From Adultism to Youth Empowerment:

Children's Rights

In Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction

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Children's Rights in Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction

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Abstract

Relying on a child-rights approach to textual analysis, this thesis addresses representations of young adults in contemporary realist young adult fiction across four key texts: *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) by Nicola Yoon, *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) by A. S. King, *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) by Savita Kalhan. The objective is to consider the first-hand experiences of the young protagonists of fifteen to seventeen years old as targets of adultism at the familial, national, or structural levels. The significance of the realist literary mode and the narrative form in emphasising such themes constitutes a primary concern for this thesis. In its denunciation of adultism, this thesis establishes a link between adultist beliefs, attitudes, and practices by relatives and non-relatives on the one hand, and children's rights violations on the other. For this reason, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC henceforth) is used as an important criterion in the delineation of young people's freedoms. At the same time, this document and its implementation on different levels are interrogated with reference to cultural relativism for instance, as well as the ambiguity of some of the convention's phrasings which can be easily manipulated to the child's disadvantage. Accordingly, part one of this thesis identifies how adultism intersects with children's rights to non-discrimination, to survival and development, to the prioritisation of their best interests, and to participation. The second part shifts the focus to constructions of adulthood in these narratives with regard to their roles vis-à-vis the targets of adultism. Finally, the thesis concludes by pinpointing youth empowerment as manifested in the lead characters' thoughts, dialogues, and methods of counteracting adultist behaviours and the violations of their rights. The findings across the first part reveal that adultism is the driving force behind the plots as it facilitates the infringement of protagonists' freedoms. Adultism is thus

pinpointed as a literary device setting the protagonists in motion to surmount the confronted complex issues fuelled by this type of discrimination to fulfil the narrative convention of the disruption of the status quo leading to youth empowerment. Throughout this journey from adultism to youth empowerment, this thesis identifies three types of adult characters with regard to children's rights and their violations: abusers, allies, and abusers who eventually become allies. It is argued that these adults, antagonistic or not, perform a crucial part in the story because they either challenge the young characters or help them towards their empowerment. For youth empowerment, this thesis resists the attribution of the young protagonists' eventual successes and achievements to their transition into adulthood. The examples in the last chapter pinpoint that the lead characters triumph over obstacles specifically as *young adults* and not as adults. Further studies are needed to address more rights and to consider the experiences of secondary young characters and whether they go on a similar journey as that of the protagonists from adultism to empowerment.

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Dedicated to my parents

Contents

Introduction

This thesis identifies the development of young adult protagonists, in a selection of contemporary realist young adult novels, from targets of adultism to empowered agents striving to exercise their rights and to enjoy their liberties. The four chosen novels for this study are: *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) by Nicola Yoon, *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) by A. S. King, *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) by Savita Kalhan. An intersectional framework of analysis is applied to interpret the journey of the main characters while taking into consideration the key concepts of adultism, children's rights, empowerment, and the relevance of the realist literary mode in conveying such concerns. Adultism constitutes the starting point of this research to uncover in the mentioned primary texts the workings of this type of discrimination in facilitating the violations of the young protagonists' rights. The analysis of the narratives aims to identify the intricacy underlying entrenched adultist beliefs and practices which might even be well-intentioned as the examples will show. By linking adultism to the violations of the young characters' rights, there is a recognition of the potential psychological, emotional, or physical threats. This is why the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child represents a crucial document in delineating young people's rights. In addition to this thematic endeavour to challenge adultism, the thesis also considers the textual elements and narrative structure in emphasising the critique of adultism. The literary techniques relevant to realism are of a great importance to this thesis to reveal the strategies employed by this mode in dispelling adultist prejudice. The subversion of adultism directs the focus to the eventual empowerment of the young protagonists as they surmount the confronted obstacles. An analysis of representations of adulthood with regards to the part performed in

the journey of the main characters in the primary texts is necessary to the understanding of youth empowerment. An examination of the development of the storylines across the four novels is also essential to reveal how the plot contributes to the disruption of the status quo that is built on binary opposition between the adult and the young person.

Aims of the research project

- To problematise children's rights discourse through the integration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to the framework of analysis of young adult literature
- To produce critical readings of a selection of recently published realist young adult fiction novels relying on a child's rights approach to textual analysis
- To reveal the textual strategies and narrative techniques of the realist literary mode in denouncing social hierarchies based on age
- To identify contemporary representations of young adulthood with regard to adultism and empowerment and in relation to adult characters in the chosen narratives

Research questions

To achieve the established aims, the thesis responds to the following research question that further define its parameters:

- How does realism contribute in challenging adultist beliefs and actions against the young characters?
- What are the challenges and convolutions portrayed in the primary texts that hinder the implementation of children's rights in different contexts?

- Do the novels acknowledge the prevalence of adultism as a key factor facilitating the violations of the young characters' rights?
- How is the lived experience of young adult characters shaped by adultism? Do the novels emphasise any ensuing negative impacts on the health, development, and well-being of the protagonists?
- Do the young protagonists undergo a change through the unfolding of their stories or are they represented in the same way from beginning to end?
- How do the depictions of young adulthood contribute to dispelling adultism?
- Do the chosen primary texts transcend the adult-child binary oppositions? If so, how?

Methodology

From Adultism to Youth Empowerment: Children's Rights in Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction is a study in two parts. The first part is divided into four chapters and is concerned with adultism and children's rights violations. The second part comprises two chapters with the focus on youth empowerment. This thesis follows a rights-based approach to textual analysis in accordance with Michelle Superle's Child-Centred Approach (CCA) 2016. Thereby, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) constitutes a pivotal point of reference to this thesis. However, the convention, its phrasings, and implementation are still interrogated throughout this work. This thesis relies on the convention primarily in the chapter division of the first part which addresses implementations of the main principles summarising children's rights. Accordingly, the first chapter focuses on violations of children's rights in the primary texts with regard to the principle of *non-discrimination*. Chapter two addresses violations of the protagonists' rights to *survival and development*. Chapter three is concerned with *the best interest of the child*.

For the fourth chapter, the principle under discussion is about the rights to *participate and to be heard*. In these four first chapters, I address the tensions arising in the translation of this document from law into practice between different rights such as between protection and participation. The implementation of the convention is further complicated through the integration of nuanced views on how intersections of adultism and other systems of inequality interfere in facilitating the violations of the young protagonists' rights.

The readings across the four chapters attest to the close link interrelating the four principles of the convention whereby the infringement of one principle is likely to lead to the infringement of another one if not all of them. For instance, the violation of young characters' right to *participation* is in itself an act of *discrimination* based on the young age. This adultist discrimination could impede the *development* of the characters, an outcome that is by no means in favour of ensuring their *best interests*. Considering this interconnectedness between the four principles, it is necessary to address some of the same plot points from the primary texts in more than one chapter, but each time from different perspective depending on the principle covered within the chapter. For this reason, the rape of Jay from *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018), for example, is discussed both in the first chapter and the second one. However, whereas the former chapter considers the intersecting sexist and adultist motivations and textual elements within the events prior to and leading to the rape, the second chapter pinpoints the detrimental impacts emphasised in the aftermath of this incident on the protagonist's health and wellbeing. Rather than using different primary texts for each chapter, the choice to examine the same novels across the four chapters is deliberately made to denote the interconnectedness between the four principles as well as between their violations. Hence, while the two first chapters discuss the plot point of Jay's rape, the perspectives, the research questions, the objectives, and the

interpretations, as well as the conclusions in each section are different, although complementary.

As the title indicates, the second part of this thesis gradually moves its focus from adultism towards the empowerment of the protagonists. Identifying concepts like adultification and role reversals between young characters and their parents, the fifth chapter reveals the shift in power dynamics from adults to young people within the scope of intergenerational conflicts. This chapter enriches the thesis by analysing the characterisation of the adults in the novels according to the roles they perform in the journeys of the protagonists. The sixth and last chapter acknowledges the empowerment of the protagonists manifested in their interactions, attitudes, or achievements. The subtitles in this final chapter denote a similarity recognized in the development of the plots across the four primary texts as the main characters move from youth subordination to an epiphanic stage, so that they eventually reach youth empowerment.

This thesis integrates mimetic and semiotic approaches to character analysis to offer a wider scope of interpretation. Indeed, while both approaches are relevant for children's literature, Maria Nikolajeva warns against the reliance on a single perception of literary characters as either real people or mere textual entities to avoid limiting the understanding (*The Rhetoric of Character* 15-17). The mimetic approach is especially relevant to this thesis considering that the primary texts are contemporary realist novels dealing with topics of children's rights, family life, and intergenerational relationships. References to the protagonists' ethnic origin, gender, age, and social class are of paramount importance to unravel the workings of adultism and intersecting discriminations. However, I integrate the semiotic approach by relying strictly on the novel to point out the characters' background information. The objective is to resist the problematic tendency – attached to the mimetic

approach as acknowledged by Nikolajeva (*The Rhetoric of Character* 15) – of attributing to the characters traits that the author did not intend to include. Therefore, the characters' motivations, desires, and intentions are emphasised in accordance with what is revealed within the text. Indeed, the novels under discussion explicitly build links between events as the literary analysis of the extracts will demonstrate. There is a strong emphasis on causality throughout the narratives to suggest the detrimental consequences of adultism and violations of different children's rights. The sayings and actions of the characters are revelatory on their own and there is no need to construct features from outside the text to pinpoint certain ideas. References to child psychology only consolidate the understanding of what is already acknowledged within the texts whether through verbal exchanges between the characters, internal monologues, or realist descriptions of the quotidian.

Identification of Key Concepts

Realist young adult literature, adultism, intersectionality, and empowerment are defining aspects of this thesis. Therefore, it is crucial to explain the ways in which these concepts are used throughout the chapters.

Young Adult

There is a considerable disagreement around the delineation of the periods of childhood and adolescence. Desmond Manderson goes as far as to suggest that the length of childhood is increasingly extending through time. He therefore argues that childhood could easily last until the age of forty years old (Manderson 103). Manderson's view is inclusive because it recognises that childhood is not a predetermined and a straightforward process that happens in the same manner for everyone. As will this thesis help to pinpoint through the examples of the chosen narratives, young people have different experiences and go through

different life lessons. Each one of them develops a specific set of skills and capacities at a particular time of their life according to their own needs.

Because the United Nation's convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC henceforth) constitutes an important point of reference to this thesis as will be explained in the following pages, I will refer to its definition of childhood so that the chosen young characters will be right holders. This document knows as a child "every human being below the age of eighteen years" (*UNCRC* 2). Accordingly, the rights under the convention are applicable to young people of this age category. However, this thesis is not concerned with childhood per se, but specifically young adulthood in relation to the YA fiction under study. The differentiation between childhood, adolescence, and youth poses yet another conundrum. Walter R. Heinz argues that: "the timing and duration of transitions between childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and old age are less age-dependent" (4). Considering this intricacy, in this thesis I will be using the term *young person/people* or *young adult* consistently to refer to the characters under discussion. The protagonists of the selected narratives are aged between fifteen and seventeen years old and could therefore easily fall into the category of age between twelve and eighteen years old which is approximately the age that is most agreed upon as young adulthood amongst researchers (Nilsen and Donelson 1-3; Bacon 30).

