is impossible to speak of one global "feminism,"' she concurs (5).⁵ She understands why 'feminist activists and authors have often found it convenient to speak of one singular global movement for women's rights, a movement supposedly led by liberal feminists from the Western capitalist countries,' the women whose names we associate with Second Wave feminism (Ghodsee 6). But the historical revision she proffers, a more complex portrait of global struggles for gender equality, is one in which many of the international recognitions of women's needs and capabilities—the 1975 UN International Women's Year, for example—were the result of Eastern Bloc advocacy (Ghodsee 3). In my view, the expanded field of activism that emerges from Ghodsee's recovered history makes it one we can engage with very helpfully; stories of different groups of women in different places, cultures, and times, gives us a rather Foucauldian picture of struggle against patriarchy. Power is everywhere. Resistance is also everywhere. The powerful and empowering lesson we can learn from reflecting on Ghodsee's history is that we—whoever and wherever 'we' happen to be—*can* create our own movements.

While I think it important to notice with Ghodsee what is being left out of canonical Second Wave histories, it is also important to see how the voices of the Second Wave were amplifying matters that we, in our 'me too' era, are still grappling with. The canonical histories are not the only ones we should be sharing but, using the metaphor of a quilt of stories, I would argue that patches of 'entrenched narrative' are crucial to picking out any overall design. Hirshman's account of Catharine MacKinnon's work on sexual harassment law, for instance, shows how the gendered and sexualised bullying so many women try to stare down in the workplace meets all the tests of a civil rights violation, as it is defined in the US Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a legal achievement, this story centres Second Wave feminism in the United States, but it is a narrative that deserves to be entrenched as localised illustration of how to make a globally relevant 'gender justice' argument. MacKinnon's focus on (cultural) dominance, rather than (biological) difference, as producing supposedly intractable puzzles of gender and equality (which I discussed in the context of violences of institutional structure and of culture in Chapter 1) grounded a radical argument that rejected the then-status quo view that sex, as an activity of the private sphere, is private and *prima facie* consensual, not a matter for public-sphere litigation.

MacKinnon's classically Second-Wave refusal to segregate 'the political' to only one area of human relations leads her to see that 'sex at work [is] political, not personal, but sex at home is political, too' (Hirshman 24). What becomes visible under her scrutiny is so much more than what peace

studies identifies as 'direct violence'—the problems of, in Hirshman's words, 'one particular woman who happened to attract her boss's attention' (14). Viewed through the lens of dominance and subordination—through culturally prescribed gender roles—sexual harassment is a phenomenon of structural and cultural violence: people in positions of authority or impunity in the workplace harass women 'because sexuality [is] what being a woman means socially' (Hirshman 14). As Hirshman summarises MacKinnon's argument:

The wrongdoing is not in treating women differently from men, even though that generally results in keeping women down and making them unequal. The wrongdoing is in treating men *as the standard for comparison in the first place*. The civil rights violation is in treating women *as lesser beings*.

(Hirshman 15, emphasis in original)

Throughout the 1970s, American Second Wave radical feminists pushed back against the subordination of women in battles that were principled but often misrepresented. The fight against pornography that also raised MacKinnon's profile in American 'culture wars' was anti-patriarchal in its intentions and messaging, but was instead framed in media commentaries as 'anti-sex,' Hirshman recounts (33). Liberal feminism, which later gave way to neoliberal feminism, triumphed over the supposedly anti-sex radical feminists, with a message of liberation, optimistic pronouncements of equal contracting (consenting) power regardless of gender, and the rhetorical flourish of asserting themselves as 'sex-positive' feminists (Hirshman 38–39). By the beginning of the 1980s, hopes for even a united *national* feminist movement in the United States (let alone a global movement) were dashed in a vicious battle over whether sex could ever possibly be a sphere of human life that occupied a space outside power and politics (Hirshman 39). The later 1980s/early 1990s 'postfeminism' backlash that pretended to be an evolution beyond gender equality

could be roughly divided into two types [of arguments]: feminism had succeeded and women should be happy with what they had achieved and go home, or feminism had succeeded and women were miserable with what they had achieved and should thus go back home.

(Hirshman 118)

At the same time this culture war was being fought over whether feminism was still relevant, three African-American women—Paulette Barnes, Mechelle Vinson, and Sandra Bundy—pursued ground-breaking lawsuits, shaping a legal context in which Catharine MacKinnon's 'theory of the case' about sexual harassment was confirmed: it was a violation of the Civil Rights Act. Even as MacKinnon's view of sex and power in the workplace

became settled employment law, from the mid-1980s on, US litigation in the area of sexual harassment was particularly concentrated on questions of employer liability for harassing supervisors and co-workers, and on what constituted a hostile work environment (Hirshman 55).⁶

And then, Anita Hill spoke up. In 1991, Hill, at this point a University of Oklahoma law professor, learned that her former boss at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Clarence Thomas, had been nominated to the Supreme Court seat vacated by retiring civil rights icon Thurgood Marshall (arguer before the Court of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case that desegregated American public schools). Hill had in fact worked for fellow Yale Law graduate Thomas, as his personal assistant, in two Washington, DC, government offices: at the Department of Education when he was newly appointed as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in 1981, and then, less than a year later, at the EEOC. By 1983, after two years of working for Thomas, she mobilised her contacts to get a teaching job in an Oklahoma law school and settled into an academic career. She had stayed mostly silent about her experiences in his employ until she learned of his Supreme Court nomination and put in motion a chain of events that brought 'sexual harassment' into American public conversation (and helped birth the 'Third Wave' of feminism). Critics who later denounced Hill as a liar and an opportunist for keeping in touch with Thomas over the years and subsequently speaking out about her early career experience of harassment at his hands either missed or didn't bother to account for what feminists understood then, and we all, post-Weinstein, should know. Men who want to assert their power through sexualising underlings often choose women who *want* to advance in careers like those the abusers already occupy, thereby forcing ambitious women to subsequently maintain these hollow, impeaching relationships in their networks of contacts.⁷ The story Hill told—her testimony of what it was like to be a junior colleague of this presumptive judicial nominee—was lurid, and the televised proceedings have become iconic: images of Hill, a composed and serious black woman, testifying to an all-male panel of senators displaying a prurient curiosity about the minutiae of her allegations. As Hirshman describes this moment in sexual harassment history, during the hearing held by the Senate Judiciary Committee (the committee responsible for vetting Supreme Court nominees), the senators demonstrated a shifting commitment to separating the public and private spheres of Thomas and Hill's respective lives. They avoided posing questions to Thomas about his pornography consumption on the grounds that it was a personal matter, but inquired into Hill's personal life (as potentially impeaching of her credibility) with such doggedness that it was apparent, even beyond Second Wave sensibilities, how the personal could be (gender-)political (Hirshman 84).

Hirshman characterises the confirmation of Thomas to his lifetime seat on the Supreme Court in partisan terms, explaining it as a matter of power-hungry Republicans and passive Democrats (85), like then-committee chair Joe Biden whose adversarial choreography of Hill's testimony prompted

questions years later, in the 'me too' moment, about whether he had apologised, or should apologise, to Hill for creating the conditions in which she was so publicly discredited and impugned. (For the record, according to Hill, he has expressed regret but has missed the broader significance of the gendered silencing he constructed in his capacity as committee chair.)

The incendiary nature of Hill's testimony could not be entirely stamped out by the white male power structure directing its full force of ridicule and testimonial injustice at this lone testifying individual. Too many women were watching the hearings and reflecting upon their own experiences. Perhaps they had not been, as Hill was, 'deluged . . . with sex talk, questions about her sex life, descriptions of his sexual prowess, opinions about her dress, and vivid depictions of the pornographic movies he had watched' (Hirshman 82). Perhaps they had not been pressured to date their bosses, as Hill had been (Solnit 110).⁸ But many women recognised the powerlessness of Hill's situation, and recognised that Thomas was sexualising his employee precisely because workplace conditions, including grossly inadequate employment law, protected him in his abusive exercise of power over her.⁹

After the hearing was over and Thomas took up his Senate-confirmed seat, journalists Jill Abramson and Jane Mayer spent four years writing the definitive book on whose testimony—Hill's or Thomas's—was more credible, and concluded that it was Hill who told the truth to the Senate. 'The two journalists did all the work the FBI would have done, had Chairman Biden run the committee hearings like a normal inquiry,' Hirshman asserts (90), a point on which Hill concurs. Hirshman characterises 'the partnership of the two pioneering woman journalists . . . [as] a harbinger of the forces lining up on the other side of the subject of sexual harassment and abuse' (Hirshman 91). One of those forces has turned out to be the activism of a generation of women who have articulated a 'Third Wave' of feminism, building on many of the demands and critiques of the radical voices of the Second Wave.

In a period of public discourse and media coverage that was theorised by Susan Faludi as a backlash and by Cristina Hoff Sommers and Katie Roiphe as the emergence of 'postfeminism,' Rebecca Walker¹⁰ channelled her anger about the Senate's treatment of Anita Hill into a call to arms for young women: an early recruitment call for what became the Third Wave. The Hill–Thomas moment of conflict is presented through Walker's eyes as a test of how much (how little) societies have learned to listen to women and believe that we can be credible testifiers. 'Can a woman's experience undermine a man's career?' she asks. 'Can a woman's voice, a woman's sense of self-worth and injustice, challenge a structure predicated upon the subjugation of our gender?' (398).¹¹ These are familiar challenges, old ones that have awoken to provoke and disappoint us yet again, as Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation hearings in 2019 saw the same questions ignored by many of the same people who instigated Walker's coming to revolution. Conscious of the need to move past righteous anger and the

need to be able to explain what she wants to put in place of patriarchal hierarchies, Walker concludes her call-to-arms essay with the observation that

[t]o be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them.

(Walker 400)

What she could not have known when she wrote this essay in 1992 was that the work she and other Third Wave essayists and commentators—Anna Holmes, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, Jessica Valenti—were doing then to examine and shift media cultures hostile to women helped prepare the ground of American civil life for the jagged eruptions of ‘me too’ stories.¹²

One effect of the work Third Wave feminists have done at the level of culture is that there are spaces in social media devoted to normalising feminist perspectives—Holmes’s website *Jezebel*, and *Feministing*, the blog that Valenti cofounded with her sister, for instance. Both in this new space, that did not exist for Second Wave battles, and in more traditionally ‘pop culture’ media (movies and television, for example), Third Wave interventions into cultural debates made feminism something that young women could see as relevant in their lives. This is one way in which radical feminists of the Second Wave, the Third Wave, and the Soviet gender-equality advocates Ghodsee reintroduces to a more inclusive feminist history all seem to resemble each other: they strive to give real and relatable content to principles of female empowerment. Ghodsee aptly cites Nancy Fraser’s description of Second Wave feminism as ‘a transformative political project . . . part of a broader emancipatory project’ (Ghodsee 18). Fraser captures what has always been the appeal of feminism: its promise to change structures and cultures so that people who are presently constrained and exploited might build their own pathways to greater freedom. The ‘consciousness-raising’ that is the hallmark of Second Wave radicalisation might be dismissed or trivialised in some circles as self-indulgence, but its point and power was always to raise awareness (consciousness) of the structures that are shaping our paths in life. From a peace-studies perspective, I see Second Wave radical feminism and Third Wave feminism as dedicating their resources to identifying and challenging cultural and structural violences, in contexts in which the liberal feminism of the Second Wave could see only, at most, direct violences.

Ghodsee says of the liberal feminism that dominated Western delegations to Cold War-era international negotiations that it ‘focused on equality of opportunity within the existing economic structure, with an implicit or explicit acceptance of that structure as fundamentally just’ (19).¹³ Such an

'establishment' feminism, working with and within the existing systems, has little to say to women who are seething with rage or shaking in fear because of the gender-based discriminations and deprivations they are encountering. A radical feminism that tells them, on the other hand, they are correctly perceiving oppression embedded in structures and are right to insist those structures be changed is a discourse that has something far more robust to say than 'trust the system.' As evidence that the radical view exerts greater appeal, we see that as 'establishment' voices become more critical of the status quo (as in Hirshman's account of the rethinking prominent American feminists have been doing in this 'me too' era of their former public support of Bill Clinton over Monica Lewinsky in the late 1990s), one of the effects of 'me too' in North America has been a surprised delight from women of the Second Wave generation that young women are now 'rediscovering' feminism. (I would argue that 'rediscovery' is mistaken language: young women identifying as feminist are doing what has always been done with intergenerational and intercultural social movements: they are taking it up and reworking it to meet their own needs and contexts.)

Women being believed: *from whispers to whistle-blowing*

In a prescient essay written in the wake of her testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee charged with confirming Justice Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill observes that '[h]ow we enlighten men who are currently in the workplace about behavior that is beneath our (and their) dignity is the challenge of the future' (1448). That enlightenment project, retraining men into more gender-equal, more respectful working environments, has become a focal point of present-day 'me too' conversations, but the real transformative strength of 'me too' is the way it is changing conversations women are having with each other. This is a moment like the decolonising one Jean-Paul Sartre describes in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (11–12): one in which the strangers who are sitting around a fire in the darkness and talking to each other with blithe disregard for what their opponents may overhear are women telling their stories of abuse and exploitation.¹⁴ This is a striking evolution: in many culturally significant industries, women have warned each other about predatory men through 'whisper networks'—the most well-known of which is the 'Shitty Media Men' list. These covert warnings, often withheld from the junior women who are most vulnerable to manipulation and coercion by powerful men, no doubt helped some women avoid abuse, but their confidential nature reinforced the imperative of silence. Don't tell. No one will believe you. This is what abused children and women are told repeatedly, insistently, and it makes coming forward to tell stories of abuse an act of heroic bravery.¹⁵

As moral argument, I am convinced that those of us who have the most social insulation (privilege) ought to take the greatest risks, but the historical record of who decides to speak out and who takes on the stress and

risks of legal battles depicts a reality in which progress is advanced by those least securely positioned within their societies. The women who have led the way forward against sexual violence in the United States have so often been women of colour: from Harriet Jacobs, to Recy Taylor and Rosa Parks, to the women like Paulette Barnes, Sandra Bundy, and Mechelle Vinson whose work lives became sexual harassment test cases and precedents, to the academics like Kimberlé Crenshaw, Anita Hill, and bell hooks who have theorised more inclusive and coalitional politics out of the bits of social progress they have witnessed. It should be no surprise then that the hashtag that broke the silencing imperative around sexual violence, #metoo, is rooted even more deeply in black women's American culture than much 'me too' historiography acknowledges.

When, in the wake of the first reporting of Harvey Weinstein's abuses, actress Alyssa Milano sent out her now-historic tweet on October 15, 2017, she was popularising a sentiment that a friend had shared with her: that a simple 'Me too.' tweet in response by every woman who had ever been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted would show the world how big this problem of sexual violence is. She did not know at the time where the phrase 'me too' came from, nor did she necessarily expect the result: an outpouring that can be seen as a kind of 'Twitter census' of victims of sexual violence. Although Milano did subsequently learn about Tarana Burke's grassroots 'me too' campaign to support African-American girls who had been abused and molested, and she has subsequently used her social-media platform and her celebrity to effectively amplify Burke's messaging, in the first few days after Milano coined #metoo, Burke saw a very real possibility that once again the credit for what had been more than a decade of black activism would accrue to a socially privileged white woman.¹⁶ 'Initially I panicked,' she told *New York Times* reporter Sandra Garcia, 'I felt a sense of dread, because something that was part of my life's work was going to be co-opted and taken from me and used for a purpose that I hadn't originally intended.' Burke's fear was unrealised (she noted in the same interview with Garcia that Milano's amplification of her 'me too' message had generated publicity the movement had not previously had), but it was not historically unfounded (see, for instance, the different historiographies of anti-sexual assault activism in Second Wave feminist narratives and in recovered histories like Danielle McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street*).