Young Adult Literature

Young Adult Literature (YAL henceforth) is identified by different researchers in accordance with two primary aspects: the age category of its readership and the topics addressed. As noted in the previous section, the age of young adults, and thus that of the YAL's intended audience (note that adults constitute more than half of the readership for various reasons

(Kitchener n.p.)), can only be generally estimated between twelve and eighteen years old (Beyer 6; Bacon 30). Rachel Falconer extends the age of these readers to nineteen years old by linking it to that of the protagonists as she points out that the two are typically around the same age (90). Thomas W. Bean and Karen Moni believe that the implied reader can also reach twenty years old (638). It is different from children's literature which is destined for an audience younger than twelve years old (Beyer 2; Nilsen and Donelson 3). For the topics treated in YAL, researchers pinpoint social ills (Bean and Moni 638) and even subjects previously viewed as taboo (Kidd 120). Examples from the chosen narratives for this thesis include murders, rape, drug dealings and addiction. Besides these two main aspects, the first-person narrative voice of the protagonist is also considered to be a determinate factor in the categorisation of these stories (Falconer 90). While this thesis attests to the prevalence of this point of view and its advantages, one out of four of the texts under study relies on an omniscient narrator. There are various classifications of YAL such as fantasy, supernatural, and realism. The latter constitutes the focus of this thesis.

Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction

Besides the first-person narration of the young protagonist and the controversial subjects treated in the novels, Catherine Sheldrick Ross adds to the list "realistic contemporary settings" to define realist YAL (174). The settings of the selected narratives are realistic in the sense that the stories happen in recognisable cities such as New York for *The Sun Is also a Star*, Philadelphia for *Still Life with Tornado*, and London for *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*. Whereas the setting of *The Hate U Give* – the lower-class urban neighbourhood of Garden Heights and the wealthier suburbs where the protagonist's school is located – is a fictional place, it is still realistic in the sense that it does not include any strange or supernatural

elements. Besides, there is a direct reference suggesting that the story takes place in the United States when the protagonist's father Maverick Carter mentions "corporate America" (Thomas 168). Additionally, these stories continuously refer to familiar and well-known people, events, and places such as Tupac, Drake (Thomas 17, 21), and "The slave rebellion of 1831" (Thomas 167). Jacqueline Bach and others label similar realist YAL "life-based literary narratives" (LBLN) (199). I include contemporary realist YA fiction in the title because the chosen novels not only portray the above characteristics, but as four publications of the last ten years (2016-2018), there are multiple references to present-day lifestyle such as the reliance on social media in *The Hate U Give*.

This thesis opts for realist YAL specifically to examine issues of adultism throughout journeys of young people in recognisable settings such as at home or at school. Unlike fantasy novels for instance, realist YA narratives do not remove the protagonists from their everyday environment and do not take them on adventures far away from their parents, families, or teachers. This thesis seeks to uncover ambiguities in the implementation of children's rights in places where these rights are applicable and among adults who can be held accountable for breaching these rights instead of ruthless monsters in parallel worlds where there are no rules. Hence, the protagonists in realist YAL are often challenged as well as empowered amidst adult relatives and non-relatives. These characters essentially face individual difficulties and violations of their own freedoms and liberties compared to non-realist novels where there is typically a danger facing the entire society. The interest here is in the individual empowerment of the young adult character. This is important to this thesis because protagonists of realist YAL have the potential to deconstruct different adultist beliefs about young people and assert their roles as family members and community members by fighting for their basic rights as will be noted in this thesis.

Another important criterion leading to the selection of realist novels for this research project is to expand the engagement with this literary mode and the strategies it offers to address young people's experiences with power struggles, a concern which has been predominantly focused on examinations of dystopic fiction, but rarely realist YAL (Grzegorczyk and Mendlesohn 2). For this reason, the research aims of this thesis include a textual analysis of the literary characteristics and devices offered by this mode and the role they perform in denouncing adultism. The exploration of the resourcefulness of realism in engaging with temporality, focalization, and intertextuality to consolidate the denunciation of age-based hierarchies and to challenge youth oppression represent a major research concern. The readings of the primary texts will then pay a close attention to the potential offered by realist elements – ranging from the exploration of detailed descriptions of the mundane, and elaborate psychological characterisation to attention to detail, and conversational tones – in unfolding the workings of adultism in specific social contexts. First, the exploration of the characters' everyday lives in relaxed environments is likely to offer an insight into intergenerational relationships and various exchanges between the young protagonists and different adults to analyse the implementation of– or violation of children's rights. Realism's focus on characterisation and psychology is also a crucial factor which could allow for the investigation of the motives behind the violations of specific rights such as linking emotional abuse to protectionism in *Still Life with Tornado*. The themes and settings of realist narratives are significant as well because they are typically concerned with family life and contemporary social issues which are very pertinent to this thesis. Other notable elements of this literary mode that will be looked into throughout the analysis include attention to detail, spontaneous dialogues, and use of slang. All of these literary features help tremendously in capturing the different struggles that young protagonists continuously

endure throughout their journeys from adultism to empowerment thus preventing them from enjoying their liberties.

Adultism

Adultism consists of discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, and treatments of young people. Adam Fletcher asserts that adultism occurs whenever there is favouritism towards adults. He further explains that:

> When decisions are made based solely on age rather than ability, that is discrimination. Language that excludes, belittles, or talks down to youth is discrimination. Laws used to punish people because of their age are discriminatory. Any behaviour or attitude that is routinely biased against young people simply because they are young is discrimination" (Fletcher 14).

The readings of the primary texts as will be seen in the following chapters demonstrate several of these discriminatory behaviours while relating them to children's rights violations. This thesis consolidates Thomas F. Tate and Randall L. Copas' view that the adult's outlook on children, either positive or adultist, determines the relationship to be maintained with young people. This outlook also either guarantees or deprives the latter of a nurturing environment (Tate and Copas 41). Based on these definitions and other studies explored throughout the work, all attitudes, actions, and expressions discriminating against young people, their needs, creations, capabilities, opinions, and accomplishments because of their age are considered as adultism. Jamie Gorman points out that young people cannot escape subordination in a society dominated by adultist beliefs and practices (14). Recognising the

risk for all young people, Nikolas Mattheis calls for the need to consider adultism as a common threat because it does not help to consider childhood as a safe space where only a few are excluded (519). It is in this sense that the readings of the four YA novels in this thesis seek to identify multiple and differing practices of adultism in various settings. To do so, the application of an intersectional framework is crucial to emphasise how the other systems of oppression interact with adultism on individual, familial, and structural levels.

Intersectionality

This thesis builds on Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's work on intersectionality which established a breakaway from approaches that firmly distinguish between identity markers like race and gender as independent matters of concern. Crenshaw primarily introduced intersectionality to develop "Black feminist criticism" integrating both feminism and antiracism which fail in isolation to consider the experiences of women who endure both racist and sexist discriminations simultaneously ("Demarginalizing" 139). The scholar explains that the "focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination" ("Demarginalizing 140). Therefore, Crenshaw's proposition addresses the previously overlooked experiences interrelating mutually reinforcing discriminatory intersections. This thesis extends this framework to the examination of young people's rights in realist YAL. Accordingly, this concept is incorporated in this research to debunk homogeneous understandings of childhood as well as to resist single-axis analysis of adultism. In doing so, this thesis aims to acknowledge the unique lived experience of each one of the young characters depending on their overlapping identity markers and how these operate in conjunction with systems of power and privilege. Intersectionality is particularly

useful in this regard because it reveals the multiple ways in which the interaction of different variables, of race, class, and gender for instance, are likely to impact young people's experience with adultism (McClellan). This endeavour is therefore inclusive considering that it resists the marginalisation of the experience of young characters who are burdened with double or multiple oppressions in addition to adultism. Examples from the narratives under study include Sarah from *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) who is dealing with sexism and adultism, Khalil from *The Hate U Give* (2017) as a victim of racism, adultism, in addition to classism, or Natasha from *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) who is confronted with adultism, racism, sexism, and classism all at once. However, as Devon W. Carbado and others point out, all applications of intersectionality remain tentative and incomplete as there is always room for further experimenting with the concept due to the constant need to limit the research to specific variables of power and privilege (304). This is also true of this thesis because it does not address the interplay between adultism and ableism or religious intolerance, for instance. Therefore, further engagements with intersectionality are always recommended to bring new insights and consider more dimensions.

It is necessary to explain how this thesis integrates intersectionality in its interpretation of the primary texts to acknowledge how this concept contributes to the overall research objective. Sumi Cho and others identify three types of engagement with the concept of intersectionality: a lens of investigation, interrogations of intersectionality as a theory and a methodology, and political interventions using an intersectional perspective (785). The first one of these, intersectionality as an analytical framework, constitutes a central element to this thesis in the reading of the four realist young adult novels. This is an efficient tool particularly because it allows a discussion of the workings of multi-faceted discrimination in hindering each of the young characters from enjoying different rights and

liberties. While adultism is a shared struggle among all the characters under study, this thesis' reflection on the interlocking systems of inequality in the four YA novels, using intersectionality, pinpoints nuanced views on how each young protagonist's journey is differently shaped or constrained. Jamie Gorman attests to the significance of intersectionality in the contextualisation of adultism amidst other systems of power and privilege. The scholar emphasises the advantage of this framework in considering at once "intra-generational justice (the full realisation of human rights and justice for all alive today) in addition to intergenerational equity (the realisation of rights and justice for future generations)" (Gorman 14). This idea of intergenerational and intragenerational is crucial because of the perpetuation of discriminatory stereotypes. Therefore, the application of intersectionality in this thesis is crucial to uncover how racism, classism, sexism, interact with adultism to create individual, familial, and structural aspects of violations of young characters' rights. The inherent intersecting identities of each young character must be identified while dealing with adultism to come up with unifying solutions that benefit all young people regardless of their differences.

Empowerment

As the title of this thesis indicates, the analysis of the primary texts starts with adultism as the focus of the first part and only addresses youth empowerment by the second part. This progression is meant to move in line with the plots of the fictional stories which feature young protagonists forced into subordination at first and who gradually reclaim their rights. Therefore, empowerment in this thesis designates the young protagonists' resistance in the face of adultist beliefs, attitudes, and practices. It is hereby used to refer to the lead characters' acts of defiance and resurgence to strive for the acquirement of their rights after they have been violated, although this does not occur without complications. Jessica

Seymour relates the interpretation of power in YAL to characters' agency (27). The scholar particularly distinguishes between the agency of adult characters and that of the young protagonists who express agency though a meaningful engagement with power hierarchies as they resist the adult norms and restrictions. The adult agency on the other hand, consists of the tendency to control and force the younger characters into subordination (208-210). Whereas Seymour's analysis considers fantastic YA fiction, this thesis identifies three types of adult characters' expression of agency specifically in realist YAL. Adding to Seymour's point that adults express agency by suppressing that of the young protagonists, the fifth chapter pinpoints that other adult characters play a rather positive role in the protagonists' journeys. This thesis also recognises a third type of adult agency that changes throughout the course of narrative from suppressing youth agency, to promoting it.

In line with the third interpretation of adult agency as a dynamic factor, Tanu Biswas acknowledges that there is no clearcut categorisation of beings as exclusively equipped with active qualities such as rationality, competency, and autonomy, and others who are rather burdened by strictly negative characteristics like passivity, incompetence, and vulnerability. Biswas affirms that "These qualities are present simultaneously and are emphasised depending on our given facticity, e.g., where, when and concerning/with whom we are doing something regardless of our chronological age" (348). This argument refutes the adultist distinction between adults and young people with regards to agency. Indeed, Biswas further contests adultist considerations of child agency in her assertion that "children and adults necessarily co-determine each other" (348). This viewpoint challenges age-based social hierarchies that deprive young people of active qualities and of any sense of power. Another study examining agency and empowerment in adolescents points out empowerment as a multidimensional concept capturing both internal and external characteristics to agency.

Whereas the internal qualities emanate from the individual's capabilities, the external factors depend upon the surrounding environment and the opportunities presented (Zimmerman et al. 1). In the case of young people, the external qualities of agency fuelled by adultist beliefs and practices restrict youth empowerment by suppressing youth agency. Grace Spencer and Marion Doull attest to the intricacy of the social position of young people in complicating the understanding of youth power and agency (907). In fact, their article specifically emphasises the theoretical position of researchers in youth studies literatures as producers of meaning in determining the validity of youth agency or the absence thereof (Spencer and Doull 909). While the approach of the two scholars recognises young people as *powerful agents* (Spencer and Doull 909), the conclusiveness of the perspective of researchers in creating opportunities for potential expressions of power by young people and thereafter legitimating youth agency uncovers the vulnerable stance of young people.

The readings in this thesis attest to these limitations of youth empowerment as the first part reveals the constraints that are posed by the violations of children's rights. Additionally, the fifth and sixth chapters emphasise the necessary collaboration between the young protagonists and the adult relatives or nonrelatives in their lives to reach their goals. Amber Moore notes that children's literature and YAL are central platforms for the depiction of various examples of issues relating to adultism on the one hand and empowerment on the other (162). Indeed, this thesis attests to YAL's significance in this regard by pinpointing the thorough integration of intersectional challenges facing young people along with the latter's counteractions and advocation for their rights. The sixth and last chapter of this thesis identifies various instances of youth empowerment demonstrated in private thoughts, verbal exchanges with other young and adult characters, or actions. These examples show

the eagerness of young people to be liberated from adultist discrimination, youth control, and subordination.

The Review of the Literature

This thesis engages with the ongoing debate around children's literature criticism about notions of childhood and intergenerational relationships. This section of the introduction reviews the important works published in this regard to outline the recent developments in the field, to situate my work within the literature, as well as to differentiate it from previous studies. The order followed for this purpose is topical starting with adultism. Considering the significant social aspect of this issue, I rely on the works of experts in the fields of psychotherapy, youth activism, and childhood studies, namely Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Adam Fletcher, and John Wall respectively, to engage with the topic thoroughly. I pinpoint connections and disagreements in the works of the different researchers such as Wall's opposition to Young-Bruehl's terminology with reference to childism. Then, the focus shifts towards the works of scholars in children's literary criticism addressing adultism in children's stories. It is revealed that the works analysed in this respect are mostly children's stories. This thesis contributes to this field by extending the analysis of adultism to contemporary realist YAL. Moreover, my thesis further complicates adultism through a critical engagement with children's rights.

A central study in the topic of adultism is Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's book *Childism: Confronting Prejudice Against Children* (2012). Young-Bruehl believes that understanding adultism is crucial to the identification of harmful attitudes against young people (*Childism* 7). She suggests that the focus of child advocacy on abusive acts such as child exploitation or pornography should be shifted towards the even bigger threat rationalising these

behaviours: adultist beliefs (*Childism* 18). Young-Bruehl elucidates her ideas by referring to case studies, particularly the psychoanalysis of a young woman referred to as Anna, who was a victim of sexual abuse and neglect as a child. In so doing, the author emphasises the importance of the minority-centric perspective – in this case the viewpoint of victims of adultism – to shed light on the blatant as well as the hidden expressions of adultism. This idea is relevant to my work because the first-person narrative voice in the selected contemporary realist young adult novels illustrates the standpoint of the character victims of this prejudice. Indeed, looking at children's rights' violations from the perspective of the concerned target group is necessary to understand the implications of such acts and how to prevent them. The first-hand experiences with adultist treatments communicate the thoughts and emotions of characters such as Daniel and Sarah – protagonists of *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) and *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) respectively – when confronted with adultism, thus revealing how parents, for instance, might hurt their children all the while having their best interests in mind. The readings in this thesis point out the prevalence of adultism by acknowledging that even well-meaning caregivers are sometimes guilty of this prejudice to various degrees. As Young-Bruehl explains by comparing adultism to other forms of prejudice like sexism and racism: "prejudices are inherently self-justifying" (*Childism* 22). Accordingly, my thesis interrogates adultism as a belief system by showing that discriminations against the young characters in question are but social constructions portraying them as rebellious or inapt… which then justifies the violations of their rights. For example, in *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), Sarah's father justifies the physical abuse of his son Bruce by seeing him as a disobedient adolescent in need of discipline. In *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), at seventeen years old Daniel is considered incapable of making decisions concerning his future career, which justifies his father's violation of his right to speak or

participate in matters directly affecting his life. Moreover, Young-Bruehl's background in psychotherapy provides cogent arguments indicating the short- as well as the long-term impacts of adultism on its victims. For this reason, throughout my readings of the primary texts, I bridge between adultism and the violations of the young characters' rights to emphasise how the former paves the way for youth maltreatment.

Still on the topic of adultism, another notable researcher whose work is crucial to my thesis in this sense is Adam Fletcher thanks to his recent publication *Facing Adultism* (2015). Giving many examples, this book sheds light on the issue of adultism, the way it happens and its implications. It also proposes an action plan to fight it. Fletcher recognises adultism as the overriding challenge that all young people endure and are likely to pass onto future generations as they grow up. Moreover, he believes that this prejudice against young people provides a fertile ground for other discriminations to occur (20). For these reasons, he calls for the need to understand this type of prejudice as a first step to help prevent it. This is a useful source for my thesis because it facilitates the identification of adultist attitudes and actions in the primary texts that are embedded in relationships between young people and other adult characters whether they are parents, family members, teachers, police officers, or even the media. More specifically, Fletcher's detailed examples and designation of particular cases – such as protectionism or demonisation – provides depth of study to the analysis through the differentiation between various prejudiced behaviours.

It is important to pinpoint the different references to the concept of adultism as used by different scholars and address the ensuing disagreements in this respect. John Wall, for one, finds Young-Bruehl's use of the term *childism* instead of adultism misleading. He argues in "From childhood studies to childism" (2019) that while there is no need for an additional synonym to prejudice against young people, it would be more fitting to reserve the term

childism for the movement aiming to disrupt this discrimination such as he does (7). For this reason, he refers to Young-Bruehl's use of the term as the *deficit concept of childism*, which he condemns for potentially furthering youth subjugation such as would the concept of feminism if it only indicated sexism rather than women's empowerment (7). Accordingly, Wall instigates a critical lens labelled childism rooted in childhood studies to challenge adultist beliefs and behaviours. Other words used interchangeably with adultism are youthism (Wagland 74), ageism and patriarchalism (Wall 7). In addition, Fletcher identifies other terminologies describing specific discriminations that are closely related to adultism like *adultcentrism*, *adultisation*, *adultocracy*, *demonisation*, *ephebiphobia*, *infantilisation*, *paternalism*, *pediaphobia*, and *protectionism* (7-9). The latter concepts are grounded in prejudice against young people but characterise precise tendencies as ephebiphobia for example is defined by "the fear of youth" (Fletcher 8). There will be references to many of these concepts where relevant throughout my thesis in the analysis of the primary texts to instantiate their workings in specific social contexts. However, it is hereby acknowledged that I will be consistent in my use of the word adultism throughout this thesis to refer to the discriminatory belief system targeting young people to avoid any confusion that might arise.

Looking at how researchers in the field of children's literature and YAL have dealt with the topic of adultism is crucial for my thesis because it helps to gain a deeper understanding of the issue, to reinforce my arguments as well as to delineate the gaps in the current literature. Marah Gubar's *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (2009) is a notable work in this sense advocating a new perception of Victorian childhood narratives. This work offers a rereading of famous stories published throughout the period – extending from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century such as *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Peter Pan* (1911) – that she describes as "the Golden Age" of

children's literature. In an attempt to revisit the perception of the "innocent" Victorian child, Gubar writes: "To find the real artful dodgers of the Victorian period, then, we must turn to children's literature, a genre that celebrates the canny resourcefulness of child characters without claiming that they enjoy unlimited power and autonomy" (*Artful Dodgers* 5). Gubar's interpretation identifies the vitality of children and their input, depicting them as dynamic participators instead of their preceding placement on the receiving end of adult actions. Indeed, her work resists Jaqueline Rose's ideas about the *impossibility of children's fiction* and the adult colonisation of the child manifested in these texts (1984). My thesis endorses Gubar's recognition of the power of adults together with children's resourcefulness and resilience. However, *Artful Dodgers* focuses on the child figure more explicitly than on young adults per se (as well as the Golden Age of children's literature rather than contemporary works), yet this approach is one that will be instrumental in my own reading of contemporary YAL. Gubar's "Risky Business" (2013) also constitutes an important point of reference because in it, the scholar outlines what she knows as the kinship model. It is indicated that theories building on the latter emphasise similarities between children and adults including the gradual and irregular development process they both experience. This kinship model as Gubar notes, however, does not offer a methodological framework for children's literature criticism ("Risky Business" 455). Therefore, this is where my thesis contributes to the discussion by integrating Gubar's ideas with those of other prominent children's literature critics such as Vanessa Joosen and Michelle Superle to produce an informed interpretation of four young adult texts that is grounded on an articulated methodology.

Another relevant reference is Jack Zipes' "Childism and the Grimms' Fairy Tales or How We Have Happily Rationalised Child Abuse through Storytelling" (2012). Zipes agrees

with Young-Bruehl on the identification of adultism as a prejudiced belief system generating negative stereotypes according to which young people are continually oppressed. He also admits that all adults indulge in adultist practices to greater or lesser degrees. He then moves to analyse the Grimms' fairy tales from this perspective pointing out how the stories blindly reflect discriminatory attitudes against children. Still, Zipes believes that these tales are crucial for understanding adultism and thus resists the idea of dismissing them on account of their purported unsuitability for children. On the contrary, he encourages future research to continue analysing them and producing revised retellings that question the adultist features in them in a way to pinpoint discriminatory stigmas and the injustices they might provoke. Citing examples from "Rapunzel," "Cinderella," "The Little Red Cap," "Snow White," and many more, the scholar shows how: "Despite happy endings -- and not all of these tales end happily -- and moral injunctions in the tales, none of them question the right of adults to discipline children severely according to principles that justify their arbitrary power over the young" (Zipes 6). At the end, Zipes proposes a set of guidelines for class readings of the Grimms' fairy tales that are attentive to the child's needs. Zipes' interpretations are significant and eye-opening even though he does not provide a detailed account, nor does he analyse extracts, but only briefly pinpoints the big picture paradox in several children's stories.

A narrower perspective of analysis is then offered by Vanessa Joosen through her publication of "The Adult as Foe or Friend" in 2013 where she delineates the focus of the interpretation to Guus Kuijer's works. Joosen integrates with her research on the widespread prejudice against young people, an inspection of the construction of adulthood. Just like it does for its young audience, the scholar asserts that children's literature has also a didactic material to offer adult readers besides the artistic and literary features. Hence,

examining both allies and adult antagonists, Joosen finds that these characterisations are crucial and require close analysis considering the significant roles they play in the stories whether it is helping young protagonists, or challenging them to their empowerment. Joosen's ideas and arguments are insightful particularly to the fifth chapter of my thesis where I examine the characterisation of adults in my selected primary texts to shed light on concepts such as adultification and the continuation of the maturation process throughout adulthood. Therefore, my thesis draws inspiration from the aforementioned interpretations and extends readings of children's literature from the perspective of adultism to four contemporary YA narratives. Moreover, my work differs from that of Joosen and Zipes in my use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC henceforth) at the core of my analysis.