The origin story Burke tells about the non-profit organisation she created in 2007 (Just Be, Inc.) and the movement she grew out of it (Me Too) is of grassroots community efforts to find for survivors of sexual violence the healing and support resources that Burke wished she had had when she was a victim of sexual violence and that she wished 'Heaven,' a young black girl in a low-income community who confided her own story of sexual abuse to Burke, had had. In an essay called 'The Inception,' Burke describes the haunting shame she felt at how inadequately she had responded to 'Heaven's' secret, and how much she wished she had been able to say the only thing that

might have made 'Heaven' feel less alone in the world: me too. It was this failure to, in the moment, find the courage to openly empathise with a fellow survivor that drove Burke to build and advocate for restorative networks of support for girls and women of colour in underprivileged neighbourhoods. Although the 'me too' origin story is one that Burke has shared widely as an illustration of her ethos of empowerment through empathy, its revolutionary power is under-recognised; many commentators and supporters stress the extent to which 'me too' is a call for accountability and let its call to empathy recede into the background.

Departing from that tendency to stress accountability over empathy, Mithu Sanyal's history of rape observes that Burke's movement, through the hashtag that popularised it,

has created a lot of empathy. It's given stories and experiences the public space and attention they had been denied . . . It's what the courts couldn't deliver. These stories need to come out; they need a community and collective mourning.

(Sanyal 177)

Sanyal is right to point out both the inadequacy of legal mechanisms and the need for community engagement with the project of ending sexual violence; some forms of understanding can be advanced through adversarial methods of inquiry, but communication that values and promotes empathy—communication that centres any emotional labour, for that matter—needs linguistic and social norms that call forth not transcripts, but the agency and the humanity of the parties involved.

It is this recognition of each other, built into 'me too' exchanges, that I identify in other writing as this movement's 'unapologetic blackness' (to borrow the language of the Black Lives Matter movement)—a variation of 'call and response' communication patterns that have developed in black vernacular English in the United States.¹⁷ The recognisable pattern of what is now known as a 'me too' story is this: one party in a conversation confides an experience of sexual violence; the other person both acknowledges the content of what has been confided and frames the confidence back to the confider as a shared experience by responding 'me too.'¹⁸ The 'me too' story is not fully comprehensible when understood only as a call to accountability; it requires the response that affirms the speaker as heard, as understood, as believed, and as a valuable human being. And it is a robust empathy that Burke calls us to, not just passing moments of sympathy for someone in an unfortunate situation. The empathy that her 'me too' movement is building is being very consciously directed into social transformation. In the 'History and Inception' Burke offers on the movement's website, she makes clear that her interest is in mobilising resources for survivors of sexual violence in under-resourced communities and building a survivor-led activist community to end sexual violence. Reflecting, in that same section, on how

the work she has been doing has been changed by the worldwide attention Milano's hashtag has brought to it, Burke declares:

Today, our work continues to focus on assisting a growing spectrum of survivors—young people, queer, trans, the disabled, Black women and girls, and all communities of color. We're here to help each individual find the right point of entry for their unique healing journey. But we're also galvanizing a broad base of survivors, and working to disrupt the systems that allow sexual violence to proliferate in our world. This includes insisting upon accountability on the part of perpetrators, along with the implementation of strategies to sustain long term, systemic change. So that one day, nobody ever has to say 'me too' again.
(History and Inception)

Coming at this history of sexual violence from a peace studies perspective, the feature of Hill's call for workplace transformation and Burke's call for transformation *tout court* that most stands out for me is the centrality of the call to dismantle systems (as ultimately more important than incarcerating individuals).¹⁹ Hill's essay on the nature of sexual harassment anticipates so much of what emerged, 26 years later, as the 'me too' moment we are all still trying to assimilate into our respective conceptual frameworks and habitual accommodations to social systems. For some of us, 'me too' has urged a rethinking of default assumptions about social interaction; for others, 'me too' is a threat—it has gone too far or has inaugurated a witch-hunt; for still others, it raises fears that something which might have been liberatory will be quashed by backlash and co-optation into privileged heterosexist or carceral (pro-incarceration) worldviews. 'Me too' means different things to different people, in other words.

Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, the *New York Times* journalists whose reporting on Harvey Weinstein is credited as the spark of the 'me too' fire, analysed the elements of the movement/moment in an interview on an American cable news show, *All In with Chris Hayes*. In the course of their reporting, they became convinced that 'me too' draws our attention to three clusters of questions: kinds of behaviour (where on 'the spectrum of problematic sex' the accusations are located), the tools we use to evaluate stories of abuse (anonymous accusations or whisper campaigns; investigative journalism; courts of law; the so-called court of public opinion), and expectations we have of what punishment and accountability look like. The controversies of 'me too,' they contend, centre around problem cases, in which these questions are mixed up or blurred. (This is part of what has made the Aziz Ansari incident I discussed in the previous chapter so notorious: debates about how boorish and pushy he was on his date with 'Grace' are muddied by entirely warranted criticisms of the reporting, and with tendentious defences of him as not-a-rapist—a defence for an allegation that was never made in the reporting.)

Reflecting in their memoir on the moment they helped to produce, Kantor and Twohey contend that, in the popular awareness,

[t]he name *Harvey Weinstein* came to mean an argument for addressing misconduct, lest it go unchecked for decades, an example of how less-severe transgressions could lead to more serious ones. An emerging consensus that speaking up about sexual harassment and abuse was admirable, not shameful or disloyal. A cautionary tale about how that kind of behavior could become a grave risk for employers. Most of all, it marked an emerging agreement that Weinstein-like conduct was unequivocally wrong and should not be tolerated . . . Growing consensus that all sorts of previously tolerated practices were wrong: sexual overtures from the boss, corporate mandatory arbitration policies that kept harassment and abuse secret, and even smaller-scale behaviors like bra snapping in school hallways and laughing at movie scenes in which girls were taken advantage of by conquering male heroes. So much was suddenly open to question. The reckoning, and the feeling of rapidly shifting social standards, seemed like a sign that progress was still possible, even at a time of partisan fracture and nonstop conflict.

(*She Said* 181–182)

And although divergent perspectives in some 'me too' conversations are no doubt fuelling even more conflict in private settings, Kantor and Twohey also insist that they think some of these controversial 'messy stories' are giving rise to 'more contemplative private' conversations (*She Said* 244).²⁰

Their memoir, *She Said*, illustrates something that Kantor's past in investigative journalism had already revealed to her: that 'gender was not just a topic, but a kind of investigative entry point . . . [into] how power functioned' (Kantor and Twohey 10), and power relations revealed the 'outsider' standpoint most women still occupy within institutions.²¹ They describe their growing awareness of how corporate structures enabled harassment: complaints that could generate negative consequences for the corporate officers were settled and then 'erased' through accompanying nondisclosure agreements.²² The particular 'sociology of harassment' (*She Said* 51) they trace, of the film industry, is one in which each victim of assault, harassment, and objectification—at Weinstein's hands, or elsewhere in the industry—is isolated from all of the others²³: silenced by the twin forces of nondisclosure agreements that typically accompany settlements and threats that speaking out would end the victim's career. Sometimes, in the case of skilled film workers or actresses on the rise, these silencing forces would be accompanied by inducements to be publicly cooperative: desirable roles in high-profile films, for instance. The whole edifice of harassment and abuse was built on making sure women did not speak negatively about their abusers. The challenge that Kantor and Twohey describe, throughout both their initial *New York Times* article and the book, was to get these

same women, as many of them as possible, on the record. In an industry in which a man's (the right man's) quiet off-hand observation that 'she's hard to work with' could end a woman's career, it is staggering to count how many women's voices needed to speak about Harvey Weinstein or Bill Cosby to even raise the question of accountability.

But, to return to Tarana Burke's 'me too' (the community-transformation work that started long before #metoo-related social reckonings), the 'me too' conversations we need to be having are not just about the call issued by the voices of Harvey Weinstein's accusers—or those accusing Al Franken, or Brett Kavanaugh, or Joe Biden—but also about our responses. What will we learn from being in conversation with their stories, and the others that might emerge? How will we become better at caring for each other? Part of my own defence of 'messy stories' in particular (see Chapter 3) is that I think the empathy and the critical thinking skills we need, to be able to identify and dismantle violent sexual cultures, are precisely the skills that get honed in sorting through what one thinks of the messy story, and why. Because 'me too' is challenging us to see differently, hear differently, and think differently, it is a disruption to our settled conceptual frameworks. That, I argue, is a positive thing.

Years ago, when I was living in Montreal during a period of widespread student protests against the provincial government, I saw a protest sign that captures exactly how I think we should be mentally positioning ourselves towards 'me too': *Ce n'est pas un signe de bonne santé mentale d'être bien adapté à une société malade* [It is not a sign of good mental health to be well-adapted to a sick society]. Rape culture needs to change. We need to change it. And in order to change it, we need to recognise the scope of the violence we are dealing with—we need to hear, and to listen to, and to really think about, all of these stories. Some of them will unsettle us, and some will shame us. Recognising with Marx that shame can be revolutionary, we can choose the path Burke chose, and that Kantor and Twohey's sources chose: we can harness our discomfort with the world we live in right now, to build collaboratively a world that has space for all of us to assert our humanity.

Global changes in conversations: *a world without princes and princesses*

And this is a global world-building project. Although 'me too' is frequently styled in popular media as an American or American-derived phenomenon, the immediacy of the global parallels strongly suggests otherwise. In the People's Republic of China, in November 2017 (a month after the Weinstein story broke in the US), an essay was published on WeChat (the heavily censored Chinese version of WhatsApp) by a Shanghai woman complaining about a man in her neighbourhood who was serially groping women (Hong Fincher 5). Characterised as a '#MeToo-like essay,' the post had recorded

more than a million viewers before it was subsequently deleted by censors, and when the essay was reposted on Weibo (the equally closely monitored Chinese version of Facebook), the woman was subjected to sustained harassment (Hong Fincher 5). But a few months later, in January 2018, students and alumni across China began signing 'Me Too petitions' that exposed the extent of sexual harassment within China's universities (Hong Fincher 5). '[T]housands of students at different universities demanded greater protections against sexual harassment and assault, in one of the largest displays of coordinated student action since the pro-democracy movement of 1989,' journalist Leta Hong Fincher reports in *Betraying Big Brother*, a book that details the rise of a young, activist-feminist movement in PRC (11–12).²⁴ The petitions themselves were a response to the online posting of a young Beijing woman's personal essay, this time an accusation of sexual assault by a former university professor. When her complaint was corroborated by other former students' testimonies of harassment at his hands, he was dismissed from the university faculty (Hong Fincher 92). Looking beyond questions of abuser accountability, to questions of how empathy is being built, what I find striking to consider is how much creativity and trust are required of people mounting protests and circulating petitions in a society as censored and scrutinised as China's. 'As censorship of the Me Too hashtag increased,' Hong Fincher explains, 'Chinese feminist activist Qiqi came up with the idea of using emojis for "rice" (*mi*) and "rabbit" (*tu*) . . . to evade the internet monitors' (54). This is call and response to each other, and it is a call for subversion (as a step towards transformation) of a system that is not meeting people's needs.

We are hearing these calls, and responses to them, in many countries—too many and too quickly for 'me too' to be a trend that the United States has exported to the world. 'Me too' is gaining appeal as a catchphrase, in all of its many translations—just not as a single type of complaint or set of demands. Elsewhere in Asia, South Korea's 'me too' conversations about sexual predation in the workplace were provoked by a female prosecutor revealing on a television news show that she had been groped by a senior male colleague (Haynes and Hangyu Chen). In Japan, conversations also began with a young woman being sexually assaulted by an older male colleague, this time in the media. Here, though, sexual harassment protests are uniting around 'we too,' to stress solidarity and diminish cultural tendencies to victim-blame (Mori and Oda). In South Asia, women in both India and Pakistan have deployed 'me too' to talk about workplace harassment, with the Council on Foreign Relations reporting that members of Pakistan's legal community have organised pro bono legal representation for women coming forward (Stone). In Africa, 'me too' has inspired Ugandan campaigns to end sexual violence against women dependent on public transportation (Keenan). In Europe, France has been reckoning with child sexual abuse in the wake of a memoir that denounced a celebrated writer as a predator and paedophile (Clark-Flory).²⁵

In light of these diverse protests, I argue that the idea of 'me too' as a singular movement emerging out of the United States and spreading to many other countries is too totalising, too imperialistic. It is, in fact, an oversimplification that erases some very significant local/contextual differences among these various protests. And yet, there is a concept, a political commitment, that does seem to be shared by many, if not all, of these campaigns of protest: the idea that women's equal human dignity ought to be respected, but is not. If, instead of a single movement, we view 'me too' as a convenient shorthand which links these campaigns through an 'umbrella' concept of gender justice, we gain the resources to consider (without homogenising different cultures' concerns) ways in which the various local campaigns are identifying common or overlapping points of women's experiences of our social world. This steers us away from easy romanticising of an essentialised 'sisterhood' of women, linked by our fundamental likeness, and moves us closer to the radical-feminist insights that drive British activist and theorist Selma James. James notes that

[i]t has not always been easy to pull up women's neglected interests from beneath the 'general cause.' The best way is to ask the women who often shout unheard: the single mothers, the teachers, the nurses, the sex workers, the care workers, the asylum seekers, the pensioners.

(273)

'But,' she continues in a searing critique of Western liberal and neoliberal feminism, 'as feminists, our hearing and our focus are corrupted when we concentrate on getting women into the corridors of power' (James 273). What she sees as feminism's tendency to advocate in narrow terms, to focus on issues stereotypically conceded to be women's concerns, has undercut possibilities for 'a wider and deeper women's movement' (James 273), something that could be a coalition of local, national, and transnational gender-liberation or gender-justice movements (an umbrella), on the model of what Fuyuki Kurasawa theorises as 'the alternative globalisation movement' for human rights (161–162).

If we are to make sense of 'me too' as a heuristic for culturally indexed arguments of justice or liberation, it is helpful to take account of ongoing human rights and development initiatives like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many countries—Japan, for instance—are having simultaneous 'me too' and SDG discussions, which makes it worthwhile to consider how we can best connect (grassroots) projects of accountability and empathy-empowerment to (international community) projects of gender equality (UN SDG no.5). First, however, we need to think critically about how to define 'gender equality.' Women who have lived through the last 40 or 50 years in Western-industrialised (developed) nations can remember quite vividly what workplaces were like, what television advertising was like, what cultural messaging was like, before. And, of course,

women who live in the '59 countries [that] provide no legal protection whatsoever against sexual harassment in the workplace' are still living those conditions in which women are uncared for and often unremunerated labour, silent carers, and decoration (United Nations, 'Women's Workplace Equality Index'). Those of us who remember a time when women just were not leaders, soldiers, engineers, or famous entertainers and artists struggle to articulate to women younger than us (those for whom professed commitments to the social value of women's participation have always been the cultural norm) the social progress we have (unevenly) made.

But one of the things that 'me too' has exposed for many people, and is still working to expose for many more, is the extent to which the social world has not changed as much as we want to think it has. We have women in positions of political and economic power now. *Some* women, who have *some* power. And in many workplaces, we see male and female workers in what looks like roughly equal proportions. At first glance, this can look like gender equality. It isn't. Equal numbers of men and women in a workplace (numerical parity) does not mean that men and women have equal access to power, in the form, say, of institutionalised mechanisms for dispute resolution. In 'he said-she said' disputes, women habitually have to work harder than men do to be perceived as credible. We do not get gender equality by mistaking equal numbers for equal power. This is precisely why we need analyses of gendered credibility gaps of the kind that Miranda Fricker offers in her account of testimonial injustice (17, 21): both cultural habits according unearned credibility to men and those withholding earned credibility from women produce the kind of credibility gaps that enable the normalisation of sexual violence.

As we survey social landscapes around the world, and pose to ourselves questions about what possible consensus points each society taking up 'me too' conversations has arrived at and what a path forward might look like, it becomes clear that we will encounter 'crossroads' moments. These moments will force upon each of us choices: of one way forward that brings us closer to transformation, and another route that brings us closer to having 'me too' co-opted as a hazing ritual inflicted on men in public life, or a public relations strategy for the world's more privileged and insulated survivors of sexual violence. (In the spirit of Tarana Burke's call to empathy, I do want to pause here, and acknowledge that part of the phenomenology of sexual violence is such that the victim *feels* isolated and powerless. That is a harm capable of doing enormous ongoing damage in a person's life, no matter how insulated from harsh realities that person might appear to the rest of us. So, yes, there is a real cause for concern that 'me too' will be drained of its transformative potential and trivialised, but we need to navigate that pitfall in ways that do not compound isolation and powerlessness just because the sufferer of sexual violence lives what appears to be an enviable life in other respects.) Kantor and Twohey frame 'me too' as 'an example of social change in our time but . . . also a test of it: In this fractured environment, will

all of us be able to forge a new set of mutually fair rules and protections?' they ask (Kantor and Twohey 5). Each point at which we ask what path we should take provides possibilities for 'me too' to become a global call and conduit through which gender-justice advocates across borders and boundaries can organise and grow postcolonial feminist relationships.

This is a vision of women's global solidarity that is easy to criticise: so many privileged women, in groups and as individuals, have set off to bring their insights to women who turn out to understand the world much better than their would-be saviours. But there are groups of women who have worked together for decades in ways that strive to challenge structures of colonisation and Global North privilege: the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), for instance. But, also at each point, because of the global reach of profit-oriented news and entertainment media, we are confronted by possibilities that 'me too'—most especially in its social media presence, #metoo—might degenerate into a privileged white heterosexist-centric 'victim platform' that serves to amplify status quo thinking and conventional wisdom.

Have individuals changed? Have structures changed? Has anything changed? Any comprehensive answer to those questions is a future project, constructible only with the passage of time. This question of change, of whether we 'are finished' yet paying the price 'me too' extracts, is one that has received considerable attention recently in the United States, as it enters its first presidential election cycle since Donald 'Grab them by the pussy' Trump was elected. A trio of 'me too' stories in American politics since 2016 suggests that very little has structurally shifted in American political life. The Washington DC 'flight' of political ambitions began promisingly, with Al Franken's contrite relinquishing of his Senate seat in 2017, following accusations of groping and inappropriate touching. It got worse, much worse, in Brett Kavanaugh's 2019 farcical repetition of Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court nomination, with Christine Blasey Ford bringing as serious an accusation and as serious a presence to confirmation hearings as Anita Hill had a generation ago. And now, as I write this chapter, Joe Biden, who appears to have learned little from his interaction with Hill, is the presumptive Democratic nominee for president in the 2020 election, and is categorically denying his own allegations of sexual assault and inappropriate touching.

In one of the essays of *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit quotes Judith Herman on predictable cycles of 'acknowledging' trauma: 'After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies,' Herman writes;

it never happened; the victim lies; the victim exaggerates; the victim brought it on herself; and in any case it is time to forget the past and move on. The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail.

(*Trauma and Recovery*, quoted in Solnit 113)

It was disruption of this expectation that made Al Franken, initially, a model of 'me too' responsibility-taking in my eyes.

In December 2017, a year into the shared social trauma of American progressives wrought by the Trump presidency, Franken, the progressive hero of Senate hearings, was accused of impropriety; there was incontrovertible video evidence and testimony from eight women. The behaviour, furtive groping ('copping a feel') that many men learn they can get away with in public life, was distinctly minor when stacked up against Harvey Weinstein's bullying of women into submitting sexually and Bill Cosby's drugging of women, but it was still inappropriate, disrespectful of the humanity of the women involved. He resigned the job he loved (and was really good at), and I respected him for being one of the men willing to pay part of the price of social transformation. I thought he conducted himself honourably in a difficult situation. About a year and a half later, Franken was given the luxury of a long-form Jane Mayer apology-absolution piece in the *New Yorker* in which he was vociferously defended against the set of accusations that had always seemed the most politically motivated (the allegations for which there had been video evidence). Linda Hirshman's account of this white-washing explains that 'Jane Mayer [who, two decades ago, co-wrote the definitive defence of Anita Hill] turned her self-described truth-seeking journalism machine on that most contentious #MeToo case' (259). 'Mayer devoted most of her twelve-thousand-word story to undermining the bona fides of the first Franken accuser, Leeann Tweeden . . . [and] brushed off the other *seven* accusers with varying degrees of quick treatments,' Hirshman concludes (259).

Watching what had appeared as Franken's principled response to calls for his accountability turned into a quite blatant effort to reposition him as unfairly targeted—a victim of 'me too' excess—is disheartening, to say the least. But it is consistent with Herman's description of evasion by perpetrators, and it is a feature of the pattern that seems to be emerging in the US entertainment industry as an 'aftermath' response, once dust has presumably settled on the 'me too' allegations for which a prominent man may have first taken responsibility. Mithu Sanyal describes one example of this process by which men who had been removed from film or television screens plotted their recuperation in the public imagination:

Some [have] tried to stage comebacks, like former CBS anchor Charlie Rose—who after less than six months proposed a TV show in which he would talk with other men who had been #metoo-ed, not about what they had learned from the process but rather about why #metoo was going too far.

(Sanyal 150)

It would seem that people who are accustomed to shaping public opinion have a hard time with challenges that require letting public opinion (re) shape them.

While critical of how Joe Biden conducted himself as Senate Judiciary Committee chair back in 1991, Linda Hirshman is very sure things have changed structurally in the United States, speculating in *Reckoning* about 'what would be asked of Joe Biden, finally, should he reappear on the political scene' (219).²⁶ She insists that American 'women—so far especially Democratic women—are no longer maintaining alliances with male politicians whose public commitment to feminism is shown to conflict with their private behavior' (Hirshman xviii). Her optimism that politicians will now be held to—and will meet—higher standards in their treatment of women is a marked contrast to the position taken by feminist philosopher Kate Manne on how Biden (at this point clearly destined to be the Democratic contender for the American presidency in November 2020) should be evaluated in the wake of Tara Reade's sexual assault accusation. Manne argues:

[t]he firm conviction that Biden wouldn't push boundaries in more serious ways, notwithstanding Reade's corroborated testimony, rests partly on a misguided faith in his 'good guy' persona, and a wrongheaded belief that only veritable monsters commit sexual assault. But as the Me Too movement has shown, many women's monsters can seem like nice guys to the rest of us. And the number of true monsters—amoral, unrepentant psychopaths who do nothing but evil—is vastly outstripped by the entitled men who commit sexual assault with the blithe, deluded sense that she's enjoying it, somehow.

This, she concludes, is 'a pattern we simply can't afford to ignore any longer' (Manne). To objections that she is condemning Biden without a 'fair' process, she replies:

[i]f this was a court of law, and we were jurors, then it would be appropriate to deem Biden innocent until he'd been proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. But a presidential campaign is not a court of law, and different standards apply: After all, we're not contemplating convicting this man, or taking away his civil liberties. We're contemplating not believing his story—knowing, moreover, that he has lied many times before—and potentially withholding from him the chance to run for highest office on this basis.

(Manne)

Any provisional answer, then, to the question of whether structures of power in the United States have transformed in this 'me too' moment has to take into account the willingness of progressive voters and political surrogates to dismiss a 'me too' story because the consequences of taking it seriously include re-electing a president who is a demonstrably worse practitioner of and apologist for sexual violence. This is a political structure in

which fears of what's worse can convince people to withhold their attention from questions of what's bad, and it is hard to see how empathy can be built in such polarised and inequitable social conditions. As a society, the United States appears right now to be vulnerable to having this very necessary anti-violence movement branded a 'witch hunt' or an overreach—but so too do societies like Japan, whose victim-blaming tendencies might be even more deeply entrenched. In thinking through how seriously we need to take the worry that 'me too' constitutes a hostile climate or a social injustice for men, it is important to acknowledge honestly and openly that it shares the problem of every political movement: how to affirm the need for critical, nuanced analysis and simultaneously nurture the enthusiasm of supporters who might not see the need for fine-grained examination of flaws and gaps in the movement's understanding of who it is and what it is trying to achieve. (This is a matter of needing to teach people how to speak sensitively of emotional realities in highly charged rhetorical situations, and also a matter of learning/affirming that acknowledging flaws in a process or argument or testimony is not the same thing as impeaching an idea.) It is equally important to take note of the fact that this charge of witch-hunting (couched as an extreme version of 'political correctness,' an already-demonised concern for how others might be harmed by one's linguistic choices that is elsewhere known as having good manners) is precisely how opponents will try to undermine and delegitimise the power of 'me too.' Nuanced analysis and self-criticism do need to be brought to bear on the three kinds of 'me too' questions Kantor and Twohey identify as central: degrees of misconduct, ways of evaluating the veracity of allegations, and forms of penalty appropriate to the violence under scrutiny.

Considering the ways in which we have indeed seen what Judith Herman described as a sort of playbook of denial, I think we should probably expect 'me too' backlash to be conducted through tokenised women who object to the movement, advancing the message that 'me too' is not representative of all women's experiences and therefore we should ignore it. This is where we see complicit femininity earning its keep within a patriarchal structure: anti-'me too' women, who might appear to be acting against their own interests, invest in false dichotomies—for instance, in the United States, ignore Joe Biden's bad behaviour or you will end up helping Donald Trump to a second term at the helm of American government. Meeting demands for uncritical support and loyalty is a way that women are trained into accommodating false masculinist notions of agency, which are sold to us as protection. The patriarchal state ('strict daddy' taking care of us all) is a crucial piece of the masculinist political ideology that both toxic masculinity and complicit femininity (gender stereotypes I analyse in Chapter 2) train us into; it breeds acceptance of a systematised sexual harassment that, as Sara Ahmed puts it, 'secures access to women's bodies; . . . consigns women to some places and removes women from others' (207). In this way of understanding women's social value, 'sexism [becomes] a worn thread of connection between

women; sexism as what you are supposed to get used to; sexism as how you are supposed to get used to being used' (Ahmed 205).

Here, I think, is the nub of the 'me too' challenge: can we build societies in which we don't, in some ways, at some levels, have some people living, working, and caring for other people's well-being at the expense of their own? Wherever 'me too' sweeps through a society and leaves intact exploitations of some for others' benefit, I will argue that, there, 'me too' has failed. 'Feminism requires fronting up to who has been left behind,' Ahmed reminds us pointedly (208). For 'me too' to be judged a success, it will have to generate empathy in a programmatic and action-oriented process of structural transformation, not just a series of disconnected 'feel good' moments or lucky accidents of outcome.

In the polarised context of American discourse, 'me too' is increasingly shaping up as yet another 'culture war,' dividing into two camps: the 'believe all women' activists and the defenders of the patriarchal default (who believe no women). Like the choice to foreground accountability over empathy, turning 'me too' into yet another battleground also fails to recognise the revolutionary potential of this movement. What we need to be doing is engaging 'me too' as a peacebuilding project, carving out the discursive space to interrogate the ways that existing social structures have both permitted the exercise of power over vulnerable persons and provided cover for those whose 'exercise' of power amounts to abuse. In theory, the deployment of power against those least-positioned to deflect it is not necessarily gender-indexed—not something that (all) men do to (all) women—but, in practice, given the historical subordination and social disadvantaging of women, relations in which a powerful social agent victimises a vulnerable one frequently appear as 'men acting badly towards women.' This needs to be acknowledged as a past social practice, and acceptance of gender discrimination needs to be seen as a habit that we all need to break, even as we pull analysis back to a focus on power (not gender).

From the standpoint of 'me too' being an umbrella under which many gendered injustices can be identified and addressed, the challenge of maximising its peacebuilding potential is the question of how it can 'come to work' for us, how we can pick up this moment, shape it, and adapt it to our needs. Calling credibility 'a basic survival tool' (5), Rebecca Solnit argues that '[a]t the heart of the struggle of feminism to give rape, date rape, marital rape, domestic violence, and workplace sexual harassment legal standing as crimes has been the necessity of making women credible and audible' (6). This is precisely what 'me too' is achieving in various national contexts: creating a space to tell stories in which women are encouraged to be vocal, audible, and credible. In peace studies terms, peace is not just the absence of observable, documentable violence (negative peace); it is also expansive conditions of social justice (positive peace). A 'me too' that focuses only or primarily on accountability can only ever achieve negative peace, through reductions in observable (direct) sexual violence. A 'me too'

movement that realises the empowering capacities of Tarana Burke's vision of empathy—caring for another as for myself—is, on the other hand, a positive peace movement, one that reforms violent structures and reshapes violent cultures into an infrastructure that gives each of us real opportunities to live lives that make us feel challenged *and* valuable. And, obviously, giving all of us those opportunities means doing away with social hierarchies in which some of us are princes and princesses, others of us witches and frogs, and still others anonymous peasants who exist only to form a backdrop for the significant lives.

Here I want to sum up, and to foreshadow the central point of Chapter 5's discussion. As Anita Hill urged in the essay she wrote in the wake of her testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991: 'We must begin to use what we know to move to the next step: What we will do about it' (1448).

Coda: culture-jamming the exploitation of women in 'Rumpelstiltskin'

What's wrong with this story? The miller's daughter is treated as the mere means to an end for all of the men in the story: her father, who uses her spinning talents to bolster his own social standing; the king, who uses her expertise and her dependent status in her father's household as an easy way to get gold; and Rumpelstiltskin, who uses her desperation to get her promise that she will give him her first-born child. Surely the benefits of her labour should accrue to her?

What if the story unfolded this way instead?

Once upon a time, there was a young woman who was an extraordinarily talented spinster, of cotton, of wool, and of flax. The yarns she spun were of the highest quality and she worked very quickly, expertly, producing enormous quantities in very short periods of time. She was also very creative, and would fashion her yarns into distinctive clothing and household textiles, which made her work highly sought-after in the local markets and prized treasures when she gave them as gifts.

She lived in a land where the king, following ancient tradition, would call in the head of each household in his kingdom every year for a personal audience. It was a tradition that had been observed for longer than any of the kingdom's historical records could remember and, although it was supposed to be a technique of governance that would help the king develop a sense of connection to his subjects, it had evolved over time into a competition among the inhabitants of the kingdom. Each year, the head of household would go to his or her (his, usually) meeting with the king determined to impress the people of the kingdom by impressing the king. This was not an easy thing to accomplish; the king had been royalty his whole life, and he had always had servants working full-time to make that life easy and comfortable, so he

often failed to appreciate the extent to which the reports his subjects offered about their own lives were, in fact, significant achievements.

When the day arrived for her father's audience, the young woman could see he was very nervous. He was a kind and well-meaning man and, like her, he was a very hard worker, but he lacked confidence in his own self-worth and was prone to boastfulness to compensate for his self-perceived inadequacy. She reminded her father that his work as the village miller was an important contribution to the local economy and that her own textile designs were beginning to gain quite a good reputation locally, and offered to accompany him to the audience with the king, support he gratefully accepted.

There was, as always, a steady stream of people coming and going from the palace and, because this was the annual week of audiences, there were also pockets of people gathered outside the walls, recounting audiences they had already had, rehearsing audiences that were yet to come, and speculating feverishly about which household the king would find most impressive this year. The miller and his daughter were hailed by a number of friends and neighbours but, not wanting to be late for their audience, they hurried inside. Taking his daughter's words to heart, the miller reported to the king that his work at the mill over the past year had helped to keep the village in healthy economic shape, and he spoke with pride about his daughter's spinning skills and the textiles she produced. He showed off the cloak she had woven for him as a birthday gift, praising her handiwork, and was disappointed to be greeted with disinterest, perhaps even a bit of boredom, from the king. Impulsively, he returned to his daughter's skill at spinning; why, she was so good at it, he said, that she could spin straw into gold. Wait, what? Now he had the king's full attention. 'You mean to tell me that if I put her in a room full of straw, she will turn it into gold for me?' 'Well, um, yes, your majesty, she could,' stammered the miller, knowing he was lying but trying desperately to save face.

That was how, before she could even fully process her father's latest ridiculous boast, the miller's daughter found herself locked in a damp, stone-floored room that was piled high with straw and was furnished only with a spinning wheel, a bucket of water, a stool, and a lantern. At first, she was so shocked, and frightened, and despairing, that all she could do was sit on the stool and weep. 'Straw?' she thought. What had her father been thinking? You can't spin straw; everyone knows that. How on earth was she going to turn this barnyard mess into precious metal? She wept some more, wishing she had insisted her father go alone to the audience with the king. He might have come home deflated, but at least she would have the comfort of her own familiar surroundings, her own spinning wheel, her own fibres and yarns. But, though she despaired, the young woman was a strong and practical person, and, in her heart of hearts, she really did love a good challenge. She examined the spinning wheel closely; it was designed for spinning flax. The straw was already damp and somewhat softened. Maybe it could be shredded into strips and spun into something yarn-like?