The UNCRC allows for the identification of specific examples in the primary texts of harmful adultist attitudes towards young characters resulting in the violations of their rights in accordance with the articles of the treaty. In this respect, I rely on Michelle Superle's model of the empowered child devised in "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: At the Core of a Child-Centered Critical Approach to Children's Literature" (2016). Superle's child-centred approach (CCA henceforth) is useful because it outlines a critical framework that can potentially reform children's literature criticism by offering "a concrete next step that can be widely implemented" (149). Instead of exclusively using textual analysis, Superle suggests placing the UNCRC at the core of the framework. Superle's article starts with an introduction of the CCA, followed by an acknowledgement of the foundational works influencing the scholar's vision such as Peter Hunt's "Childist Criticism" (1984), Maria Tatar's "What Do Children Want?" (1995), Mary Galbraith's "Hear My Cry" (2001), Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's *Childism* (2012), David Rudd's "Reading the Child in Children's Literature"

(2013), and Marah Gubar's "Risky Business" (2013). Recognising the significant development in children's literary criticism in this respect, Superle explains; however, that the field could use a unified methodology specifically designed for children's literature which the CCA seeks to offer. She then moves to introduce the key aspects of her model. Primarily, the purpose behind this child-centred approach is to disrupt adultism. Therefore, in addition to the potential of children's literature to reflect and influence social behaviour patterns, the CCA holds that it can also empower young people. Superle advises that future implementations of her model should look at power relations as well as collaborations between young people and adults, and carefully examine stories that depict young characters with authentic voices and agency. However, the scholar admits not having developed concrete steps for the application of this child-centred approach other than the adoption of the UNCRC at its core. Superle then proceeds in the following part of her article with a case study of *The Goats* (1987) by Brock Cole from the perspective of adultism and participation rights to illustrate the CCA in practice. Lastly, Superle concludes her paper with an assessment of the pros and cons of relying on the UNCRC as the anchor of a child-centred approach to prove that this is a crucial step offering an informed scope of analysis specifically devised for children's literary criticism.

The UNCRC (1989) symbolises a crucial reference to my thesis simply because there is no other document that best articulates children's rights in a more comprehensive way than it does, not to mention its ratification by 196 countries. It presents guidance for further inquiry by promoting a thorough focus on child empowerment in the upcoming research. In this sense, additional studies are required to better understand the key tenets of children's literature from this perspective. Accordingly, my thesis follows a rights-based approach by establishing a rapport between adultist beliefs and violations of children's rights as described

in the studied works of fiction. In doing so, my readings problematise children's rights discourse by addressing examples of the UNCRC's ambiguous phrasings – such as giving children's views "due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (5; article 12) – which can be manipulated to put young people at a disadvantage. For this reason, it is argued that the selected YA texts offer a space to contextualise children's rights and their violations in a way that empowers young people to claim their liberties and exercise them. There is also an engagement in debates about the consensus around the treaty and how it operates from international agreement to national law while taking into consideration cultural relativism especially pertaining to the Indian and Korean cultures. Thereby, different layers of the incorporation of the convention are examined – the structural, local, and individual levels.

The four novels offer a wide scope of analysis considering that the social contexts covered include individual, familial, and institutional levels while also bringing into attention different historical, cultural, and national-specific contexts. Therefore, the antagonistic adults depicted perform the roles of a parent, a cousin, an aunt, a teacher, or a police officer and the confronted obstacles raise important issues relevant to the slave rebellion of 1831 for instance or to Indian cultural values, or Korean parenting. The discussion addresses the impacts of adultism leading to *blatant violations* like physical acts of abuse as well as *milder* forms which are mistakenly thought to serve the best interest of the child but are no less damaging. An important secondary source in this regard is Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham's *Human Rights in Children's Literature: Imagination and the Narrative of Law* (2016). In it, the two authors attempt to bridge the gaps between children's law and literature, human rights' theory, education and research. Todres and Higinbotham draw attention to the importance of invigorating children's fiction with children's recognised

rights to kindle their own sense of self-worth from an early age. In Todres' words: "a *story* incorporating human rights themes is much more likely to have an impact on a child reader than a legal decision or statute would" (XVI). The purpose here is to make youngsters fluently aware of their full potential as human beings despite their age restrictions to encourage them to perform a conscious role and engage actively within their respective communities all over the world. For this reason, the two authors sought to cover a variety of children's rights held by international verdict by devoting an entire chapter for each covered constitutional right such as the rights to participation, equality, identity, and well-being. In doing so, they emphasise the implication of spreading knowledge about these statutory rights and the rewards this awareness will bring. My thesis draws from this book the incorporation of human rights and law within literary research, and further extends the focus to contemporary realist YAL. Taking from Todres and Higinbotham's chapter division, I will devote – for part one of my thesis – a chapter for each of the four principles of the UNCRC. This results in four chapters intersecting adultism first with non-discrimination, second with the right to life, survival and development, then with the best interests of the child, and lastly with participatory rights. The purpose behind this integration is to reveal how the prejudice against young people deprives them of their respective rights.

An engaging integration of children's rights with research on this prejudice against young people within children's literature criticism is introduced in 2019 with Susan Honeyman's publication of *Perils of Protection*. As the title indicates, this book reflects on the detrimental implications of adult protectionism by drawing on cultural and legal studies. Accordingly, the scholar links the containment and isolation of childhood directly to the discourse of childhood innocence. Essentially, Honeyman's work calls for the recognition of children's participatory rights and dismissing the idea of protectionism which only justifies

controlling minors even when it is assumed to serve their best interest. Indeed, the author acknowledges that childhood protection depends greatly on the inclusion of children. Thus, it is believed that protection rights cannot be implemented without the engagement of children (Honeyman 3). For this reason, Honeyman rejects the notion of the nuclear family in view of the injustices it causes to young people such as abuse and neglect when adults refuse the idea of divorce supposedly in the best interest of the children (184). This is a crucial read for my analysis considering that the primary texts portray antagonistic adults cast in the roles of caregivers, mainly the parents. This book proves useful specifically in the second chapter – where my reading of one of the YA novels emphasises how protectionism infringes upon the child's right to development, thus leading to psychological abuse and mental health problems – and the fourth chapter – demarcating the counterproductive effects of protectionism on young people's rights to participate and be heard. However, my thesis moves beyond the examination of protection, its origin and consequences to identify in the second part of my thesis how the selected primary texts celebrate youth empowerment by dispelling the adultist perception of young people as passive and vulnerable subjects.

This review traced the prominent developments achieved in recent years in the field of children's literary criticism with regard to the topic of adultism relevant to my work from Gubar's kinship model (2009) to Susan Honeyman's interrogation of protectionism (2019). Building on these scholars' findings, further research is needed to address knowledge gaps such as the focus on young adult's experiences with adultism in YAL. Young people from twelve to eighteen years old are also protected by the UNCRC as rights' holders. Therefore, it is important to investigate to what extent adultism hinders young adults from enjoying the exercise of their rights and liberties freely in these narratives. My thesis not only moves

beyond children's literature to YAL, but it also relates adultism, children's rights' violations, and youth subordination to empowerment. First, adultist beliefs and practices are identified at the familial, structural, and national levels with an emphasis on the perspective of the target group of this discrimination. In doing so, I problematise children's rights' discourse by pointing out ambiguous phrasings in the UNCRC that can be manipulated to the child's disadvantage, as well as addressing obstacles in the implementation of this document. Furthermore, my interpretation of the chosen YA primary texts foregrounds the perspective of the target group of adultism and their thoughts, reactions, and counteracts. This emphasis on the experiences of young people is also useful to address their empowerment despite the challenges encountered. Additionally, this thesis does not overlook the construction of adulthood in these texts, the examination of which allows to distinguish between different manifestations of adultism – blatant physical abuse and protectionism for instance – and to consider whether these differences are equally threatening for the health and wellbeing of young people.

Rationale and Summary of the primary texts

A selection of contemporary realist YAL presents the primary source of investigation for this thesis for the purpose of uncovering limitations to the implementation of children's rights violations specifically with regards to older child characters and their experiences with adultism. The selected fictional protagonists, named Daniel, Natasha, Sarah, Starr, and Jay, are all aged between fifteen and seventeen years old. The age category of these main characters is important to this research because of the paradox it presents being midway between childhood and adulthood. Even though the UNCRC considers all young people under eighteen as children, the experience of in-betweenness creates conflicting societal

demands (Garnow 5). The stories of the protagonists under discussion strongly demonstrate this ambiguity. This thesis seeks to emphasise this prevailing issue by pinpointing the crucial role that YA fiction plays to show how different young characters' rights are violated at the hands of the adults in their lives because of this paradox.

The main criterion in the selection of the primary texts is to gather a complementary set of YA novels that would together cover violations of the four principles of the UNCRC – non-discrimination; life, survival, and development; best interest; as well as participation. It is also important to this research that each text deals with more than one principle so as to allow a comparison between the literary representations of intersections of adultism with each principle from different narratives as well as to emphasise the complementary asset of the principles and attest to the prevalence of violations of different rights in the lives of the characters. The chosen narratives offer a rich scope of analysis as each one succeeds in portraying various examples of infringements of the four principles proving the pervasiveness of adultism.

The settings of the selected narratives depict adultist behaviours and children's rights violations in the Global North, specifically in the United States and the United Kingdom. Whereas one might question this choice at a time when grave infringements of children's rights occur in the Global South, this thesis seeks to acknowledge that adultism is a *worldwide* dilemma and not restrictive to less economically developed countries. Indeed, Sabine Balk recognises that the rights of children and young people in wealthier and more powerful regions of the world are not being respected either with the example of Germany where violations of children's rights are rather prevalent (n.p.). These violations are caused by adultism, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, which is an entrenched belief system presenting a common struggle for children and young people all over the world and

threatening their wellbeing. Kiaras Gharabaghi and Ben Anderson-Nathe also note that the continuous infringement of child rights is not a matter of poverty or underdevelopment. They admit that it is a mistake to assume that this is an issue related to the Global South when European countries along with the United States particularly are also guilty of the same issue. (Gharabaghi and Anderson-Nathe 1). The two scholars focus on *governmental harming practices* against young people citing the recent example of children-parents separation under the Trump administration to establish the U.S.-Mexico border (Gharabaghi and Anderson-Nathe 1-2). However, the interest of this thesis is rather on individual cases of child rights and their violations such as within the immediate family. Whereas government maltreatment of young people is a serious issue that requires to be remediated, personal examples such as the ones depicted in the selected primary texts also need to be emphasised. These stories often portray everyday examples of equally harmful child rights violations that happen at the hands of adult relatives or non-relatives but are hidden from the public attention. Therefore, this thesis aims to signal individual cases which often take place in privacy. This is important because such examples signal detrimental adultist practices and blatantly violated child rights while using various pretexts like resorting to violence as a means of discipline or referring to cultural relativism to control and manipulate children.

While the settings of the chosen YA narratives take place in economically advantaged countries, namely the United Kingdom and the United States, the stories and characters provide a multicultural scope of analysis by bringing into discussion diverse cultures and nationalities. The five protagonists under discussion come from different social and ethnic backgrounds: Daniel is a second generational Korean immigrant living in New York; Natasha is an illegal Jamaican immigrant in New York; Sarah is American; Starr is African American;

and Jaya is British Indian. This diversity helps to compare and contrast the implementation of children's rights in distinctive contexts and to reveal how adultist beliefs lead to harmful practices and violations against young people. In addition, these various backgrounds portray cross-cultural influences and interactions between the Global North and the Global South with an emphasis on the vulnerability of certain groups of people in the Global North such as Natasha's experience with racism as a Jamaican girl who wears an afro instead of following the host country's beauty standard of straight hair. The hate crime and police brutality in *The Hate U Give* distinctly expose discrimination and injustice in the Global North.

Similar to the protagonists, the authors of the chosen narratives come from differing backgrounds and experience immigration in distinct ways such as Nicola Yoon moving from Jamaica to Brooklyn, then to Los Angeles (the US.), or Savita Kalhan who was born in India and brought up in the UK. The diverse ethnic and social backgrounds of the authors play an important role in informing their texts and the experiences of their protagonists. Indeed, this cultural diversity demonstrates that the experiences of young people, regardless of their origins or where they live, are tainted by adultism and children's rights violations. The story of American Sarah, born and raised in Pennsylvania, by A. S. King represents an essential part of the analysis because it brings attention to entrenched adultist beliefs in the Global North and how this leads to harmful behaviours against young people. As the only author in this selection who is still living in her place of origin, like her protagonist, King's narrative is necessary to denote that adultism is everybody's concern and not a mere product of cultural clash or hybridity. As *Still Life with Tornado* reveals, this author is a strong supporter of teenagers. Depicting the similarity between her life and that of her young protagonists in an interview with Roger Sutton, King refers to being the youngest in her family. The writer

admits that instead of the negative role that is usually forced upon young family members such as she experienced, she likes to imagine strong-willed young characters who have the potential to impart knowledge to the adults in their lives for a change (A. S. King, Amy Sarig King Talks with Roger).

American Jamaican Nicola Yoon lived in Jamaica until the age of eleven when she moved to the United States. Her female protagonist is inspired from her cultural background while that of the male protagonist is inspired from her American Korean husband as she reveals in an interview with Rich Fahle (Yoon, Nicola Yoon on "The Sun is Also a Star" at the 2016 Miami Book Fair). When asked about the issues of immigration and deportation discussed in her novel during the same interview, the author quickly dismissed the political side of things and referred to the American dream and the hopes of all Americans, immigrants or not. Yoon appears to fully embrace her American identity and to appreciate the idea that anyone can move to the US and build a nice life. As a Jamaican immigrant and a child of immigrants, she admits to being a firm believer in the American dream (Yoon, Nicola Yoon on "The Sun is Also a Star" at the 2016 Miami Book Fair). Throughout her narrative, we see the characters, the young protagonists and their adult parents, grappling with this idea of the American dream from differing perspectives.

The journeys of the fictional characters emphasise their diasporic identities between their cultures of origins and the American way of life while they navigate their hopes and dreams in the new world. As the analysis of *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) will show, Yoon pinpoints how the characters' life choices, inclinations, and overall personalities are shaped by their diasporic identities. Indeed, this novel attests to the complexity of the concept of diaspora by depicting divergent facets closely linked to it such as immigration, illegal immigration, deportation, adaptation, and hybridity. This portrayal foregrounds Stuart Hall's

understanding of the diaspora experience as heterogeneous and diverse. (Hall 235). As the thesis chapters will demonstrate, even Daniel and Charles – who are siblings sharing the same background and upbringing as second generational Korean immigrants in the US. – have completely different experiences with regards to their *cultural identities*. While Daniel dreams of becoming a poet, his father urges him to pursue a career in medicine thinking that he is protecting him from poverty (Yoon 238). Daniel's father himself immigrated to the U.S. early on and started his own haircare business after escaping the family's struggles in Korea. Natasha wants to continue her studies and life in the U.S., so she is trying to find a way to cancel her family's deportation to Jamaica (they are illegal immigrants). Her father's American dream has failed, and he is in a state of despair. This strong emphasis on the portrayal of the cultural backgrounds of the characters denoting the direct impacts on their careers and life paths throughout the storyline acknowledges the uniqueness relevant to diaspora identities. The use of collective protagonists is particularly effective for this purpose. Nikolajeva recognises the advantages of using more than one protagonist in children's literature to provide various representations with regards to gender, age, and personality ("Narrative Form" 171-172). The collective protagonists in Yoon's text promote inclusivity and portray distinct diasporic experiences.

In the case of Angie Thomas, it is through language that the author reflects her cultural background in her novel to convey the particularity of her characters. When asked about the authenticity in her writing, the author refers to the effective use of slang occasionally for a culturally true representation. Thomas specifies that the overuse of this literary device has led in the past to a deceptive depiction of Africans as unintelligent which is linked to a lack of respect for the object of representation. For this YA writer, it is reported in the *Guardian* that showing respect to both her characters and the audience is a matter of

the highest importance (T. Lewis). Indeed, this curated use of slang specifically depicts young people in a good light. Mary Bucholtz asserts that there are social meanings beyond the literal denotations attached to slang depending on how and by whom it is used. Citing examples where young people laugh at outdated uses of slang by adults, Bucholtz maintains that slang can either grant *greater-* or *lesser power* to its user (275). We can see that Thomas takes advantage of this linguistic tool to portray her young adult characters as powerful and cognizant beings who, instead of imitating adults, set their own youthful and contemporary ways of talking. Because this novel is above all a narrative against racism, moving away from standard English is a crucial step denoting a form of resistance. Indeed, slang is a key component of African American Vernacular English *AAVE* (Nathaniel Norment 75). AAVE is not only a means of rebellion through which the language of the oppressor has been acquired and transformed to become a tool of subversion, but this *hybridized language* is most importantly necessary in the bridging of gaps between different racial and cultural collectives. This occurs by shifting away from the idea that a certain language is only specific to a single race or place (Yazdiha 34). In this sense, hybridized languages such as AAVE have the potential to grant power to the oppressed as well as to unite different social groups (Yazdiha 36). This can be seen throughout *The Hate U Give* in various examples where the power of slang is used to fight back against racist speech and behaviours at times but is also used to reinterpret an interconnected community as will be discussed in the chapters.

Thomas cleverly uses language to reiterate her own experience as a diasporic individual through her protagonist Starr. Thomas communicated the challenges she faced as a minority African American student to fit in among her American university peers during a talk in 2019 entitled “The Hate U Give: Finding Your Activism, and Turning the Political into the Personal” (n.p.). Similar to her main character who lives in an impoverished African

American neighbourhood but attends school in the wealthier suburbs where she is rather an ethnic minority, the author admits continuously resorting to code switching – a linguistic practice whereby one refrains from using slang in favour of Standard English (Young et al. 56) – to avoid being negatively stereotyped while at university. This resonates with what W.E.B. Du Bois knows as *double consciousness* and defines it as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (8). This notion entails that the person is constantly considering oneself from the perspective of others in addition to one's own perception. Thomas opened up about this particular feeling recounting how she felt compelled to pay attention to how she presented herself and how careful she was of her choice of words among her American peers for fear of encouraging the racist stigmas of the angry–, the ghetto–, or the ignorant African American girl (n.p.). This led to a sense of *two-ness*, as known to Du Bois, which Thomas confesses having grappled with during her time at university because she was attempting to adjust to her new environment by becoming this different person (n.p.). Vershawn Ashanti Young and Rusty Barrett identify this code-switching tendency as a remnant of segregationist ideologies (60) as they maintain that encouraging the development of double consciousness among African American students, especially in formal settings, is a recognition of the superiority of Standard English as well as middle-class and upper-class Americans over AAVE and African Americans (Young et al. 60). Professor of linguistics Walter Edwards insists that the biggest misconception about AAVE is that it is merely broken English (n.p.). Starr's narration offers insight into this burdensome consciousness which will be seen throughout the thesis. Accordingly, Thomas uses her writing to reveal this internal struggle confronting African Americans in addition to other

detrimental impacts of racism and to bring awareness about deeply seated social issues as well as to encourage positive change.

In the case of Savita Kalhan, the author herself reveals having struggled against the strict upbringing she received as a second-generation Indian immigrant growing up in England. Kalhan recounts that first-generation Indian parents like hers refuse to recognise the changes that occurred in the Indian society over the years. For them, Kalhan reports, old Indian culture and principles must be preserved unaltered and passed on from one generation into the other. Because of that, the writer admits in an interview with Norman Geras that she had no choice but to rebel even though it was at great expense to herself. At a time when the possession of cultural and social Indian values is identified as the number one prerequisite to be part of the Indian Diaspora (Gautam 10), the unfortunate lived experience of Kalhan led her to reject this big part of her identity.

As will be seen throughout the reading of her novel, the protagonist's struggles against the strict rules of her aunt are inspired by the author's own experience. As a fictional character who is a partisan of ethnic absolutism, the aunt conveys *the myth of ethnic purity* through her strict adherence to traditional Indian ways of being. In his book on Paul Gilroy, Paul Williams reports the definition of ethnic absolutism as a worldview holding an absolute separation between ethnic groups that is by no means open for discussion to preserve ethnic purity (27-28). This divisive conception of the world leads the aunt to go as far as to deny Jay the friendship of non-Indians as will be seen throughout the analysis of the novel. In his rejection of the notion of hybridity, Gilroy contests the existence of any anterior ethnic purity preceding a cultural exchange (qtd. in Hutnyk 82). Kalhan's novel follows Gilroy's view in offering a critique of this conception by holding the aunt accountable for intersectional discrimination and violations of children's rights.

In line with the aunt's worldview and the prejudiced perceptions of her son, Kalhan explains how rape in traditional Asian communities is taboo and that a sexually abused girl is seen as *impure* (Kalhan n.p.) while introducing her book. The author seems to relate the myth of ethnic purity and the preservation of identity to hostile sexism – "negative views toward individuals who violate traditional gender roles" (Daniels and Leaper n.p.) – through the sexually abused protagonist named Jay who is rather a liberal thinker. The novel's empathetic depiction of Jay and her misfortunes caused primarily by the aunt's discriminatory beliefs and the cousin's sexist behaviour could be seen as a subversion of the disparaging view that partisans of ethnic absolutism project on liberal thinkers. Indeed, the novel attempts to refute ethnic absolutism as well as the labels attached to rape victims. The sexist and racist notions of sexual impurity and ethnic *im*purity, respectively, are in this sense paralleled to point out the stagnant mindsets of supporters of such notions. Throughout these depictions, the author is attempting to convey the struggle she herself felt with regards to cultural identity as a British citizen brought up in a conservative Indian home. Monbinder Kaur recognises this lingering issue while defining diaspora as "both a physical condition of dislocation and a postmodern intellectual notion expressing an existential loss" (Kaur 68). This interpretation reveals the inner crisis attached to diasporic identities provoking an ongoing anxiety and confusion. Jay's story emphasises the difficulty of the balancing act of identity which does not come easily for everyone (Kalhan n.p.). It was also challenging for the author herself who, after years of rejecting her culture of origin, was finally able to reconcile with her Indian heritage and willingly sought to learn about it (Geras n.p.).

It might be useful to provide hereafter a brief summary of each primary text. To establish a methodical framework for this initiative, I will refer to the chronological order of

publication of the four chosen narratives to introduce them coherently. According to this logic, the first book summary is that of Nicola Yoon's *the Sun Is Also a Star* (2016). This is the story of Natasha Kingsley and Daniel Bae, two seventeen-year-olds living in New York City. While the latter is hopeful, dreamy and optimistic, Natasha would rather follow reason, facts, and science over emotions. The entire plot consists of a one-day pivotal adventure where the journeys of the two protagonists come across as they fall in love with each other. However, the timing of their encounter is rather unfortunate because that day marks the deportation of Natasha and her family as illegal immigrants to Jamaica, their country of origin. At the same time as Natasha runs around NYC to find a solution that could prevent the expulsion, Daniel's future prospectives and career are one decision away from being completely altered. Much like Natasha's opposition to her parents' resignation to the deportation, Daniel also rebels against his parents' wishes. Besides the love story of a Korean American boy and an illegal Jamaican immigrant, this is more importantly a realist narrative dealing with complex issues of race, immigration, intergenerational conflicts, and human rights.