The miller's daughter worked all night, soaking clumps of straw in the bucket of water, and twisting strips of the softened fibre into a scratchy, bulky yarn. By mid-morning the next day, when she heard the door unlock from the other side and saw one of the palace servants usher the king into the room, she had finished turning every piece of straw into a strange artisanal yarn and had already started thinking about how she might fashion that yarn into bags and baskets, and maybe hats and rugs. Her mind raced with possibilities. The king, however, his imagination hampered in its development by a lifetime of luxury, saw none of the potential wealth the young woman had spent the night creating. Furious with himself for having been taken in by the miller's intemperate boast, he wanted nothing more to do with what he saw as the whole sorry situation. He ordered the servant to have the miller's daughter taken back to her own house and forbade her to enter the palace again. She had wasted enough of his time and energy; he just wanted rid of her. And she could take that mess of whatever she had done to the straw with her. It was no longer fit for anything, even the stables.

So the miller's daughter, the spinster, arrived home later that day with piles of artisanal yarn that she immediately began crafting into new pieces that she would take to the markets to sell. That was how she turned the straw into gold, through her own creativity and hard work. Because the king had forbidden her to enter the palace again, she knew that she would never be able to live independently if she remained in the kingdom; who would represent her household at the annual audience? So the spinster, financially self-sufficient working woman that she was, packed up her spinning wheel and her design sketches and left the kingdom, intent on making her fortune and her household in a foreign land.

Notes

- 1 Alyssa Milano's tweet of 15 October 2017, the origin of 'me too' as a hashtag, read: 'Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem,"' and invited her followers to reply if they had experienced these kinds of sexual violence. Throughout this discussion, as I have throughout the book, I will variously refer to 'me too' (the empathy/community-building phrase introduced by Tarana Burke) and #metoo (the hashtag coined in Milano's tweet). I do this to distinguish the social media reaction following Milano's tweet from the 'work on the ground' fostered by Burke's life-long activism. When I speak generally, I speak of 'me too' and of plural movements, rather than a single colonising movement into which all 'cultural variations' are folded.
- 2 There is little merit to a private-public distinction in radical feminist thought of the Second Wave; the distinction is seen, for the most part, as a justification for sheltering privileged people from the (public) consequences of their (private) bad behaviour. Even as that argument leads me to endorse their rejection of the distinction, I do recognise it might sometimes be deployed to protect marginalised people: in 1967, then Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau announced

decriminalisation of homosexuality in Canada by declaring that 'there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.'

- 3 In 'The Social Basis of the Woman Question,' Kollontai talks about 'all those gentlemen owning and administering industrial enterprises who force women among their workforce and clerical staff to satisfy their sexual whims' (180).
- 4 Ghodsee contends, as one example of distortion by the entrenched narrative, that erasure of 'the contributions of East European women and socialist women from the developing countries allows for a particular story about the United Nations Decade for Women [1975–1985] to be told, one that credits Western women and independent social movements for the progress of women's rights during that era' (2–3). The story we all end up learning, in countries around the world, is the story of Western feminists and of American-centred movements and struggles. But, insists Ghodsee, 'Western women simply had/have more resources to record their histories . . . so the general story of international women's activism at the United Nations has been dominated by the memoirs and oral histories of women from the United States' (11). This is an international relations (IR) version of a familiar critique within feminist histories and organising: the objection that 'feminist' campaigns are planned and executed by privileged women for their own benefit. It is the reason why African-American women working for empowerment have sometimes felt the need to articulate their efforts as 'womanism' and Latina/Latinx activists have organised under a banner of 'mujerista.' An American academic version of this dominance through resources (in this case, by white liberal feminists organising conference panels) inspired the fierce rage of Audre Lorde's 1979 canonical critique, 'The Master's Tools Can Never Dismantle the Master's House.'
- 5 On this point, Ghodsee's position on global female solidarity appears best encapsulated by Bruno Latour's observation of the United Nations: that it is a hope we need to work towards, not an already fixed starting point from which we might embark upon any cosmopolitan aims or projects we might share (3).
- 6 The former question was settled by a 1998 Supreme Court decision that employers could sidestep liability if they could show that they had exercised 'reasonable care,' in the form of antiharassment policies and training that were widely publicised to the workforce and the management (Hirshman 55–56). Corporate efforts to manage liability through assigning human resources departments the tasks of policy dissemination, training, and complaint resolution was an early part of the scaffolding that 'me too' came to challenge: ineffectual and unresponsive to workers, these departments became a bulwark against complaints, and the settlement/nondisclosure agreement process became an instrument to silence any complaints that did get past the gatekeepers. See Kantor and Twohey's memoir, *She Said*, for a particularly lucid account of the structures built to silence sexually harassed employees.
- 7 Sara Ahmed observes that '[s]exual harassment works—as does bullying more generally—by increasing the costs of fighting against something, making it easier to accept something than to struggle against something' and notes, of its power to harm, that when '[i]t is happening all around you, and yet people seem to be getting on with it . . . [y]ou can end up doubting yourself, estranged from yourself' (141).
- 8 'When Hill declined [Thomas's invitations to go out with him], she said, "He would not accept my explanation as being valid," as though *no* were not itself

valid' reports Rebecca Solnit (110, emphasis in original). Men and women both, toxically and complicitly, are socialised into a curious refusal of women's 'no's. Men with privilege are socialised to hear 'no' as a starting point for their negotiations; women are socialised to justify any 'no' we might issue. Jane Fonda put the point succinctly in a 2018 Netflix documentary, *Feminists: What Were They Thinking?*: 'It took me 60 years to realize that "no" is a complete sentence.'

- 9 Hirshman's history draws a fairly straight line from Hill's testimony of sexual harassment to Bill Clinton's sexual misconduct later in the 1990s:

In a campaign disturbingly reminiscent of the conservatives' war on Anita Hill, the Clinton team orchestrated a series of attacks on the character of Monica Lewinsky. She was a 'sexually demanding stalker,' as one White House intimate put out. A key congressional ally, Charles Rangel, questioned whether she 'played with a full deck.' When a private conversation of Hillary [Clinton]'s was revealed years later, Americans learned that Monica was, in the spouse's estimation, just a 'narcissistic loony toon' whom Bill had heroically tried to rid himself of.

(Hirshman 103)

Hirshman includes in her history, Lewinsky's 'me too' realisation: 'He was my boss, he was the most powerful man on the planet, he was 27 years my senior, with enough experience to know better. He was at the time in the pinnacle of his career while I was in my first job out of college' (Hirshman 218; Lewinsky). This aligns with Lewinsky's other public statements these days: what she got from 'me too' was the ability to see the power structure she had walked into in her consensual flirtation with Clinton. She has always had the ability to see (and willingness to own) her own desires—which is why she has consistently stressed the consensual nature of their interaction—but 'me too' offers a language in which to explain that just because there's no problem on the matter of consent, that does not mean there's no problem on the matter of power inequities (Lewinsky). It is, after all, Lewinsky who has spent decades of her adult life being notorious; undermined and disparaged because a powerful man who was toying with her wanted to protect his marriage and his public reputation. Lewinsky's 'romance' with Clinton is a paradigm of a messy story of consensual sex bound up with abuse of power and position; in a recent Slate podcast (*Slow Burn*, season 2) Leon Neyfakh brings alive how vulnerable she was in that situation, a young woman dreaming that there might be a post-White House future for her with the man she (thought she) loved.

- 10 Walker, one of the earliest writers of feminism's Third Wave and coiner of the term, lives the generationally linked feminism I am presenting as radical Second Wave and the Third Wave overlap; her mother is celebrated Second Wave poet and novelist Alice Walker.
- 11 In 1991 it was clear that women's voices could not challenge structures that produce and affirm male privilege: Thomas was confirmed and sits as a US Supreme Court Justice to this day. Hill was savagely denounced and largely receded from pop-culture awareness, emerging again only recently to support and encourage 'me too' reforms. In 2019, Dr Christine Blasey Ford's testimony of an attempted sexual assault perpetrated against her by then Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh (now Justice Kavanaugh) replicated that challenge, with no better result.

- 12 One recent example of this groundwork is 'the 2014 hashtag #YesAllWomen . . . [which] shared stories of how widespread sexual abuse and harassment actually is' (Hirshman 211). (#YesAllWomen was a response to a hashtag that emerged immediately after a high-profile California shooting spree, #NotAllMen: as in, no, not all men are harassers, abusers and misogynists, but, yes, all women have stories of encountering such men.) Valenti's column in the *Guardian* newspaper analysed the outpouring of #YesAllWomen stories four days after the hashtag was instantiated to speak about the pervasive misogyny identified as a motivation for Elliot Rodger's murders in Isla Vista, California. Holmes' website *Jezebel* provided extensive coverage of news items related to #YesAllWomen in the days and weeks following.
- 13 Liberal feminism's acceptance of existing structures as the framework to which gender equality efforts must accommodate themselves was a marked contrast to 'the suspicions of many women in state socialist countries that, without fundamental transformations in society, feminism would at best just give certain women equal access to fetishized free markets' (Ghodsee 239).
- 14 Burke herself characterises the core of 'me too' as 'survivors talking to survivors' (*Democracy Now!* interview). Without referencing Sartre's description of fire-side revolutionaries (and possibly unaware of it), Kantor and Twohey close their memoir of 'me too' reporting, *She Said*, with an account of a 'reunion' of some of the key women involved in exposing Harvey Weinstein's abuses, in which they speak to each other of their own roles. The conversation, women speaking to each other for their own benefit, takes place in front of a fireplace in the den of Gwyneth Paltrow's Hollywood home.
- 15 Acknowledging how much of a burden whistleblowing and silence-breaking are suggests that there are moral dimensions to the question of who comes forward and why: specifically, the idea that one's ability to survive public harassment and retaliation constitutes a privilege that grounds an obligation to come forward. This obligation to come forward, identified by both Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford, is something I think is worth normativising, as a way of redirecting the burden away from the many under-waged and unwaged women, like Carmita Wood, whose workplace experiences have become grist for law and activism.
- 16 The discussion in this section of Alyssa Milano's tweet and Tarana Burke's empowerment work with African-American girls—the story of how #metoo emerged from 'me too'—is adapted from an essay that I originally published as 'The Unapologetic Blackness of the Me Too Movement,' on Kenyan current affairs and criticism website *The Elephant.info* in October 2019.
- 17 This thesis that black vernacular English is inherently dialogical is drawn from the literary theory that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. develops in *The Signifying Monkey*. Gates argues that dialogicality (call *and* response) and double-voicedness (communication that can be interpreted by uninitiated hearers as innocuous messages and simultaneously by those 'in the know' as subversive or incendiary) are features of communication in African-American communities, and identifies their origins in musical traditions that emerged from struggles to survive the horrors of slavery and systemic, deadly racism.
- 18 Linda Hirshman suggests, mistakenly in my view, in *Reckoning's* opening that Mary Jo Kopechne, the young woman who drowned in questionable circumstances in Ted Kennedy's car in Chappaquiddick (Massachusetts) in 1969,

an incident that put an end to his presidential aspirations, has a '#MeToo' story to tell (3). You might call it that, Hirshman suggests. You might—except that we never heard Mary Jo Kopechne speak on the matter of any abuse or predation Ted Kennedy might have engaged in with her. She died without having spoken and without having been listened to. She is a forever-silent woman who didn't live to reveal the ways in which the highest price of Kennedy's entitled womanising was paid by her, not him.

- 19 Hirshman notes in her 'me too' history of sexual harassment that the examples of Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, and Bill O'Reilly being brought down by sexual assault and harassment allegations from the positions of power and influence they occupied—which Hirshman styles as pre-shocks to the Weinstein earthquake—and then the *New York Times* and *New Yorker* reporting on Weinstein showed the world attuned to American media just how much opportunity and impunity 'was made possible by a universe of institutional structures of harassment . . . a society organized to empower abusers' (203). The insights of Second Wave radical feminists, Third Wave feminists, anti-sexual violence advocates from African-American communities are all quite correct: sexual violence (direct violence, in peace studies terminology) will not abate until or unless we also take on the structural violence of lives and workplaces structured by male dominance and female capitulation and the cultures of impunity and isolation that abusers and victims are sorted into.
- 20 However much complexity may or may not be leavening private conversations, there is no doubt that 'me too' has generated some fascinating public analysis of what story is, as a form of communication, and how its tropes produce meaning. Kelly Faircloth, for instance, argues in a 2018 stock-taking of 'me too' that 'Bluebeard' has been revealed as the fairy tale most emblematic of our time. The real-life child predator Gilles de Rais became, in the fairy tales about Bluebeard, a wealthy old pirate who married and murdered a succession of young women and hung their bodies in a secret room that no one was to enter. Faircloth draws parallels between that tale and the abuses that Harvey Weinstein was able to lock away in the 'secret rooms' of nondisclosure agreements. 'It has often been the very concept of "private" that has kept these stories either shut away, or trapped in some shadow realm where they go understood but unacknowledged,' she writes, suggesting that '[p]erhaps #MeToo's biggest upheaval has been dragging these secrets down from the proverbial attic and laying them out in public; an insistence that the domestic home is no longer a place to hide grisly secrets' (Faircloth). But, she notes, 'me too' has complicated public-private distinctions in ways that trouble traditional boundaries in our discourse (workplace/personal life, for instance), and it is stories that spill over and refuse to respect these demarcations that are driving critiques of 'me too' as 'going too far' (Faircloth).
- 21 This idea that a gendered or feminist analysis of power structures illuminates power relations is also advanced in the work of, among others, feminist international relations theorists Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe who argue that we need this kind of analysis of international organisations like Oxfam, International Committee of the Red Cross, and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. In order to think clearly and creatively about how we build gender equality into political cultures governing societies, we need to understand 'the politics' of femininity and masculinity, they argue—a point clearly true of academic and political institutions, but also true of workplaces in general. 'Their models were constructed *without*

women, and *without* men-as-men, and “inserting gender” then appears both difficult and unnecessary,’ Cohn and Enloe observe of the difficulty in motivating institutional change (1193).

- 22 Widespread use of both nondisclosure agreements and whisper networks in the entertainment industry suggest competing (possibly gendered?) approaches to information: one in which power is maintained by keeping information to oneself/as few sources as possible; another in which the power (value) of the information exists in the process of sharing being shared. This latter view is clearly the one being embraced by/as the ‘me too’ (re)orientation.
- 23 Early in *She Said*, Kantor and Twohey recount an interview with actress Marissa Tomei whose career-long frustration with pay inequities and limited, limiting roles had led her to the theory that Hollywood dreams are ‘a cycle of misperception’ in which girls are brought up to admire the beautiful ‘fantasy women’ they see in films and television, and develop ambitions to be part of that world without understanding how brutally it will treat them—all because the women who are this generation’s ‘fantasy women’ are also part of a cycle of silencing about the costs of success (29).
- 24 Hong Fincher notes in her book ‘feminism’s unusual appeal to young Chinese women, who are fed up with being sexually harassed whenever they take public transportation’ (103). It is unusual in China’s history, she explains, because, as Ghodsee noted in her analysis of East European (Second World) women’s rejection of the term, ‘feminism’ is indelibly associated with white liberal (bourgeois) agendas (Hong Fincher 119).
- 25 It is important also to acknowledge where these protests for equality and structural fairness have failed to materialise. In Russia, where ‘me too’ awareness is deemed ‘embryonic, at best,’ there is feminist organising to protest domestic violence laws that give very light penalties to abusers who are convicted, with conviction itself a rarity (Ferris-Rotman) In Italy, actress Asia Argento has been criticised for speaking out in the US, and ‘me too’ has been dismissed as American puritanism (Poggioli). In Ghana, casual joking by celebrities about sexual violence against women, and against even very young children, is routinely dismissed as mere ‘misbehaviour,’ and sexual assault allegations are more likely to ruin the life of an accuser than an abuser (Asante). And a quirk of Australia’s libel laws that puts the burden on publishers to prove allegations are true (rather than expecting the person who claims defamation to prove them false) has made coming forward with allegations of sexual violence an action with such enormous financial consequences for the accusing individual that structural critique of industries from media to finance have been short-circuited (Sloman).
- 26 Hirshman casts Biden as a politician committed to his ‘nice guy’ persona: Biden ‘considered himself a friend to women,’ she observes in *Reckoning* (73). In her view, Biden had every reason to see himself this way, ‘since his whole life was made possible by women who had put his career first’ (Hirshman 73). In his default orientations, he is, she says, ‘accustomed to supportive women, obsessed with being liked, and suspicious of the media and of organized political feminists’ (Hirshman 74). This is not a set of habits and assumptions that incline someone at the pinnacle of his career to engage deeply and self-critically with ‘me too’ criticisms of his past treatment of women, and one burning question facing American feminists in this moment is the extent to which Biden’s inadequate responses to allegations of mistreatment (so far—apart from

Tara Reade's serious but actively doubted allegations of sexual assault—a series of accusations of groping and 'handsy' behaviour that his campaign has written off as 'just Joe, being friendly') are or should be impeaching of his candidacy for president.

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5 *And they all lived better than before . . .*

Culture-jamming our way to a better world

We have always been doing this: *tales from the past*

Several years ago, I taught a course on the history of women in philosophy—a ‘special topics’ course, no less—and my enduring memory of that experience is the tragically mis-represented life of Cleopatra. Queen of one of the great empires of the ancient world, reputedly well-educated, well-spoken, and highly intelligent, Cleopatra is a model of the shrewd and fortunate woman we can find in every age and culture, the woman who mines all her opportunities and social privilege to allow her to be heard in a cultural context that typically silences and erases non-dominant (non-male) voices. My understanding of Cleopatra as misrepresented comes from one of her more sympathetic and more recent biographers, Stacy Schiff, who explains that the primary sources of her life are written by Roman historians, interested in telling a history of Rome (*Cleopatra: A Life*). The result is a portrayal of this politically astute ruler as mere appendage to the two famous men she bore children to: Julius Caesar and Marc Antony; as Schiff observes in an interview promoting her biography, Cleopatra is ‘only ever apparent to us when there is a Roman in the room, or when her story intersects with the rise of Rome’ (“Cleopatra: ‘A Life’ Misunderstood”). Like Kristen Ghodsee’s Soviet and Soviet-aligned women (see my discussion in Chapter 4), Cleopatra was responsible for choices and decisions that reshaped the world she lived in and, like them, she still lacked the power to get her story, her voice, into the ‘great conversation’ of human history. Schiff notes (*Cleopatra: A Life*) that the Cleopatra we ‘know’ today is largely the iconic cinematic representation of her by Elizabeth Taylor (whose own voice was misdirected and trivialised in a career shaped by Hollywood film studios). Cleopatra, beautiful and voiceless, appears in human history as the ancient-world version of Hello Kitty’s mouthless femininity.

Even though, as Mark Dery, one of culture-jamming’s earliest theorists, points out, ‘the web may have popularized the idea of culture as a conversation, not a monologue’ (xiv), we cannot assume that everyone with something to say—about, for example, rape culture—has the ability to be heard by others. We need to *make* that space, for ‘the plurality of creative

voices that improvisatory arts . . . both presume and place in dialogue' (Born et al. 21), through strategies like culture-jamming. We can think of cultural interventions, like pop-culture feminist zine *Bitch* and Alyssa Milano's #metoo tweet, as making space for voices that have otherwise been drowned out of conversations,¹ but culture-jamming is both a broader and more targeted orientation to public discourse. It offers 'a range of tactics used to critique, subvert, and otherwise "jam" the workings of consumer culture,' but these 'jammings'—'scrambling the signal, injecting the unexpected, jarring audiences, provoking critical thinking, inviting play and public participation'—are most typically embedded in subaltern or oppositional artistic projects and practices (DeLaure and Fink 6).

Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink, editors of a new anthology on culture-jamming, characterise these projects and practices as 'creative acts of popular intervention performed by people seeking change, using whatever means and materials are at hand' (6). It is where the creative meets the subversive that we find rich and potentially transformative examples of culture-jamming, a point reinforced by DeLaure and Fink's insistence on both connotations of the term as definitive of its strategic focus: culture-jamming is 'jamming' in the sense of blocking the free flow of advertising and consumer propaganda, but it is also and simultaneously 'jamming' in the sense of playing music experimentally with each other (7).

These two approaches, of course, need not be mutually exclusive: indeed, LeVine [a proponent of jamming as play] asserts that culture jamming should be 'both critical and positive . . . perform[ing] an inherent critique of the existing system while also showing the way forward to a different future.'

(DeLaure and Fink 7)

The same tactics that culture-jamming artists and activists have used to expose the shoddy dehumanisation of consumer culture can be, and have been, used to expose the workings of rape culture. Indeed, this chapter argues throughout that there are recursive overlaps between culture-jamming, (peace studies-inflected) improvisation theory, and the empowerment-through-empathy that Tarana Burke's 'me too' activism is building. What those (em)powered by empathy can do to dismantle rape culture is 'jam' its messages of patriarchal gender roles, women as prizes or rewards, sex as negotiating campaigns in which consent and attrition collapse into each other, and other normalisations of sexual and gendered violence. We can do culture-jamming in order to develop 'the plurality of creative voices' that Georgina Born, Eric Lewis, and Will Straw valorise in examination of 'social aesthetics' as a frame for theorising improvisation (21). Robust attention to the intersection of culture-jamming and improvisation theory (with its own paradigms of collaborative musical experimentation) demonstrates that culture is not a coherent 'cover story' created by a group of like-minded

people, but a patchwork quilt of contested views of ourselves. And in those contestations, conceptual space can be seized and turned back on itself, so that we can interrogate the subordination, the alienation, and the silencing that rape culture fosters and flourishes within.

DeLaure and Fink identify the common features of culture-jamming as: an ‘appropriating’ orientation to culture, artfulness, playfulness, transgressiveness, a preference for anonymity and pseudonymity, participatory politics, and its own (sub)cultural convention of producing and reproducing critiques as a series (12–24). This might seem a grab-bag of artistic practices and social motivations, but they are, on closer inspection, reinforcing features. Culture-jamming’s treatment of commodified public space as furnishing raw material to be appropriated and turned into one’s own message is an attitude that leads jammer and self-described prankster Kembrew McLeod to characterise culture-jamming as ‘twisted versions of participatory democracy in action’ (401). Appropriating the slogans, images, and memes of consumer culture and presenting them as items in a series constitutes an invitation to a radically participatory politics, a politics that sees public space as an improvisatory site for ‘answering back’ to the ‘one-way communication’ of corporate merchandising and encourages others to add their own transgressive appropriations to the mix. Giving an explicitly transgressive cast to the imperatives of artfulness and playfulness reminds us that art can be fun and that play can serve very serious purposes. And, ‘[t]he anonymity afforded by masks and pseudonyms,’ explain DeLaure and Fink, ‘. . . puts the critique, not its authors, center stage’ (17).²

‘Culture jamming does political work in that it critically engages narratives of the dominant capitalist culture,’ they argue. ‘At its most trenchant, culture jamming challenges existing structures of power, seeking to reveal hypocrisy and injustices, spark public outrage, and promote collective action’ (DeLaure and Fink 19). It both causes confusion, and then mines that confusion, to show us that there are other questions to ask that lie beyond our initial ‘wtf’ reactions. In this way, culture-jamming can be understood as a resistance to power enacted by the powerless: ‘We don’t get to make culture? Really? ‘Cause we’re doing it right now, by defacing this bus-stop poster.’ Everyone, however disempowered and apparently passive, *does* participate in producing and maintaining the culture he, she, or they lives in, and official social norm-making (e.g. laws and political discourses) that does not build in an encouragement to diversity of voice will end up unwittingly creating the conditions of possibility for the subversive and outrage-fuelled ‘speaking back’ that get identified as instances of culture-jamming.

Christine Harold identifies three possible ‘rhetorical postures’ adopted in culture-jamming interventions: sabotage, appropriation, and intensification (which she understands as a kind of resistance *within*, that does not require one to step outside the cultural space or concept being criticised). Speculating about what a ‘gender justice’ or anti-rape culture could look like seems to require something like Harold’s intensification strategy: we cannot step

outside of culture to transform it from any kind of overarching ‘view from nowhere,’ so all our resistance is necessarily working *inside* power relations. It is here that I see an overlapping space for culture-jamming, improvisation theory, and empathy-empowerment that can address Foucauldian thinking about power and resistance.³ The overlap of culture-jamming and improvisation theory is extensive: they both claim experimental music as a defining paradigm, and the promises made for culture-jamming and for improvisation by their respective proponents identify common ideals. ‘At its best,’ DeLaure and Fink tell us, ‘culture jamming is a creative and inventive mode of public engagement: it cultivates critical attitudes toward commercial culture and dominant institutions, and helps foster belief that the world can be different’ (25). My own work on articulating an ethics of improvisation—identifying political and ethical norms of ‘free jazz’ improvising ensembles that can help build more democratic political communities (Nicholls, *An Ethics of Improvisation*)—aligns well with culture-jamming’s aggressively anti-hierarchy stance: Kembrew McLeod, for instance, argues that its power lies in ‘encourag[ing] people to stop being bystanders, engage with their daily lives, and deviate from their daily routines . . . [in order] to see the world, even very briefly, from a new perspective’ (401).

Improvisation and culture-jamming benefit from being examined through the framework that ‘social aesthetics’ offers. A recent volume that theorises this new interpretive frame through analysis of improvisatory arts (predominantly music) defines social aesthetics as

argu[ing] for, and investigat[ing] the details of, the many ways in which our interactions with art participate in or serve an array of political orientations and social and cultural processes: from signalling our membership in and commitment to particular social identities . . . to reifying, contesting, or modeling alternatives to existing social formations.

(Born et al. 3)

Locating artmaking within social relations is, the editors argue,

particularly appropriate to an analysis of improvisatory art, since improvisation, regardless of its medium, has often been conceived by both its practitioners and its theorists as being intimately inflected by the social formations in which it is created and as being, in aesthetically relevant ways, a social practice in itself. Improvised art is often created partially as a social commentary.

(Born et al. 9)⁴

While improvisation is an observable response to environment across human cultures broadly, there are competing traditions of improvisatory arts, especially improvised music. The sonic experimentation of European art music of the 20th century is framed as a very different adventure in

artmaking than the improvised jazz that I and many of the other contributors to the social aesthetics volume theorise from. In improvisatory art performed within African-American traditions, ‘improvisation’ is best understood as ‘repetition with a signal difference,’ says Henry Louis Gates Jr., who has developed a literary and vernacular communication theory out of sustained study of black cultural practices of taking something that already exists and playing around with it a little bit (51). In group improvisation, dialogue (communication) is foregrounded as an aesthetic practice that is also a social interaction (Born et al. 10). Thus, improvised music, in its troubling of composer-performer distinctions and in its efforts to provoke audience engagement, is posing the same questions that culture-jamming does: whose voices are getting heard? what are they telling us?

In her own contribution to the social aesthetics volume she co-edited, music theorist and erstwhile improvising musician Georgina Born offers a conceptual foundation for this relatively new approach to aesthetic theory: an analysis of four planes of ‘social mediation,’ the term she uses to describe processes of speaking change into existence (43). The first plane she identifies, microsociality, is the community that is formed within an improvisatory exchange, analogous to the exchange of a ‘me too’ story and the ‘me too’ response. The second, imagined community, is the more durable and well-populated affective network that forms and is entered into as, say, one develops membership in a jazz scene or punk scene. As a mediation of rape culture, it is performed through one’s own ‘me too’ call-and-response interaction over time. Affective community is, however, something that needs to be brought into being before it can provide much in the way of support—and is not yet fully there in the early interventions, which is why being the first voices (in any discourse) is so fraught. The community that will sustain you does not yet exist.

The third and fourth planes are both refractions whose jaggedness reveals wider social relations (what we can see in our culture because of what we see in the improvisation’s or culture-jamming’s commentary) and institutional forces (the systems and structures that improvisation or culture-jamming reveals). Born’s analysis, explained by her through improvised music (43), and applied here to ‘me too’ concerns, reveals both improvised music and culture-jamming as having all the necessary resources to enact political critique and build community. The four planes she sees as sites of social mediation within improvisatory arts are, in their application to ‘me too,’ more visible as two pairs of social interaction. The first two planes articulate a sociality within—the building of community through empathy—whereas the third and fourth are the transformative work of commenting on social structures, the revealing of pervasiveness and similarities of various ‘me too’ stories, that culture-jamming does so effectively.

To be judged as good/successful culture-jamming, an intervention must have many of the same attributes that I have written about previously as the value criteria for improvised music (Nicholls, ‘Improvising Rage’ 33): it must

engage in dialogue or conversation (perhaps as initiator of a particular idea or interpretation, but in ways that signal responsiveness), it must acknowledge and welcome voices (points of view) other than its own, it must speak to a community to which it holds itself accountable (an identity that is being represented by the ‘jammer,’ as in Emma Sulkowicz’s ‘Mattress Performance’ addressing sexual-assault survivors and the institutional processes that fail to support them), and it must accept the risks and contingencies of the space in which the culture-jamming takes place. ‘[T]o be improvisatory is to reject (or subvert) definitive or official versions’ (Nicholls, ‘Improvising Rage’ 36), but it is also to build trust among the participants (broadly construed to include audiences) that they will be listened to generously—a notion theorised in improvisation studies by Julie Smith and Ellen Waterman as ‘listening trust’—and they will be part of building some transformative common ground. To the extent that a culture-jamming intervention can plausibly convey these improvisation-theory commitments to community and responsiveness, it becomes more than just rage against a social machine.

To be a good judge—of improvised music or of culture-jamming—one must be an open and engaged listener, approaching a performance with the intent to listen closely to what underlying meanings there could be. This means one must be cognitively agile and curious about alternative interpretations. Being a good judge also means being a thorough and diligent listener, hearing out the entire intervention and considering everything that can be gleaned from its context before evaluating it as success or failure. The ideal, in this listening, is a cultural fluency (the ability to ‘codeswitch’) that can only result from immersion in and sustained engagement with different voices, different cultures, different stories—to the point at which you can see points of convergence between your stories and the others you have learned. This is how I understand Tarana Burke to be talking about empowerment through empathy; improvisation theory’s emphasis on context and embodiment/voice is consistent with a ‘me too’ emphasis on empathy,⁵ which must necessarily develop out of concrete personal interaction.

What I have argued in the context of mapping shared commitments of improvisation theory and peace studies is that an ‘ethics of improvisation’ (what the good is that improvisation can do, and how) is not merely performative, but transformative (Nicholls, ‘Improvisation, Peace,’ *An Ethics of Improvisation*). Like peace studies, an ethically inflected improvisation theory gives us a perspective on our social fields that develops us as creative and responsive individuals: valuing us for our capacities of generosity, willingness to support others in their creative risk-taking and their struggles out of problem situations, forgiveness of mis-steps that arise in negotiations, and respect for creative performance of social responses (Nicholls, *An Ethics of Improvisation*).⁶ If Miranda Fricker’s work on epistemic injustice is properly labelled virtue epistemology, then I am tempted to suggest we think of Burke’s empowerment through empathy as a kind of virtue politics, making ourselves better individual (embedded in microsocialities and imagined

communities) agents both *by* making our societies better and *in order to* continue making them better.

Efforts to push societies forward—in the name of justice, or equality, or human rights—through subversion-as-critique are not a new feature of modern society. We have always been doing this kind of cultural disruption as social justice. Among the examples of subverted and reimagined cultural productions in which women have grounded demands for gender equality are ‘culture-jammings’ of two historic declarations of human rights: the French *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen de 1789*, which was reworked by French revolutionary and women’s rights activist Olympe de Gouges; and the American *Declaration of Independence (1776)*, which was reworked by American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In both cases, they ‘rewrote’ stirring and iconic documents proclaiming ‘the rights of man,’ revising them into arguments for gender equality. In fiction, we find equally instructive and thought-provoking depictions of gendered social expectations, like the example of *Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes’ 17th-century contribution to the canon of Spanish literature. In the English-speaking world, Cervantes’ central character has been cast as a fool who imagines and misidentifies battles and adversaries, a buffoon who ‘tilts at windmills.’ Yet the newest (2005) English translation of this Spanish classic suggests the possibility of a very different reading of Don Quixote. In translator Edith Grossman’s hands, this Spanish gentleman who we think we know as a simple-minded fool is reintroduced as a man whose failure to conform to social expectations sometimes takes the form of standing up for women’s rights—as in the defence he makes of a beautiful young woman who insists that the desire of the men who fall in love with her does not obligate her to reciprocate their affections (101). This Don Quixote is a new feminist-friendly voice emerging from literary classics, and suggests our previous misperception of him is yet another distorting effect of patriarchal culture. Re-presentation of disparaged and mocked figures in literature can, in cases like these, also be understood as culture-jamming.