The second novel to be discussed is also a 2016 publication, this time written by A. S. King. *Still Life with Tornado* is a poignant story depicting the detrimental consequences of the violations of child rights at the family level and at school. Incorporating magic realism, the author articulates the impacts of emotional and physical abuse on sixteen-year-old Sarah and her older brother Bruce at the hands of their parents, Helen and Chet. Whereas the mother, Helen, is herself a victim of her husband's violence, she plays a role in the constant violation of Sarah's rights to be heard and to participate. Besides this parental abuse at home, the young girl also experiences maltreatment at school because of her teacher Miss Smith. The latter secretly throws the protagonist's art project in the bin to prevent her from

winning the show. Confronting the teacher with the truth leads to further psychological abuse and bullying by the rest of the class. This provokes Sarah's existential crisis portrayed through interactions with three vivid visions of her younger as well as older selves – ten-year-old Sarah, twenty-three-year-old Sarah, and forty-year-old Sarah. Years after Bruce's escape from the family home, Sarah reaches out to him and together they manage to put an end to the parental deal enforced by the husband Chet on Helen. By the end of the story, the brother and sister team up with their mother to break the agreement which was built purely on sexism, adultism, and protectionism.

The Hate U Give (2017) by Angie Thomas is the story of Starr Carter, a sixteen-year-old African American protagonist, and her friends' struggles with intersections of racism, classism, and adultism at individual, familial, and structural levels as a cultural, historical, and a political inspiration of the Black Lives Matter movement (Owen 250). The novel does not shy away from depicting social issues such as drug dealing, "gangbanging," addictions, and killings. It all starts with the racist murder of Khalil Harris, Starr's childhood friend at the hands of a policeman, with her being the only witness. Despite her fear and grief, Starr finds herself compelled to fight the media's allegations distorting Khalil's image in a desperate attempt to exonerate the police officer Brian. The narrative features other young characters fighting similar battles such as Starr's half-brother Seven who, along with his two younger half-sisters Lyric and Kenya, are neglected by their drug-addict mother and physically abused by his stepfather (Kenya and Lyric's birth father). The latter, known as King, is the leader of the neighbourhood's most feared gang. King is also behind the exploitation of other secondary characters, mainly DeVante – a young gang member.

Savita Kalhan's *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) tells the story of Jay, short for Jayalakshmi, a fifteen-year-old Indian girl living in London. Soon after the death of Jay's

father, her family went bankrupt. The mother, Neela, forces Jay to move into Aunt Vimala's house for a while despite the protagonist's objections. The agreement is for them to stay, rent-free, in exchange for help around the house with cleaning and cooking. This deal turns out to be a nightmare as the protagonist and her mother end up working for Vimala's family like slaves. The worst part is that Jay's relationship with her mother keeps getting worse. Neela continually refuses to listen to Jay's reservations about the unhappy life they are leading at Vimala's place. The climax of the story is the protagonist's rape by her cousin Deven (Vimala's eldest son). After this incident, Jay escapes without a word to her mother. She later attempts suicide, but is saved by Sita Anandhati, the matron of the protagonist's old school. The latter eventually helps Jay to reconcile with her mother, then offers them a home to start afresh.

PART ONE

Adultism and Children's Rights in Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction

"'Can you imagine if everyone had the power to mess with everyone else's lives? Chaos.'

But of course, this *is* the problem. We already have that power over each other."

(Nicola Yoon *The Sun Is also a Star* 2016 317)

CHAPTER ONE

Intersections of Adultism with Other Forms of Discrimination

"Once upon a time there was a hazel-eyed boy with dimples.

I called him Khalil. The world called him a thug."

(Angie Thomas *The Hate U Give* 2017 436)

Introduction

The right of each young person not to be discriminated against whether by ethnicity, religion, background, language, abilities, or appearance, forms the first principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC henceforth). The purpose behind this principle is to ensure an equal treatment in all aspects of life to all children and adolescents around the world. However, when it comes to practice, the implementation of this principle is challenging on structural, familial, and individual levels. Thus, discrimination against young people still takes place at the hands of adults causing severe repercussions for the target group's well-being (Todres and Higinbotham 81). Authors of realist young adult literature (YAL) often use their narratives to address these very issues and their complexity. In doing so, they portray the intersection of adultism –discrimination against young people as explained in the introduction – with other forms of discrimination pertaining to race or class, as in *The Hate U Give* (2016) by Angie Thomas, or *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016) by Nicola Yoon, or gender like in *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) by Savita Kalhan. Considering the significant ethical, social and moral content of YAL (Alsup 161; Wolk 667), the interplay between different systems of inequality in these novels

provides a rich scope of analysis. For this purpose, this chapter relies on an intersectional framework to identify the added burden inflicted on young characters who are disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw points out that failing to acknowledge intersectional discriminations produces a misrepresented account based on "experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon" ("Demarginalizing" 140). Hence, this analytic tool is crucial because it resists simplistic understandings of childhood and youth as a linear and homogeneous paradigm. The intersectional lens recognises the different and multi-faceted experiences of young people with adultism and other systems of power and privilege.

According to the second article of the UNCRC, a discriminatory prejudice constitutes of any partiality "irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (2). In order to provide depth of focus, the examples from primary texts within this chapter are however, limited to discriminatory acts pertaining to age in conjunction with race, class and gender, "the three major social structural positions" in the construction of the self and the other identities (Romero 105). In her definition of discrimination, Mary Jeanette Moran emphasises "the human habit of othering" (77) which she explains as casting aside and degrading those who are different from one's expectations of norms as a counterstrategy to reduce feelings of threat ensuing from the dissimilarities (77). Thus, this habit consists of establishing a human standard in accordance with one's own religion, gender, or ethnicity, for example, which then leads to the marginalisation of those who do not fit in the same social group. Accordingly, the unfamiliar becomes menacing, and is then assumed to be inferior. Whereas discriminations about race, class or gender might be familiar issues to some but not necessarily all young

people, adultism on the other hand is a prevalent prejudice. Adam Fletcher establishes this predominant concern asserting that "the list of challenges facing young people is enormous. However, adultism is a core challenge *all* people face, and must be addressed starting now" (Fletcher, Facing Adultism 14). In line with these correlations, this chapter reveals how age inequality becomes the primary mode regulating the violations of children's rights to be treated fairly. Indeed, Fletcher understands that "adultism lays a foundation for all other discrimination" (20). Accordingly, the following reading of *The Sun Is Also a Star, Still Life with Tornado* (2016), *The Hate U Give*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* identify the extent to which different systems of inequality feed off each other.

This chapter is concerned with representations of young characters with a particular focus on the ways in which intersectional discriminations against them are carried out. An important question to this thesis is to define whether all young characters in the studied primary texts experience adultism in the same way regardless of their race, class, or gender. The purpose is to identify how adultist stereotypes are influenced by the factors of race, class, and gender. In order to address these questions, this chapter is divided into three sections according to the focus on the intersection of adultism first with racial issues, then with classism, and lastly with sexism. Because adultism presents a *consensus issue* – impacting all group members whether in similar or diverse ways (Collins 47) – for all the young characters under study, it is placed at the centre of the analysis. Racism, Classism, and sexism are hereafter *crosscutting issues* (Collins 47) directly affecting some characters but not others. Accordingly, this chapter attempts to pinpoint how a particular set of intersecting factors shapes, improves, or restrains each character's lived experience. Another significant concern in this sense is to demonstrate whether the texts focus on overt acts of discrimination covered by international law or if they also reveal hidden acts of

discrimination. A final research concern covered in this chapter consists of an examination of the behavioural patterns depicted in these texts to show whether they create awareness and contribute to making children's anti-discrimination rights known or do they reinforce discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes.

Intersections of Adultism with Cultural, National, and Racial Differentiations

Two out of four of the chosen primary texts of this thesis openly address the topic of racial differences in the context of contemporary societies. First, *The Sun is Also a Star* illustrates the repercussions of bigoted beliefs and behaviours in twenty-first century New York through the challenges confronted by two teenage protagonists alternating the narration. Similarly, *The Hate U Give* draws a thorough picture of the struggle of a teenage girl caught up in a society governed by racist beliefs provoking hatred, disputes and crime. The following readings of Yoon's and Thomas' stories discuss the intricate interaction between adultism and cultural, national, and ethnic differentiations in multicultural societies. The purpose is to identify how these types of discrimination are intertwined leading to the double oppression of young characters. An important question to this chapter is to determine to which extent the adultist stereotypes constructed against the fictional protagonists and other secondary characters are influenced by factors of race, culture, and nationality. Another matter of concern is to find out whether these intersectional prejudiced beliefs and practices are portrayed carrying similar impacts on the characters.

The Sun Is also a Star builds a link between adultism and racism by revealing how parental control impinges on the child's right to freedom of association with someone from a different race. Dae Hyun takes advantage of his position as a father to dictate to his son, the seventeen-year-old protagonist Daniel Bae, whom he can and cannot associate with. Basing his judgement solely on the skin colour of African American Natasha Kingsley, the

second young protagonist of the narrative, Dae Hyun warns his son: “I saw the way you look at that girl, but that can never be” (Yoon 237). This compound sentence shows that the father has made a prejudiced observation and come up with a rather final and discriminatory decision about his son’s love life all by himself. This example reveals the limited impact of children’s rights in private settings such as at the family level where parents can overstep in their roles to exert their control over young people. Grounded in adultist assumptions about minors which Elisabeth Young-Bruehl identifies as passivity, immaturity, and lack of reason (*Childism* 25), Dae Hyun violates his son’s right to freedom of association (*UNCRC* 4; article 15) by racially discriminating against Natasha. Indeed, the father’s outlook on Daniel denies the latter of exercising his basic identity rights as an individual. Overt acts of physical abuse are easily identified as harmful in attitude against young people, but violations of identity rights – which encompass a variety of freedoms in addition to that of association (such as the freedom of thought and religion (Todres and Higinbotham 97)) – are often downplayed.

YAL can play a positive role in exposing these subtle, yet oppressive attitudes towards young people by connecting them to more recognisable problematic acts, like racial discrimination in this instance. In addition, realism as a literary mode provides the ideal platform to expose entrenched prejudiced beliefs and behaviours. Through its exposition of the daily lives of characters and their interactions which might seem mundane and insignificant at first glance, realism offers eye-opening examples such as the exchange between Daniel and his father. Besides his racist discrimination against his son’s African American friend, Dae Hyun’s words also reveal a paternal controlling stance. The authoritative tone of the compound sentence in the example above as well as the use of the adverb of negation *never* show that the father’s decision is conclusive. It is understood by this decisiveness that Daniel is expected to obey his father unquestionably. There are

cultural values here that directly clash with the principles of the convention by denying young people their status as individuals with their own rights and human dignity. Susan Honeyman calls for the need to reassess the erroneous perception of young people belittling them to mere property of their respective families (185). This is an intricate issue because of the cultural motifs that are at play in this context considering that while the CRC protects young people's identity rights, it also respects cultural differences as indicates article 30 (*UNCRC* 9). However, this fictional example reveals the ambiguities arising from translating children's rights law into practice particularly within collectivist cultural backgrounds which tend to tolerate more pronounced parental authority and control over minors as is the case for most Koreans (Yang 36). Therefore, Daniel's narrative can potentially bring attention to this contradictory and confusing aspect regarding the implementation of children's rights. Moreover, there is an additional level of ambiguity when considering young adults who are caught between the perceptions of the child as vulnerable and in need of protection and those of the adult as responsible and mature.