The paradigmatic example I have used throughout the course of writing this book—the body of work that explained for others what I was talking about in references to culture-jamming—is Banksy. A studiously anonymous street artist whose work is now sold at auctions, Banksy began, in the early 1990s, to develop a style of public mural-meets-vandalism that initially used bits of contingent space—cracks in a concrete wall, for instance—as ‘canvases’ for subversive reminders that we don’t have to be passive consumers of commercialised messaging. Moving from a graffiti style to stencilling, he continued the cultural critique in public space that culture-jamming analyst Benedikt Feiten describes through Mark Dery’s definition of culture-jamming as ‘intruding on the intruders’ (219). Feiten argues that Banksy’s ‘intruding’ is twofold: a reclamation of the physical space in which corporations are relentlessly shouting their advertising at us, and a liberation

of our minds (219). Banksy shouts back, says Feiten, thereby showing us that public space is not monolithically commercial space. In this, despite a very different cultural background, his art has transformed public space in ways very similar to the emergence of hip-hop culture in inner cities of the United States in the 1970s.⁷ Banksy contributes to

what Carrie Lambert-Beatty (2010) calls invitational culture jamming . . . [that helps us] perceive the city and its elements not only in terms of the functions they fulfill, but also as an aesthetic space, open to revision and co-creation.

(Feiten 223, 226)

Feiten describes the deliberate disruption in his works as ‘provocation to think about the spatial surroundings not as something fixed (static) but as maybe something that needs to be fixed (amended)’ (227)—a shift of awareness that, expanded to include ‘fixed’ as in ‘fixed that for you,’ encapsulates the culture-jamming attitude.

Dery, one of culture-jamming’s early theorists, in a foreword to DeLaure and Fink’s anthology, asks whether ‘jamming [is] a quaint anachronism in a networked world where Facebook and Twitter pass the mike to anyone with a Net connection, giving her access to a global PA system, free of charge?’ (xi).⁸ This positioning of contemporary culture-jamming as no longer necessary and all voices as free to speak obscures the structural barriers that are a reality on most social media platforms: not just anyone gets access. Some people get amplified; others don’t. And this is not just a scattershot accident; whether you get heard on social media largely replicates the same patterns of inequality, privilege, and marginalisation that we see elsewhere in society. Much of the cultural infrastructure that gives platforms to authorised voices and suppresses dissident ones remains unchanged from the conditions in which culture-jamming emerged into cultural awareness in the 1990s, popularising anti-consumer, anti-advertising, ‘no logo’ sentiments through mockery, exposure of hypocrisy and greed, and other ‘street theatre’ tactics.⁹ Concluding his case for culture-jamming’s continued relevance, Dery reminds us that it is a social practice with origins in the oppositional, norms-defying attitudes of medieval-era European carnivals, and that it seeks to demonstrate ‘that culture really is a contest of narratives, a war of stories’ (xv).

We need to do more of this: *tales for the future*

There are indeed ‘story wars’ for us to fight with culture-jamming strategies and tools. The ‘Slutwalk’ marches that Selma James has written about as emblematic of ‘the new women’s movement’ (274) began in Toronto, Canada, in 2011, as a repudiation of a Toronto police officer’s declaration

that women who didn't want to get raped shouldn't 'dress like sluts' (Gibson). As Rebecca Solnit recounts the history of these marches, they began

as a [Canadian] protest against victim-blaming . . . [and] became an international phenomenon, of mostly young, often sexily dressed women taking back public space (rather like the Take Back the Night walks of the 1980s, but with more lipstick and less clothing).

(151)

As a voice of the radical Second Wave, James is an activist who has never stopped her advocacy of gender justice and community empowerment; she sees in Slutwalks a real opportunity to build solidarity across race, class, and gender affiliations. She recalls of her own involvement in these Third Wave-driven protests that '[w]e were not merely marching together; we were one, claiming not equality but mutual respect for individuality' (James 275). One might object here that she is idealising her experience,¹⁰ and there is, I think, no arguing with the observation that public protest can be a euphoric, albeit fading, experience—it is a rare experience, in a neoliberal society that atomises human experience and valorises the heroic individual, to be in a crowd who are (or appear to be) all passionately transported by the same ideas and feelings. It evokes similar feelings of closeness to these stranger-others to the feelings one might experience in the concerts, festivals, and performances that are objects of analysis for improvisation studies.¹¹

Given their synthesis of creative performance and political protest,¹² I think we can see creative cultural reproaches like Slutwalks and other anti-sexual assault performances as analysable through Georgina Born's four planes of social mediation. At the level of the microsociality of that particular London march James writes about, and at the level of imagined community that unifies all of the Slutwalks worldwide, empathy is being built. In the assemblage of diverse races, genders, and classes of people, wider social relations are being culture-jammed (as Solnit insinuates, marchers typically wear lingerie and other so-called slutty clothing in rejection of the notion that only 'sluts' get raped) and institutional forces (e.g. law enforcement's acceptance and perpetuation of rape myths) are being exposed. 'In this sense, the [London] SlutWalk was light years ahead of the 1970 women's liberation march, which made way for it,' James insists, drawing credibility for her assessment from the fact that she was, as she notes, 'at both' (275).

So, how do we and our law enforcement develop the rape-culture belief that Slutwalks are jamming (that women who experience sexual violence are probably, more likely than not, asking for it)? What is the cultural machinery that needs to be subverted, so that it can no longer nurture attitudes that cause social harm? Since the 1980s, one piece of the means of production of consumer capitalism that has been scrutinised with these questions in mind is the film industry. A 1984 review of the research findings presented at that year's American Psychological Association symposium foregrounded data

analysis about repeated viewing of violent films making ‘viewers, including women, become more callous in the face of the films’ portrayals of violence toward women and more likely to believe that a woman who was raped wanted to be’ (Goleman). Clover Hope, writing three decades later about the impact of ‘me too’ on ‘the violent male gaze’ through which and for which movies are made, notes the particular inadequacy of this cultural scrutiny in terms of enumerating its possible instances of harm. Despite three decades of psychological study and media theorising about the potential harms of violent imagery and degrading representations, Hope quotes a spokesperson for the Motion Picture Association of America (the organisation responsible for rating movies as suitable or not for viewing by children) confirming that ‘the MPAA has never tracked specific types of violence, i.e. rape or domestic violence, in movies.’

Another author of ‘me too’-era analysis of rape in cinema, April Wolfe, documents a growing demand in Hollywood for stunt coordinators who can advise on filmsets in a specialisation known as ‘rape choreography.’ Rape choreography, Wolfe tells us, emerged in a confluence of cinematic preoccupation with sexual violence and growing cultural awareness that violence can be traumatising to watch and to perform, even if one is acting. This is not a ‘me too’ evolution—rape choreography predates the ‘me too’ call to accountability and empathy—but it is one response to heightened cultural scrutiny of and discourse about representations of rape in movies and television. The prevalence of the male gaze in the popular-culture representations we all consume normalises both desires to assert power over another person (a desire men are socialised into in a variety of contexts) and widespread disregard of mutuality as being a necessary factor in any choice to engage in sexual (or sexualised) activity. This is not just rape-culture messaging; it is part of the story behind philosopher Kate Manne’s observation (discussed in Chapter 4) that one person’s ‘me too’ monster is another social network’s good guy. This disconnect, in Manne’s view, explains how men can engage in coercive, bullying behaviours that serve their sexual pleasure at the expense of vulnerable others and still believe that they are ‘nice guys.’ Their self-perceptions are bolstered by rape culture’s male gaze: they are ‘nice guys’ because they are behaving in ways that the heroes of their favourite movies would.

‘Using rape as a plot point most often functions to give a dull male character a reason to act, a wrong to right, while serving as the female character’s sole backstory,’ Wolfe observes, characterising habitual use of this device as ‘lazy writing.’¹³ Wolfe’s analysis of the toll that ‘rape cinema’ takes on those who produce it includes a distinction offered by indie-film director Jessica M. Thompson: ‘between rape-filmed-as-rape and rape-filmed-like-sex’ (Wolfe). ‘If you film [rape] like a sex scene, then it is glorifying it,’ Wolfe quotes Thompson as saying. One of the questions Wolfe poses is: ‘what if portraying rape could actually be a positive thing?’ Her interest in taking up a trope that has been used to reinforce women’s subordination, vulnerability,

and male-identification, and refashioning it into representations supportive of women's agency and expanded cultural empathy, suggests a culture-jamming sensibility, but little is said in her piece about how, exactly, that re-presentation might work. Perhaps this inattention to answers is because '[t]he questions are pressing:

How many rapes do viewers see in a lifetime? How many are filmed in a year? Does all this normalize rape or expose it as horror? Are these depictions power-fantasy turn-ons, victimizing exploitation, or dramatically and thematically vital? What toll do they take on viewers (and critics)—and on the people who produce the scenes? Until recently, most rapes in TV and film were told from a male point of view.'

(Wolfe)

In fact, the landmark 1988 film *The Accused* is so (unwittingly) committed to the male point of view as the unquestioned norm (in Martha Minow's terms, the 'unstated' assumption) that it does something arguably more undermining of empowering representation than either lazy writing or glorification of rape as sex; it centres the perspective of a male bystander to legitimise the rape at the centre of the story.

The film begins with the aftermath of the gang-rape of Sarah Tobias (Jodie Foster) in a bar: we see a young man (the bystander who will at the end of the film be depicted as a hero) on a pay phone outside the building, pleading for emergency services to come help a girl in danger. Then we see Sarah, running out of the bar to flag down a car and go to the emergency room. The film is, at its heart, courtroom drama; just after the film's halfway mark, we see Sarah's testimony, describing the gang-rape in explicit detail, but—in an illustration of the testimonial injustice of rape culture—she is impeached by the defendants' legal counsel. One of them goes so far as to suggest that she should have said something more than 'no,' to make clear to bystanders that she needed rescuing: 'help,' perhaps, or 'police.' It is only at the film's climax that the gang-rape is depicted in flashback, as it is being described by the 'good guy'/saviour bystander who testifies to witnessing what Sarah experienced.

In Mithu Sanyal's words, 'he speaks [the rape] into existence . . . the famous scene on the pinball machine was neither described in Sarah's words nor shown from her point of view' (33). Sanyal thinks 'the desire to be unambiguous was so immense in *The Accused* that the makers failed to see the paternalism of the court-room scene' (33). She understands the storytelling as 'a kind of feminist best-case scenario of how to negotiate a rape case in a court of law—and, by extension, the court of public opinion,' identifying '[i]ts central conflict [as] how the victim can speak her truth and by doing so inscribe it into the law' (Sanyal 31–32). The persistence of this 'carceral' logic in our cultural discourses about sexual violence (the tendency that is driving a lot of contemporary critiques of 'me too' as 'over-reach' or

‘witch-hunting’: to hear a story of wrongdoing and understand it as a story of crime) is something that Sanyal unpacks throughout her history of rape, pointing out that, although some victims of sexual violence choose to pursue legal recognition of the wrong done, that is not the only response available and we should not elevate any single response as a best course of action for all.

‘What happens when women direct rape scenes?’ April Wolfe asks. Elsewhere in her analysis of rape choreography, she raises a different question about the ethics of representation: ‘What’s the right amount of rape to create that dialogue that might lead to actual change?’ In order to bring us closer to an answer to the first of those two questions, we need to reframe the second question, to draw attention away from questions of right *amounts* of representation of sexual violence and towards questions of the right *kinds* of representation. Possible improvements in how sexual violence is represented in film and television can be hypothesised through consideration of how some more recent examples are telling stories that seem to be using unconventional point-of-view framing and predictable human responses to ‘the face of the other.’

A 2018 Australian film, *The Nightingale*, about a sexually brutalised convict in 1820s Tasmania, explores the impact of sexual violence upon the whole of the central character’s life in a way that does not let the story become an easy ‘revenge quest.’ We do not revel in kick-ass ‘girl power’; we are subjected to unflinching cameos of Clare emotionally experiencing her powerlessness. Unlike *The Accused*, in *The Nightingale*, we are given both real struggles with the burden of getting one’s own ‘justice’ (how you actually stumble through day after day if your experience is *not* a feminist best-case scenario) and, anachronistically, a searingly modern portrayal of the enduring effects of trauma. In an interview about her film and the reactions it has provoked at film festivals, director Jennifer Kent spoke of her concern for the well-being of the actor playing Clare (Aisling Franciosi) but also her directorial determination to confront us with Clare’s humanity (Buckley). She explains to *New York Times* reporter Cara Buckley that she ‘kept the camera focused closely on the victim’s face; her intent was to make the viewer experience the violence too.’ There is undeniable logic to the view that seeing Clare’s face in close-up as her rape happens can solicit our empathy for her: we see her emotional reactions, not the movements of an easy-to-sexualise female body, and the parts of our brains and social conditioning that attune us to how others feel are fully engaged. Wolfe’s own empathy-creation argument for better representations of rape in film also identifies the singular importance of presenting a character we feel some connection to: ‘[i]f you can make it believable, make people care about the victim, then you’ve created a better story and honestly shown the horror.’

While focusing cameras on close shots of facial expressions is one way to foreground the inner life of an individual human being and thereby create a better story, a shift of camera angle to tell the story from the rape victim’s

point of view seems to me to be an equally powerful way of representing rape onscreen. This is the device used by a ‘me too’-inflected Netflix series, *Unbelievable*, that builds on a ‘catch the criminal’ story familiar to watchers of *CSI*-type television to ground more empathetic portrayals of the women who are the rape victims. These characters—Marie, Amber, Sarah, Doris, and Lilly—are distinct individuals, and part of *Unbelievable*’s better story-telling is its casting and writing characters who vary in age, body type, class, race, and social interests, to illustrate that there is not a single kind of woman who becomes a rape victim. The most radically humanising thing this series does, however, is to film all of the ‘flashback’ representations of sexual assault as montages that include shots of what the scene would look like from Marie’s point of view (or Doris’ or Amber’s).

Like *The Accused*, *Unbelievable* starts its story-telling in the aftermath of the rape that centres the story: Marie’s. In the images accompanying Marie’s report to a responding police officer immediately after being attacked, we see what she saw when she was woken by an intruder: a masked face leaning over her. Throughout her report of what happened (given first to the responding officer, then to a detective, and later to a hospital nurse doing her rape kit, in scenes that graphically portray the burden of testimony), images cut back and forth between conventionally framed camera shots in which we see Marie and her interlocutor and the more jarring but also much more empathy-arousing camera shots that are thin bands of partial image, representing what she would have seen while blindfolded. Point-of-view decisions have always been recognised as crucial to storytelling, so it is almost surprising to see this device at work in *Unbelievable* and realise that it is not the standard in representing rape. If we *want* to show the horror honestly, as Wolfe urges, and we want to give audiences a sense of how it would feel to experience this horror, why would scenes of rape and other sexual violences ever have been filmed from any other standpoint?

Another variation of the fully humanised (fully drawn) experience of rape—along with the foregrounding of emotional reality through close-up filming and the foregrounding of cognitive reality through point-of-view choices—is the device of shared monologue that we find ranging over seasons 2 and 3 of the Hulu telling of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. At the beginning of episode 10 in season 2, we see Emily preparing for the monthly ritualised rape that Gilead euphemistically calls ‘the Ceremony,’ an encounter that is timed to take place when the handmaid is most likely to conceive and involves the Commander’s wife holding her down during the rape (‘The Last Ceremony’). In this posting, Emily is handmaid to a Commander whose first name is unstated, so we don’t know her handmaid patronymic—of-(commander’s first name)—she is a technically nameless woman. She approaches the bed as we hear her monologue in voice-over: ‘you treat it like a job . . . one detaches oneself . . . one describes.’ Later in the same episode, we see June in her posting as ‘Offred’ (handmaid to Commander Fred Waterford) being subjected, in the very late stages of pregnancy, to a ‘labour-inducing’

Ceremony (rape); June is saying to herself in another voice-over, 'you treat it like a job . . . one detaches oneself' ('The Last Ceremony').