An intersectional analysis is necessary to reveal the ways in which factors of origin and age are intertwined in shaping the character of Daniel and how he is positioned by others, as well as how he positions himself. The novel opens with this protagonist's introductory headline to his narrative: "*Local Teen Accepts Destiny, Agrees to Become Doctor, Stereotype*" (Yoon 2). Daniel's ironic commentary on his own life condemn adultism by emphasising the main character's helplessness and *forced* subordination to his parents' career expectations due to his young age (more on this on chapter four). However, another striking factor contributing to the construction of the stereotype of submission to elders that should not be overlooked is the influence of the Korean lifestyle. Indeed, Sonam Yang emphasises the prevalence of social hierarchies based on age in Korea through the literal

translation of the terms *adult* and *child* in Korean language to: "'to become a person'" and "'one who has not arrived at the age of majority'" respectively (36). The suggestion that a minor only becomes a person in adulthood, Yang continues, legitimates elders' authoritarian attitudes over young people to guide them to maturity. Filial piety and education, thus, are considered of paramount importance to Koreans, and for this reason, parental control translates to an expression of love and care (Yang 36). Hence, the young age and Korean lineage construct fundamental variables in the direct characterisation foregrounding the typicality of the stereotype of submission to parental wishes identified by Daniel in the headline mentioned above. This compliance falls in line with the frequent perception of children as property of their parents which Ya'Ir Ronen aims to challenge by shifting the focus of child law to promote authenticity in the upbringing of minors rather than their sense of belonging (153). It is revealed that the intersection of Daniel's age and origin constrains the protagonist's practice of his identity rights. He admits to Natasha his struggle with his identity stating: "'I'm used to it. My parents think I'm not Korean enough. Everybody else thinks I'm not American enough'" (Yoon 158). Despite being born in America, Daniel's Korean physical appearance makes his integration in the American society difficult as he becomes the target of racial prejudice. As a result, Daniel fails to fit in with the rest of Americans because of his looks, and he does not even find acceptance among his parents due to their prejudiced views. The intersectional analysis of Daniel's character identifies that discrimination extensively constrains his lived experience resulting in an identity crisis.

In the case of Charles, Daniel's older brother, the novel demonstrates that his lived experience is equally shaped by his upbringing as a second-generational Korean immigrant in the US. Charles is affected by the same intersecting factors as his brother in a different, yet also disadvantageous, way. The following passage shows this character's rejection of his own

heritage as he addresses Daniel contemptuously: "'You and your Korean food and your Korean friends and studying Korean in school. It's pathetic. Don't you get it, Little Brother? […] Korean is *all* you are. We're not even from the goddamn country!'" (Yoon 221). Such details as food preferences are significant elements directly contributing to the characterization. This example shows that Charles is enduring what Nesdale's identifies as "emotional maladjustment" (46-65). Nesdale refers to Freudian philosophy to associate young people's prejudice with their emotional maladjustment as a result of repressive and strict child rearing practices (65). Indeed, the rigid parenting style of Dae Hyun and his wife, which aims at conserving their Korean heritage and passing it on to their American-born sons, leads Charles to a complete denial of his cultural origins. From a textual standpoint, this character is presented to be fully immersed in the North American lifestyle through his natural speech marked by the use of the word *goddamn* which is an informal North American adjective. In consequence, the parents' efforts to transmit their cultural heritage to their sons is met with an emotional imbalance on the part of Charles who fails to adapt himself to this situation. Charles is puzzled over his own roots and ends up rejecting his Korean origins.

Other examples exhibiting this identity crisis are shown in his culinary preferences – his dislike for and rejection of Korean food since junior high school (Yoon 29) – as well as in his specific type of girlfriends – "all his girlfriends (all six of them) have been very cute, slightly chubby white girls with blond hair and blue eyes" (Yoon 30). Charles' distaste for Korean food and adherence to the mainstream standards of beauty of the host country operate as expressions of his cultural identity. This depiction reveals how the overcontrolling upbringing habits of prejudiced parents might turn the child against his own background. It is important to note that the same intersectional variables – here adultism and nationalism –

do not necessarily result in similar lived experiences as shows the examples of Daniel and Charles and their differing challenges. Hence, the examination of various literary representations of similar intersectional patterns such as the specific experiences of young Korean immigrants in the US is just as useful in bringing attention to prevailing threats to the wellbeing of young people as the exploration of contrasting examples like that of the prejudiced treatment of the young Jamaican Natasha.

Dae Hyun's adultist attitude towards Natasha is heavily informed by the factor of race. Daniel worries about his family's racism towards Natasha dreading that his "parents would never approve [of their relationship]. Not only is she not Korean, she is Black. There's no future here" (Yoon 107). The main character's certainty expressed though *would never approve* and *no future here* condemns the predominance of his parents' prejudiced beliefs. While this example emphasises the factor of race directly, there are other crucial and intertwined elements shaping the experience of Natasha which cannot be overlooked. Crenshaw rejects oversimplified examinations of African women's struggles as either strictly racist or strictly sexist for the reason that such frameworks are incapable of producing a comprehensive account of their multifaceted experiences ("Mapping the Margins" 1244). Similarly, Natasha's case cannot be interpreted solely from the perspective of racism because this character is burdened with multiple discriminations considering her ethnicity, her age, and her gender. A study focusing on the two variables of race and age revealed that African American youth are most likely to be negatively stereotyped compared to their peers from other ethnic groups (Priest et al.). This is evident through Daniel's worries. Moreover, Dae Hyun's racist critique of Natasha's hairstyle reveals the dominance of Western standards of female beauty (Yoon 142). His insistence on the young protagonist conforming to the straight hairstyle instead of her afro which is a natural hairdo for African American women

(Yoon 129) clearly depicts his bias. Naomi Priest and others emphasise that the focus on even the smallest differences is likely to lead to negative attitudes and harmful consequences (2018 11). There is an intersection of age, race and gender here implying the multiple oppression of minority women who are pushed to comply with certain ideals of attractiveness. The latter according to Bryant "emphasize skin colors and hair types that exclude many black women" (80). Natasha's example reveals the crucial need of applying intertextuality to denounce adultism and identify the inherent intersecting identities that are at play besides the age factor. Crenshaw insists on the advantage of this analytic lens arguing that single-axis perspectives and strategies fail to address the struggles of those who are burdened by multiple inequalities at once ("Mapping the Margins" 1246). Indeed, the interpretation of Natasha's case acknowledges the unique vulnerability of African American girls which cannot be fully addressed by any of the anti-adultist, antiracist, or feminist lenses separately. Crenshaw further emphasises the value of intersectionality by pinpointing that the antiracist movement is not specifically tailored to tend to African American women specifically and that the latter "need not await the ultimate triumph over racism before they can expect to live violence-free lives" ("Mapping the Margins" 1258). Therefore, the intersectional framework allows to consider the particular cases of those whose concerns are not necessarily prioritized in the generic discourses of antiracism or feminism for instance. For this reason, it is necessary to reflect by means of this analytical tool on the various ways that different systems of inequality shape the experiences of the young characters to resist problematic one-dimensional interpretations of childhood.

Yoon demonstrates that these beauty standards are so widespread even among African Americans like Patricia Kingsley, Natasha's mother, who abides by them and is displeased to see her daughter wearing an Afro (127). Accordingly, Patricia contributes to

the transmission of the prejudice against her own group through her assertions that: “Afros make women look militant and unprofessional” (Yoon 130). The example of Patricia reveals that the prevalence of European standards of beauty leads to what Poloskov and Tracey identify as *body dissatisfaction* (501). Hence, Yoon’s characterisation acknowledges how the interlocking systems of racism and sexism cooperate in furthering the subjugation of minority girls and women through the impact of these ideals of beauty. Moreover, researchers agree that these tendencies result in an internalised self-hatred (Bryant 85-86; Silvestrini 305) such as Patricia’s rejection of her natural hairstyle. Also, by pushing her daughter to straighten her hair, the mother demonstrates the transgenerational spreading of this *self-hatred* thus making young minority girls subject to yet another form of exploitation. Bryant recognises self-acceptance as a major challenge in the long term for African American women who do not adhere to the dominant ideals of attractiveness (Bryant 81). In this sense, Natasha might feel empowered by her stance against the sleek hairdo at the moment, but this might change over time because of the persistent prejudiced outlooks towards her. Hence, Natasha’s struggle is a multidimensional one where racism, sexism and adultism are interwoven together revealing complex individual challenges that are restricting her lived experience.

The young characters in *The Hate U Give* are also subjected to adultist stereotypes which are significantly influenced by race. In line with Yoon’s interpretation of self-hatred as a negative effect of discriminatory beauty standards, Thomas also draws a similar example. This can be seen in Starr’s confession: “I can’t lie, we get the “why is he dating *her*” stare that usually comes from rich white girls. Sometimes I wonder the same thing” (85). Being a subject of racial prejudices seems to have led the young protagonist to develop a racial inferiority complex, sparked by the fear that she does not deserve to be Chris’ girlfriend

because his racial origins and social class are perceived to be superior to hers. In a way, Starr is adhering to these bigoted social hierarchies in determining how she values herself. Therefore, the exposition to discriminatory attitudes towards her leads her to question her self-worth. This example shows how YAL does not shy away from the interpretation of issues such as body dissatisfaction which according to Bryant "is not commonly acknowledged in social work conversations or practice" (89) to offer a strong case in deconstructing prejudice. Priest and others also acknowledge that perceived discrimination presents an additional psychosocial stressor to the victim threatening one's health and wellbeing (2). The realist novel enables the author to delve deep into the characters' psychology and to explore their innermost thoughts and feelings. Acknowledging realism's strong assets, Tom Wolfe refers to this immersion "into the minds and central nervous systems of the characters" (50). Digging into the individual's private emotions allows a discussion of contemporary concerns while raising awareness about social inequalities and their impact on different levels. It is in this sense that Starr's internal monologue performs a crucial role in depicting how in addition to overt discriminatory acts and hate crimes such as her friend's murder (see chapter two), racism also operates indirectly at a personal level. The excerpt above from the novel discloses the everyday struggle of minority youths with racial injustice adding to the shared confrontation with adultism.

The novel recounts the story of a crime against a teenager who gets shot on the premise of an intersectional prejudice against African American youths. A suggestive quote from the rapper Tupac Shakur about the discriminatory system of adultism marks the start of the narrative. Uplifted by the rapper's song that was playing in the car, Khalil enthusiastically explains its meaning to the protagonist a few moments before he gets shot by an officer: "'Listen! The Hate U – the letter U – Give Little Infants [… obscenity]

Everybody. T–H–U–G L–I–F–E. Meaning what society give us as youth, it bites them in the ass when we wild out'" (Thomas 21). This premonitory passage pinpoints the adultist prejudices at the heart of the ensuing events and the moral behind them. Through this quote, adultism is suggested as the primary cause behind the issues portrayed in the novel. Indeed, while the discriminatory treatment of the protagonist and her friend Khalil are heavily influenced by the factor of race, it is their young age which facilitates these unjust acts to be carried out against them. Capturing the speech patterns of Khalil's socio-economic background through the use of slang metaphors, this passage emphasises this character's sense of belonging and attempt at establishing his identity as a group member regardless of the ongoing discrimination. Khalil's words also pinpoint a discerning perspective and a critical appreciation of Tupac's song thus refuting prejudices about *minority youth* attached to the difference in speech patterns as a sign of unintelligence. Indeed, Khalil's enthusiastic interpretation of the lyrics and the meaning behind them pinpoint his awareness about and strong refutation of this problematic social inequality. Adultism is a dangerous threat to young people and their wellbeing because as Samantha Besson recognises, children are even more likely than adults to be exposed to racism, sexism, religious intolerance or any other type of discrimination for that matter (433). Hence, adultism constructs a core challenge that should be closely examined as a first step to remedy harmful attitudes against young people.