Where this repetition of self-counselled detachment starts to appear as culture-jamming, as items in a series that aims to subvert conventional reasoning, is in its reappearance in episode 10 of season 3 ('Witness'). June has been reassigned to the household of Commander Joseph Lawrence and is now 'Ofjoseph.' Lawrence has a prestigious position within the Gilead leadership structure so he has the freedom to run a deviant household; we see a resistance movement enacted by marthas and handmaids largely under his nose, as he uses all his influence to try and maintain a steady supply of medication for his wife, who appears to suffer depression and manic episodes that would be entirely treatable in a humane social context. There is no monthly Ceremony in this household. At least, there isn't until Gilead leaders decide to pull Lawrence into line by 'witnessing' the Ceremony, sitting in the parlour while the rape happens and then sending a doctor into the bedroom to verify that sexual 'relations' have taken place. June shares the monologue script with her new Commander, coaching him on how to comply with the ritual: 'you treat it like a job,' she instructs, '. . . it's easier if you close your eyes' ('Witness'). In this scene, we are seeing a man who is being coerced into raping, learning how to endure the experience from the woman he will be violating. The repetition of shared monologue between Emily and June is itself a humanisation, in revealing how very detached from their humanity each needs to be in order to cope with this repeated experience. When the monologue is shared further, with Lawrence, it is a subversion of the series we have seen: this monologue is a coping mechanism for rape victims, not rapists. But this is not just a small subversion, interior to the plot; presenting a sex-power context in which the powerful man *does not want to perform* dominance 'jams' the toxic masculinity that I analysed in Chapter 2, and humanises both the men and the women who suffer within rigid and damaging gender scripts.¹⁴

'All of Hollywood is run on one assumption: that women will watch stories about men, but men won't watch stories about women,' says Hollywood actress Geena Davis in *Miss Representation*, a 2011 documentary about media erasure of women's perspectives and privileging of men's opinions, experiences, and agency. She continues: 'It is a horrible indictment of our society if we assume that one half of our population is just not interested in the other half' (*Miss Representation*). Despite the periodic success of films that tell stories of strong female characters, and despite the introduction of critical media tools like the Bechdel test,¹⁵ the culturally dominant 'male gaze' continues to construct the view of the world that is given to us in all popular media, well beyond what I have been discussing here as 'rape cinema.' The male gaze itself needs to be jammed, as part of any sustained campaign to dismantle rape culture. We need to challenge the cultural attribution of mouthlessness/ voicelessness to women that makes it possible for men to doubt that we even have points of view and stories to tell. This is a

point made by filmmaker Anna Biller, in Clover Hope's analysis of violent film in the age of 'me too.' Hope quotes the filmmaker explaining that

[b]ecause there is no widespread social awareness about the way women are systemically blocked from achieving their ambitions, many men think that it's a more or less level playing field and that women are just bad storytellers or that they just don't have anything to say.

(Biller, quoted by Hope)¹⁶

For all that the world of films promotes a perception of itself as enormously complex artmaking that requires many people to coordinate themselves and objects around sets, it too can be culture-jammed using its own means of cultural production. Recall that a culture-jamming initiative, like many 'salvage' art projects, is a 'vernacular space of art making . . . one in which the possibility of participation is extended to ever increasing numbers of people, refuting the social and cultural closures inherent in the institutionalization of the arts and music' (Born et al. 21).

In the time that I have been writing the last two chapters of this book, the world has been grappling with the outbreaks and lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I have been watching in real time the creative adaptation that improvisation theory says we are all capable of. We are, as I write, *in the very process*, globally, of articulating online vernacular spaces of artistic production (as well as spaces of learning, governing, and pursuing everyday social interaction with colleagues, friends, and other intimate acquaintances): television talk and news programmes, podcasts, concerts, family reunions, and of course activism have flooded to online platforms like Zoom, along with all of the 'white-collar' work that can be done or approximated in video format. As quickly as lockdowns happened in various countries, workarounds arose that normalised home-crafting of cultural products that had previously 'required' huge production resources. (As an example, one of my favourite podcasts is now apparently being beamed to me from a closet in Brooklyn, NY.) I think it is fascinating, and instructive, to consider how this moment will change our conceptions of what is possible in 'street art' (culture-jamming). Now that smartphones can make movies, the number of people who can parody, subvert, and outright replace cultural representations that are harming us has multiplied radically. We don't need to wait for others to produce the better representations that *The Nightingale*, *Unbelievable*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* are working into our cultural lexicon. We can make our own 'movies' that jam rape culture. (Personally, I would love to see hacked versions of, say, Victoria's Secret commercials with the *Handmaid's Tale* voice-over added in—'you just treat it like a job . . .'.) Of course, we need to take account of the uneven distribution of platform and voice-amplification in social media, but there is also grounds for optimism.

One of the things I think I have come to realise, throughout my career, as I have explored academic interests that range over human rights, gender

justice, racial equality, privilege examination, and the potential of improvised music is that almost everything about our social world is more fragile than we like to think it is—except the things we presume to be fragile. COVID-19 lockdowns have contributed to a view of national economies and their local impacts in which economic indicators of well-being crash into nothingness like a melting polar ice shelf. And at the same time, more ephemeral things—hope, music, the nobility of ‘care work’—have emerged to sustain us. And, while I am keenly aware of how easy it is to idealise these surprisingly resilient wisps of inspiration, I also see possibilities for deeper transformation of cultural beliefs and assumptions than have previously been visible. The improvisation on display in this global pandemic—in artmaking, and in stubborn efforts to maintain communities—has been impressive, and there are a lot of people who deserve credit for advancing our ability these days to have social encounters online that meet all the needs our face-to-face encounters once did. (Obviously not all social interaction is substitutable in this way, but I think a lot of individuals and businesses have discovered that technological advances have considerably expanded the scope of sociality.)

The deep transformation that I hope for in all of this global uncertainty and despair is illustrated by a May 2020 artwork by Banksy that appeared suddenly on the wall of a hospital in Southampton, England (Stolworthy). Apparently titled *Game Changer*, this latest mural is of a little boy playing with a female superhero dressed in a nurse’s uniform, to the exclusion of his Batman and Spiderman dolls (who are visible in a waste-paper basket off to the side of the picture). One of the differences of ‘pandemic-life’ that clearly caught Banksy’s attention as much as it caught my own is the unusually acute recognition given to healthcare workers. (In my experience of lockdown in Aotearoa New Zealand, there was an outpouring of recognition for ‘essential workers’ that sometimes collapsed into empty platitudes, but in many of the countries whose news I was obsessively watching, the reporting captured a strand of seemingly visceral, and brand-new, awareness of how much each of us owes to all healthcare workers—not just often-lionised doctors, but also the nurses, nurses’ aides, orderlies, and paramedics who tend to work in the background of our fields of awareness.) Banksy’s nurse-superhero demonstrates culture-jamming’s emphasis on redescription, as a crucial initial part of processes that reshape cultural values through subverting perceptions. Redescribing the nurse—as much a paradigmatic figure of ‘care’ as the mother—as a superhero endorses a stark transformation of cultural values, away from ideals of conspicuous consumption and towards an ethics of care.

Working from Virginia Held’s premise that care is a basic moral value capable of grounding both an ethics and a politics of care, I would expect such an ethics and such a politics to be articulated within feminist peace studies as a programme that evaluates people and institutions according to how well they make space for care—as both a value and a practice, to put the point in Held’s words (39). As Catia Confortini observes of feminist peace studies

generally, an ethics and politics of care should be concerned with identifying the structures that shape individuals' lives and with interrogating them for gendered disparities and injustices—and it should also be concerned with articulating a more positive vision of worlds and value systems, in this case, a vision in which 'care' is a great gift that we give to each other instead of a weakness to be exploited and monetised. (Indeed, I would expect a positive programme within a politics of care to look very much like the empathy-empowerment work of Tarana Burke's that I characterised earlier in this chapter as 'virtue politics.')

Banksy's radical redescription is emerging exactly at the moment that improvisation theory's attention to contingency would recommend: all of us who are able to tap into newsfeeds around the world can see for ourselves how scared people are in the shifting contagion-hotspots of this pandemic, we can see healthcare systems buckling under the demands of the sick and the dying, and we can see the enormous efforts of individual healthcare workers to make their resources stretch further and do more. We can see, finally, what a real superhero looks like. Banksy is not showing us what we don't know; he is showing us that there's another (maybe better?) way of understanding what we can all see—a newly visible ethical and political ideal.

In culture-jamming, as in improvisatory artistic and cultural productions generally, it is difficult (and not always helpful) to claim that a different way of doing something is a better way—in improvisation theory, 'better' demands an accompanying explanation: in what context is this different way better? For whom? One way we might understand how valuing care is better than valuing money is by looking closely at the costs of structural violence in each society's status quo and asking, what are the costs of failing to care? But notice that this question has already shifted us out of the redescription stage of social critique and activism (the point at which culture-jamming can be profoundly generative of new ways of seeing), and into more scholarly tasks of data collection and problem articulation. This is how a movement evolves to into an entity capable of exerting influence in societal conversations about change.

Bringing that point to bear on sexual violence and rape culture, we can see that the 'culture-jamming' effects of Alyssa Milano's Twitter census are helpful in opening up the conversation, but that any awareness an intentional community has of itself (the Sartrean-Burkean 'survivors talking to survivors' conception of 'me too' that I presented in Chapter 4) needs to be supplemented by a narrative that can be understood in mainstream discourse as evidence. One way to make the scope of sexual violence visible on the public stage is to create and report statistics that measure the problem—so suggests Tarana Burke. Speaking to *Democracy Now!* only weeks after the 2017 emergence of the Harvey Weinstein story, Burke urged people to 'look at the numbers, look at the people, look at the survivors, and think strategically.' Thinking, she says, like a community organiser and a lifelong activist, she observes that 'if you apply the numbers around sexual violence

to any communicable disease, the World Health Organization would shut it down; there'd be all kind of, you know, experiments and research around it' (Burke, the *Democracy Now!* interview).

All of the contributions being made in art, cultural representations, and discourses of political change (e.g. #timesup) are helping to bring cultures to crisis points where changing in ways that turn us towards care and empathy becomes easier than resisting. Once we get to the crisis points, data and problem-analyses that reveal the structural violences of rape culture will be vital for making the case about how to dismantle it, but it is culture-jamming representations that will get us to those points. Cultural influences, gender roles, social scripts—each of these are areas in which we see challenges to patriarchal hierarchy being advanced, and being furthered by the 'me too' culture-jamming we have seen emerging in diverse societies. The first stage in a collaborative dismantling project must be an explosion of voices 'jamming' rape culture: a campaign of empathy-empowerment and care-valorisation that pushes back against denial to women of epistemic credibility (the status of 'competent knower of the world'), and instead works to help all of us feel 'authorised' to participate in the mass global project of 'authoring' culture. Only once we become aware of the distorted thinking we do not want to endorse, can we begin the conceptual/character conversions that will change the ways we act towards each other.

Coda: Walt Disney, meet Sara Ahmed

Three years into 'me too' reckonings and six months into a world gripped by pandemic and, more recently, a tragically newly energised Black Lives Matter movement, are there any signs of change, any signs that 'me too' can contribute to ending violence and building peace? As I noted in Chapter 4's concluding analysis, signs of structural and cultural change take time to emerge into view, but there may already be some fuzzy outlines of the gender politics conversations we will be having in the years to come. Throughout this book I have worked to undermine fairy tales as one element of the cultural propaganda that deflects and redirects our abilities to have productive conversations about how to end sexual violence.¹⁷ To some extent, I think my central thesis—that storytelling is both reflective of cultures it emerges from *and* a mechanism capable of reshaping them—could have been argued through a variety of genres of narrative. But, as I observe in the introduction to this book, only part of what a focus on fairy tales makes possible is demonstration that, to use Georgina Born's helpful visual metaphor of social mediation, they refract rape culture's mythology, acting as an interface of cultural hopes and fears and societal needs to train people into worldviews in ways that put those views beyond questioning (propaganda). This capacity of refraction is what makes it possible for someone to characterise a woman's elevation in social rank through marriage as 'a Cinderella story' or to argue that Bluebeard is definitive of Harvey Weinstein's sexual predation; we can

see broken-up and reassembled versions of our own societies in these tales. Another part of the reason for my focus on fairy tales is the genre's usefulness as a metaphor for rape-culture messaging: so much of what our cultures tell us who gets raped, and why, and what we can do about it is just fantasy.

The point of ending this book with a discussion of the fairy tales that Walt Disney has made iconic is to consider what seeing 'the Disney princess' as a figure in transition might tell us about cracks in rape-culture propaganda. As I observed in the introduction and have illustrated throughout the book with subtitles and codas, fairy tales do a lot of cultural messaging work. Disney tales have fed generations of young girls dreams of romance as a life-project: sparkly, glamorous, luxurious romance, available at the cost of passive, uncomplaining beauty. The 'old school' Hollywood-inflected princesses—Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel—all fit the pattern dictated by gender scripts that urge girls towards complicit femininity: they are beautiful, often startled or disadvantaged in their encounters with princes, in need of being rescued, and of course, they meekly, blushing, fall in love with their prince-rescuers. As new franchises emerged during my adulthood—Pocahontas, Ariel, Belle—I ignored them. The Disney princesses I grew up with had nothing to say to me about the life I was building for myself; what could the new ones offer? Then a young friend of mine, a former student whose recommendations in films and television I really trusted, suggested that *Frozen* was worth seeing. I think I went to what was my first Disney-princess movie in decades more in a spirit of developing an argument against his recommendation than an interest in seeing the film on its merits, but he was right. And he was right about *Moana*. I do not mean to suggest here that Disney has done an amazing feminist turnaround in representations of girls and women. They haven't.¹⁸ But there is a change in the Disney princess story these days. Princesses whose primary object of love and concern is a sister or who have been called on a quest are showing young girls different possibilities—and most importantly, a wider range of possibilities—for themselves than what I had been shown.

These more agentic, less male-identified characters look quite a lot like the wilful girl Sara Ahmed introduces in *Living a Feminist Life*'s engagement with the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *The Willful Child*.¹⁹ They disobey what they are told because what they are told conflicts with their own judgement—which they either trust from the beginning or learn to trust in the course of meeting the challenges of their narrative arc. They do things that they think are important, even in the face of ridicule and disempowerment. Ahmed's wilful girl is a figure around which she wants to build a politics of wilfulness: 'as standing against; . . . as creativity . . . engaged in the creation of a world for women' (223). Although I reproduce her version of the story in a contextual note in Chapter 2, it is worth presenting it here again in full:

Once upon a time there was a child who was wilful, and would not do as her mother wished. For this reason God had no pleasure in her, and

let her become ill, and no doctor could do her any good, and in a short time she lay on her death-bed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her arm came out again, and stretched upwards, and when they had put it in and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go to the grave, and strike the arm with a rod, and when she had done that, it was drawn in, and then at last the child had rest beneath the ground.

(Ahmed 66–67)

The child is wilful, and therefore God is willing to let her die. The child is so wilful, however, that she refuses to die properly; her arm rises from her grave, like she is raising it (for permission to speak, perhaps?). In both versions, Ahmed's and the Brothers' Grimm, it is *the mother* who is obliged to go beat her dead child into submission. Thinking about this story through Adrienne Rich's analysis of how women are subjected to male power (compulsory heterosexuality), it strikes me that this is one way in which the solidarity among girls and women is crushed: the mother (or step-mother, in many fairy tales) is made the instrument of harmful social responses to wilfulness. We are harmed in order to make us capable of surviving in a harmful world. (Note that this is the very antithesis of the refusal to adapt oneself to a sick society urged by the revolutionary slogan I discussed in Chapter 4: *Ce n'est pas un signe de bonne santé mentale d'être bien adapté à une société malade*).

Rape-culture resistance needs to take up these so-called weapons of the weak I have been discussing—culture-jamming, wilfulness, intentional communities of support—and teach us to value them in a way that I imagine a politics of care would, acknowledging that, for some, speaking in forthright ways is structurally impossible or just plain terrifying. As we work to restructure the world in ways that will no longer force some into unchosen silence, we need also to be sensitive to presently existing silences, gestures, and other ways of communicating distress and dissent. Ahmed's wilful girl raising her hand: can she be read as an instance of performing, but not speaking, 'me too' perhaps? Is the story of the girl whose hand would not stay in the grave a story of desperate subversion, of symbols being deployed where words fail, or are not possible?²⁰

Jessie Kindig argues in the introduction to one of the first self-consciously 'me too' anthologies, *Where Freedom Starts: Sex, Power, Violence, #MeToo*, that the 'deepest and potentially most radical, inclusive, and visionary claim of feminism . . . [is] that what happens to our bodies is where our politics can begin' (23). This theorising through embodiment is yet another point of convergence between feminist thought in peace studies and international relations, in aesthetics (most particularly in improvisation studies), and in philosophy. Beginning with the idea that what happens to and within our bodies matters, we can draw strands of different discourses together to produce stories that develop empathetic, care-oriented politics. With

these stories we can disrupt and subvert mainstream assumptions about how bodies (and by extension, persons) need and deserve to be treated. As I ventured in the book's introduction, the value of these disruptions and subversive interventions is that they can draw our attention to the ways that the patriarchal thinking that perpetuates rape culture congeals in our perceptions of the world without us even being consciously aware of it. Stories alone cannot change the world, cannot dismantle rape culture, but telling stories differently can encourage each of us to think differently, to react differently to our social worlds, and to see when and how others are reacting differently. It is less of a smashing of rape culture than I wish for, but erosion over time is changing the patriarchal status quo women have been expected to endure for my entire lifetime (so far). The erosion continues. The story doesn't end here.

Notes

- 1 *Bitch*, a zine on feminism and popular culture . . . [is] about thinking critically about every message the mass media sends; it's about loudly articulating what's wrong and what's right with what we see' (Hirshman 136); 'Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem'" (Milano). Both display elements of culture-jamming (critical orientations, invitations to participate) but, because they are not embedded in artistic practices and communities, they are perhaps better understood as 'culture-jamming'-adjacent.
- 2 DeLaure and Fink also observe that '[a] variation of the pseudonym deployed by jammers is the "multiple name," a collective identity through which anyone can perform an intervention under a common name' (17). This is the kind of idea I had in mind in my previous chapter when I characterised 'me too' as functioning as a global 'umbrella term' for gender justice activism across a variety of cultures.
- 3 The improvisatory subversions of 'authority' that are cognisant of (responsible to) others who have also been silenced, the performances that fall within this overlapping space, are 'addressing' Foucault's theory of disciplinary power insofar as they are yet another illustration of the point that our ability to talk ourselves into (internalise) power's demands means we also have an ability, however nascent, to talk/train ourselves into resistance to power. While this observation may not hold true for all societies, in putatively democratic ones that have to be seen to be respecting civic voices and also want to promote the ability to adapt to systems as a citizen's/consumer's/worker's virtue, wherever disciplinary power asserts itself, it creates the ground for subversive resistance. Whether that resistance is realised and does truly transform anything depends on the contingent circumstances of its performance—a point true also of culture-jamming and improvised music in the 'free jazz' tradition.
- 4 In framing their understanding of improvisation and its heightened relevance within a socially cognisant aesthetic interpretive structure, Born, Lewis, and Straw make a point of clarifying that 'the very notion of improvisation is itself contested ground—aesthetically and socially—and that distinct practitioners and communities, with their particular histories and concerns, characterize and theorize improvisation differently' (10–11).

- 5 Elaine Sandoval has argued that we might want to be critical in approaches to theorising empathy: as a concept only recently coined (from the German *Einfühlung* which entered use in 19th-century aesthetic theory), it makes sense to ask about the discourses in which ‘empathy’ is implicated—why and how it emerged and ‘what lack of concept existed previously’ (Sandoval). This reference to a ‘lack’ suggests that one plausible way of responding to Sandoval’s concern is to present the concept’s emergence as an illustration of Fricker’s account of hermeneutical injustice. The German term translates literally as ‘feeling into,’ and emerged from aesthetics literature informed by German idealism, so Sandoval’s concern is well-placed; for a concept that now functions as a stringent call to attend to the emotional inner worlds of others, empathy has some very disembodied roots. But the coining of a term, while it does deserve the genealogy Sandoval advocates, does not determine all the ways that term can come to capture other ideas. And certainly, in its popular usage, ‘empathy’ has become the ‘I feel’ expression of similar placement (‘I feel’ as if what you are expressing is my experience) in contradistinction to ‘sympathy,’ the ‘I feel’ that I have when you are expressing something I cannot recognise as my experience but can nonetheless regret and deplore as a harm you have been subjected to.
- 6 One critical point that needs to be examined and debated, in the context of exploring the extent to which songs with ‘me too’ messages could produce empathy capable of being developed into political solidarity, is the limitations of passive listening. If the responsiveness of engaged listening is the transformative mechanism of improvisation (and of culture-jamming), what are we to make of passive listening? Is ‘passive’ the same thing as ‘disengaged’? Interestingly, recent literature on music and empathy suggests that what we think of as passivity might be more engaged, more potentially generative, than we typically recognise (Clarke et al.). Investigation of perception-action relationships in neuroscience over the last couple of decades has attempted ‘to ground a sense of empathy . . . in identifiable neural mechanisms’ (Clarke et al. 65). Linked to theorising about brain plasticity and possibilities for creating and reinforcing neural pathways through social interaction, this ‘neuroscience of empathy’ does produce data linking ‘coordinated physical activity . . . with consequences for social bonding and empathy’ (Clarke et al. 66). This includes mimicry and synchronisation, which suggests that, say, singing along to a recorded song or tapping one’s foot in rhythm are forms of engagement—lesser forms, perhaps, than the ideal of the responsive listener, but still a listener who is potentially ready to be engaged. Clarke et al. observe that ‘[y]oung children, for example, synchronize better with a pattern on drum sounds when they believe that the sounds are intentionally produced by another person’ (67), which suggests that humans do pay closer attention to things like graffiti that we take to be intentional as opposed to spilled paint. (I developed preliminary discussion of this point in a presentation to MOMRI Virtual Conference, Min-On Music Research Institute, October 2019.)
- 7 See Tricia Rose’s *Black Noise* for a history of the emergence of hip-hop as a popular campaign to reclaim public spaces in the way that David Harvey envisions in his thinking about a ‘right to the city.’
- 8 Dery understands the cultures of the 21st century to have been shaped by ‘digital disruption that has flattened media hierarchies’ (xii), but, as William Gibson has observed about the future, while flattened hierarchies may already be here,

they are unevenly distributed. The democratisation Dery ascribes to the internet means we do exist in a world less monolithic, less univocal, than the era in which culture-jamming gained prominence as a way of ‘speaking back to power’ (the 1990s). But, as he himself notes, ‘the social media where most of us swap memes and post links . . . is private property masquerading as the town square’ (Dery xiii), and our ‘shared mythology . . . that is our common culture . . . is, more often than not, wholly owned by multinational corporations’ (Dery xiv). And what he does not note is that the voices that do emerge from the background noise are increasingly ‘influencers’ whose celebrity is tied to their ability to commodify their online presences.

- 9 DeLaure and Fink offer a history of culture-jamming that foregrounds Mark Dery’s *New York Times* and *Adbusters* articles on artistic/aesthetic social dissent in the early 1990s, and makes special mention of the role Canadian magazine *Adbusters* played in promoting anti-consumption, anti-inequality critiques, including the call for popular occupation of New York City’s Zucotti Park which marked the birth of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement (8–9). But they also identify the *détournement* practices of 1960s artists and intellectuals as antecedents of the 1990s culture critics, and they draw parallels with ‘salvage art,’ an appropriation and representation of ‘found’ objects that was notoriously inaugurated by Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Fountain’—a 1917 entry of a urinal into an art show, as ‘found sculpture’ (DeLaure and Fink 12–13). Another contributor to their edited collection tells a history that embeds culture-jamming in the ‘appropriation culture’ of British punk and street art, a culture that is itself shaped by salvage and reclamation attitudes reminiscent of Duchamp’s ‘Fountain’ and the ‘pop’ art of Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol (McDonnell 184–185). Culture-jamming’s pessimistic ancestors, Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, provided the philosophical frame that explained the conditions of possibility for these subversive art cultures in sustained and critical analysis. Culture, they contend, has degenerated under consumer capitalism into an ‘industry’ whose products—books, movies, videogames, popular music—are the words and images that shape our thinking, including our capacities to call and our capacities to respond. The commodified, advertising-drenched public space they bleakly predicted is the dominant voice that subversive ‘speaking back’ reacts to. See Adorno’s *The Culture Industry* for an early analysis of commodified social relations, and see David Harvey, ‘The Right to the City’ for Marxist-inflected conceptual analysis of what we might think of as ‘open access’ cultural life that could stand in contrast to neoliberal commodification.
- 10 In a book critical of those who deny women the right to interpret our own experiences, I am not about to make that objection. It is true that sometimes an experience can have such impact that one is tempted to dress it up in ‘theory clothes’ and try to make it emblematic, instead of accepting it in its singularity. At issue for this distinction is the difficulty of sorting emblems and singularities, sometimes even in retrospect. Because this chapter is written from an improvisation-theory perspective, it is important to me to invite observations, not gate-keep them.
- 11 See, in particular, Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* for an early (and influential in improvisation studies) discussion of how shared musical experiences can contribute to the building of communities and social networks. To construct and participate in (musical) discourse is to

construct and participate in community, Monson argues. To put her point in Selma James' words: 'Who is with us *is* us' (275).

- 12 Hong Fincher documents other instances of performative resistance to sexual violence, in the young feminist movement that has coalesced in the People's Republic of China around the 2015 pre-emptive arrest of the 'Feminist Five': Wu Rongrong, Zheng Churan, Wei Tingting, Wang Man, and Li Maizi (9, 17). These activities, that I think ought also to be considered culture-jamming of patriarchal societies, have included: protesting outside a courtroom hearing a high-profile domestic violence case while wearing a bloodstained wedding dress (Li Maizi); walking two thousand kilometres across China to raise awareness about sexual abuse and to assert a right to occupy public space (Xiao Meili); and walking around every day wearing a sign protesting sexual harassment (Zhang Leilei), among many other creative rejections of a status quo that subordinates women's lives to men's (9).
- 13 Patterns of narrative that depict extreme sexual(ised) violence against female characters in order to give a male character a heroic backstory range across cultural media. In graphic novels/comics, the phenomenon is known as 'Women in Refrigerators' and the action of sacrificing a female character for the sake of a backstory or a plot point is referred to as 'fridging.' The term has been credited to comic-book writer Gail Simone, and refers to a plot-point in the Green Lantern's quest for justice in which his girlfriend was murdered and her body was left in his fridge as provocation for a future battle. See the DC Comics Database/fan wiki for discussion of 'Women in Refrigerators Syndrome.'
- 14 There are isolated moments across all three seasons of *The Handmaid's Tale* that I think can be read as culture-jamming toxic masculinity. In season 1, we see a depiction of the Ceremony in which Fred is unable to achieve erection and commit his scheduled rape of June, in her posting as 'Offred' (episode 4: 'Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum'). Both his 'breaking of the rules' of the Ceremony (caressing June's thigh) and the following scene of nonprocreative marital intimacy between him and Serena Joy, his wife, suggest that, regardless of what a culture says it expects of men, an empathic emotional connection matters more in sex to (at least some) men than physical release. In a rape culture that ascribes to masculinity, to men, a constant willingness to have sex, depicting a man who doesn't want to (or can't) perform can be a subversive act—especially if, as in this case, we see the powerful man not enacting (failing to enact, refusing to enact) power through sex but still being able to keep his power. That suggests 'wiggle room' within the social expectations that govern him, and raises possibilities for unexpected pockets of elasticity in Gilead's other social roles. Given the recognised power of cultural representations to shape our thinking, watching depictions of 'wiggle room' can inspire us to search for these openings and unpoliced spaces in our own lives.
- 15 The Bechdel test measures the representation of women in fiction through the presence or absence of fully drawn female characters. First articulated by American cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 1985 in her *Dykes To Watch Out For* comic strip (and credited by Bechdel to her friend Liz Wallace, therefore sometimes known as the Bechdel-Wallace test), the test requires a cultural product (e.g. a film) to have at least two female characters, both of whom are significant enough to have names, who have at least one conversation with each other on some topic other than a man (see 'Bechdel test,' *Wikipedia*).

- 16 Biller concludes her observations by noting that this view of women not having stories to tell shapes how much space there is in the film industry for *creative* women, but April Wolfe's interview with Hollywood stunt choreographer Deven MacNair suggests that there is little space for women at all. MacNair remarks almost in passing that 'men still get the best stunt-doubling gigs (*even for female characters*). *That* is how persistent and systemic the exclusion is' (emphasis added).
- 17 Even with cracks in its monolith (some 'me too,' some not), rape culture is still a cultural edifice with a lot of heft. Fighting it, dismantling it, with culture-jamming tools and peace-studies analyses of violence and conflict transformation will be a process of what anthropologist James C. Scott calls 'everyday resistance.' In *Weapons of the Weak*, an analysis of class struggle in Malaysian villages, he describes these

everyday forms of peasant resistance—the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. Most of the forms this struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance . . . [using instead] the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.
(Scott 29)

Considering 'everyday resistance' alongside its more overt pair, 'open defiance,' Scott cautions us that 'even at those extraordinary historical moments when a peasant-backed rebellion actually succeeds in taking power, the results are, at the very best, a mixed blessing for the peasantry' (32, 29). Pragmatic acceptance that even an unjust stability can be more conducive to survival than open defiance is why 'circumstances lead many of the poor to clothe their resistance in the public language of conformity' (Scott 289), even as they engage in acts of mockery, petty vandalism, and passive non-engagement with the dominant culture. Scott tells us that '[resistance] activities on anything less than a massive scale are, if they are noticed at all, rarely accorded any social significance' (35). But this diminishes how very effective the weapons of powerless people can be. The deeply fascinating questions provoked by his study of revolutionary struggle are: What is strength? What is weakness? Are 'the weapons of the weak' in fact powerful enough to bring down power structures that look impregnable? In its sly capacity to trouble strength-weakness categorisations that ought to be easy, culture-jamming can be understood as 'a weapon of the weak.' You don't need a Hollywood production company. You don't need to be a world leader. You don't need Swiss bank accounts. You can start a revolution with a can of spray paint. (Admittedly, it does help if you are Banksy.)

- 18 There are still many complaints one can make about the ways that women and cultures are portrayed in Disney movies. *Moana*, for instance, does seem problematic in its representations of Pasifika culture. And too many of these better-drawn princesses still embody a trope criticised as 'the Improper Princess,' defined as 'protagonists that scorn other girls—other girls being passive, pretty, and having boring feminine interests' (Nichols) and undermine the potential feminist force of more empathetic, solidaristic character development in a rush to be different from the old-school princesses.

19 The Brothers Grimm version of the story reads (in translation) as follows:

Once upon a time there was a child who was willful and did not do what his mother wanted. For this reason God was displeased with him and caused him to become ill, and no doctor could help him, and in a short time he lay on his deathbed. He was lowered into a grave and covered with earth, but his little arm suddenly came forth and reached up, and it didn't help when they put it back in and put fresh earth over it, for the little arm always came out again. So the mother herself had to go to the grave and beat the little arm with a switch, and as soon as she had done that, it withdrew, and the child finally came to rest beneath the earth.

The translator, DL Ashliman, notes that the child's gender cannot be determined by the German text, so the male gender has been arbitrarily assigned.

20 As Leta Hong Fincher explains, Chinese women who found 'me too' impossible to share on social media because of government censorship resorted to using emojis for 'rice' (*mi* in Chinese) and 'rabbit' (*tu*). As images, emojis are harder for censors to screen out.

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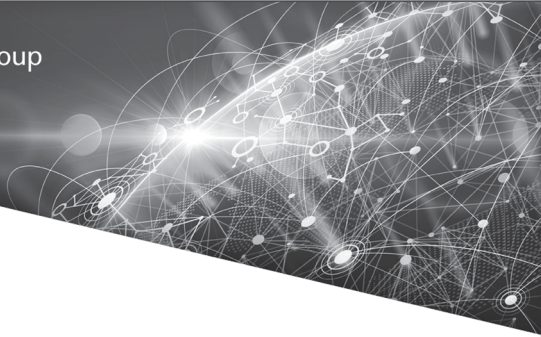
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