Much like Khalil, Starr also falls victim to Brian's prejudice. Reporting to her uncle what happened after Khalil lost his life, the protagonist discloses: "'While we were waiting on help to show up,' I say, my words wobbling. 'He kept it [his gun] on me until somebody else got there. Like I was a threat. I wasn't the one with the gun'" (Thomas 122). The wobbling words suggest that this incident still terrifies the protagonist. Starr here emphasises the irony behind the officer's acts against her and Khalil whilst his prejudice is

the real danger. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl recognises that teens are specifically "easier to construct as rebellious or parricidal" (*Childism* 37). Laura S. Abrams and others affirm that young African Americans are targets for *over-surveillance* (75). Another source finds it common that young African Americans are specifically perceived as less innocent than minors from other ethnicities and therefore not in need of as much protection. The research also specifies that they are often considered to be typically four and a half years older than they are (Priest et al. 11). This proves how the factor of racism significantly shapes the officer's adultist outlook on the protagonist and her friend in the same manner despite their gender differences. Recognising the intersectional stigmatisation embedded in the officer's attitude, Starr cleverly pinpoints: "who's to believe a grown man was that scared of two children?" (Thomas 255). Through this reply, Starr claims back her young age, her innocence, and the right to be treated fairly. It is suggested thus that the officer's stance is but a constructed prejudice ensuing from the intersection of adultism and racism against African American youth. In this example, Brian stereotypes Starr and Khalil as a dangerous threat which he feels the need to contain using his gun.

Intersections of Adultism with Classism

Class (besides race and gender) is one of the three fundamental forces that shape social behaviour (Ait Belkhir and Barnett 157; Romero 105). Replete with examples about intersectional representations of issues relating to age and class, the novels under study attest to the prevalence of class as a behavioural influence. Indeed, the realist literary mode provides scope to look at complex social issues of contemporary relevance through its nuanced views of cross-cultural interactions between multi-dimensional characters. In his literary manifesto of 1989 calling for the revival of the realist novel, Wolfe attests to the

undeniable interconnectedness between society and the individual that is intrinsic to the realist mode (51) The scholar explains the need for the realist reporting by pinpointing the everlasting relevance of class structure in the American society and the outpouring of immigrants from all over the world (Wolfe 52). Representations of the quotidian and simple daily exchanges offer insight into the interplay between class and prejudice. Indeed, Tobia Fattore and Susann Fegter assert that "by examining practices of social distinction that individuals enact on an everyday basis we can understand the dynamic nature of class identities, including those of children experiencing poverty" (2019 68). For this purpose, this part of the chapter looks at everyday instances of class prejudice reflected in *The Hate U Give*, *The Sun Is Also a Star*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror.* In order to meet this thesis' objective of reading through a critical child- and teenage-centred approach, I will focus on the realist interpretation of characters' interactions and the display of emotions those interactions provoke to shape an understanding of social hierarchy and how adultist perceptions might vary towards young people from different social classes.

The Hate U Give is filled with everyday depictions of race and class prejudice that are sewn together with adultism exhibiting various stereotypes. A simple yet striking example in Thomas' novel is the exclusion of Starr's little brother Sekani Carter by his fellow neighbours because, unlike them, he goes to school in the rich suburbs. To this end, Starr admits that "in Garden Heights, kids play in the streets. Sekani presses his face against my window and watches them. He won't play with them though. Last time he played with some neighborhood kids, they called him "white boy" 'cause he goes to Williamson" (Thomas 90). Here, we can observe that the attribution of the social label of "white boy" to Sekani who, like those kids, is also African American, emphasises his social class rather than his origins. This example addresses social constructions interrelating race and class and the transmission

of endorsements of social hierarchy from adults to children leading to intergroup hostility and discrimination. Indeed, children often imitate behaviours they witness within their environment. Therefore, Sekani's non-acceptance among his neighbours on the grounds of his belonging to a specific social class consists of a replication of prejudice. This viewpoint builds on "the social reflection approach" which "takes the latter point as a fundamental premise – children's prejudice simply reflects the community's attitudes and values, which are typically transmitted to children by their parents" (Nesdale 65). Similarly, Fattore and Fegter report that "Children also engage in practices that reproduce class distinctions and thus exacerbate the dynamics of class, for example through creating moral, physical and social distance from individuals who are constructed as abject" (74). In this sense, besides the crucial role performed by parents, family and society as an entity in the transmission of values to younger generations, lies the danger of spreading hostile attitudes such as prejudice. The differential treatment that Sekani receives based on his perceived social class exhibits a conscious and intentional discriminatory attitude stereotyping him as an outsider.

The Sun Is Also a Star depicts the complex interrelations of race, class, and age as well as their impacts on Natasha. At the sight of the latter's interaction with his brother Daniel, Charles quickly assumes the worst of Natasha. In consequence, when she explains that they are indeed friends, Charles voices in disbelief: "'Oh, I thought maybe he'd caught a shoplifting customer'" (Yoon 138). Based on his snap judgement, it appears that Charles stereotypically associates Natasha's identity markers of race, class, and age with theft. This happens to be a common stigma because Anthony Gunter affirms that young people from lower socioeconmic backgrounds especially from minority groups represent the target group that is most associated with youth crime (50). Henry A. Giroux also attests to the threefold oppression of poor minority youth maintaining that "while all youth are now suspect, poor

minority youth have become especially targeted" (78). This example in the story is significant because it reveals the multiple oppressions that young people from the lower class and/or minority groups have to face continuously. The stereotype ensuing from the intersection of racism, classism, and adultism this time rhymes with the criminalisation of youth.

In the following examples, it is revealed that class discriminations are prevalent among young people because they operate in conjunction with class identity, a process prompted during childhood as suggested by Karen Sánchez-Eppler (819). Accordingly, Sekani's rejection by his neighbours (discussed above) shows that Sekani's fellow neighbours are not only aware of social distinction, but they are also able to identify who belongs to what social class. Indeed, children refer heavily to social hierarchy in establishing their social niche, building friendships and, more notably, identifying themselves. Fattore and Fegter's research paper attests to this tendency as they conclude that their examples reveal that the awareness of social standing significantly shapes "demonstrations of social value and one's position in the social field" (74). As portrayed by Thomas in the narrative under discussion, those kids playing together found their friendship on the basis of going to the same school in the poor neighbourhood of Garden Heights. Even though Sekani lives on the same street, he does not find acceptance among them because unlike them, his school is located further away in the wealthier suburbs. Sekani's exclusion due to their belonging to dissimilar social classes acknowledges children's identification of themselves in accordance with their respective social rank. On that account, Fattore and Fegter establish that social stigma heavily influences self-perception of people from the lower class (72). Thomas' interpretation of young people's interactions emphasises the role performed by social class in informing one's self-image and social circle, as well as the transgenerational transmission of social divides.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror (2018) draws the same conclusions regarding social class and exchanges among young people through the experience of teenage Jaya at her new school. To that end, as we learn from a third person narrative voice:

> No one could call her a 'rich bitch' now, which was what some of the other kids called her when she first started at Kingswell Secondary halfway through year seven, and they'd find out what kind of school she used to go to. The most hurtful insult had been: 'spoiled little daddy's brat' (Kalhan 19).

Because Jay's old school was frequented by children from the upper classes, the young protagonist was the victim of labelling by her new school peers at first. Like Sekani's exclusion, this incident also suggests that young people demonstrate a penchant toward other peers who belong to the same social class as theirs, all the while rejecting those who do not. Besides the reliance on class divisions in the identification of one's social circle, this excerpt also pinpoints the integration of classism with adultism in the stigmatisation of Jaya. Fletcher recognises that just like adults, young people also perpetuate adultism (141) as proves this passage. Thus, Jay's stereotype as *spoiled little daddy's brat* is heavily informed by her family's previous socio-economic status, but it carries a derogatory meaning about childhood as well as indicates the noun *brat*.

The novel further emphasises this idea when Jay's schoolmates quickly adapt their bullying to her current socio-economic conditions as soon as they find out about her father's death and her family's ensuing bankruptcy. Accordingly, the stigmatisation of Jay as the spoiled girl does not last long before turning into that of the poor child. Indeed, the third-person narrator reports: "to be fair, […] that was before they found out where she lived, and

that her dad was dead. Then they called her 'Little Orphan Annie'" (Kalhan 19). The new stereotype also interrelates adultism and classism. This twist in name-calling from *daddy's little brat* to *Little Orphan Annie* shows the predominance of social class among young people as an important "identity marker" (Schieble 212). This characterisation highlights teenagers' tendencies to establish their social interactions and relationships based on class. Indeed, Fattore and Fegter believe that belonging to the same class is a decisive factor in creating bonds between people as they might get involved in similar activities (68). As a result, Jay's schoolmates reject her both times because her social class does not correspond to theirs. This is revealing of how class prejudice leads to disunity among different groups. The novel's depiction of this interplay between age and social class reveals how the overlapping of the two systems of inequality of classism and adultism are likely to constraint the same individuals and their lived experiences in different ways throughout their existence depending on the changes that might occur to their intersectional identities.

In her deconstruction of class prejudice, Thomas focuses on how the latter unfairly impacts Khalil's murder case. In doing so, she does not deny his involvement in drug dealings. To Starr's big disappointment, it is revealed that her murdered friend was indeed guilty of drug dealing which she firmly considers to be a deliberate choice that he could have avoided. For this reason, Starr recognises that: "Khalil matters and not the stuff he did, but I can't lie and say it doesn't bother me or it's not disappointing. He knew better" (Thomas 234). Starr's discontent with her friend's past does not last long before turning into remorse while Thomas gradually reveals the selfless reasons behind Khalil's engagement in such a malevolent practice. To that end, DeVante reports to Starr events about Khalil's past that were unknown to her. Therefore, he recounts:

> ‘He didn’t wanna sell drugs, Starr. Nobody really wanna do that *shit* [emphasis added]. Khalil ain’t have much of a choice though. […] Look, his momma stole some *shit* [emphasis added] from King. King wanted her dead. Khalil found out and started selling to pay the debt. […] That’s the only reason he started doing that *shit* [emphasis added]. Trying to save her.’ (Thomas 234)

The incorporation of this backstory as part of the rich characterisation of Khalil is a crucial element to the narrative providing insight into the character’s motivations and actions. Khalil’s benevolence to help his mother out of a dreadful situation softens the image of the teenage drug trafficker. As DeVante explains to Starr, the living conditions of Khalil led him to engage in drug dealings even if he did not want to do it. The repetitive reference to drugs as *shit* by the young character solidifies his argument by showing he despises the activity. Through this turn of events, Thomas proves how easy it is to succumb to social class stereotypes and jump to rushed accusative conclusions. While the story does not justify the practice of drug-dealing in any way, it endeavours, however, to deconstruct the stigma attached to youths belonging to the lower class. Under their suggestive subtitle: “The Othering of the Drug Offender: The Power of Label and the Consequences of Stigma,” Rebecca Askew and Mike Salinas point out the negative consequences of the labels typically associated with both drug users and suppliers such as junkie, pusher, and criminal (314). The two authors identify how factors of race, class, and social standing allow privileged groups using or selling drugs to escape the confines of these labels, while further constraining the lived experience of the underprivileged ones (Askew and Salinas 215). The backstory of Khalil’s engagement with drug-dealing activities places an effective counterargument against widely recurrent stigmas and refutes oversimplified understandings of drug trafficking by

recognising the underlying implications of different variable such as class distinctions. Charlotte Beyer identifies the engagement of contemporary literature for young people with social justice concerns as a compelling initiative in bringing attention to the controversy around youth agency, denouncing inequalities and proposing fresh perspectives to visualise the self and the world all around (9). This is also true for Thomas' novel which pinpoints the role of young people in breaking widespread stereotypes and spreading awareness about the impact of interwoven inequalities. It is in this sense that *The Hate U Give* is likely to inspire positive change in the status quo by delving deep into the psychology of the young characters.

The second example drawn by Thomas deconstructing prejudice against youth in poverty is that of DeVante. The latter is first introduced through Starr's narration as a teenager from the lower class involved not only in drug dealing, but also in "gangbanging." He starts the narrative as a member of the most feared gang in all of Garden Heights known as King Lords. However, midway through the story, DeVante discloses to Starr's father that King, the leader of the gang, is urging him to engage in killing people. Devante reports: "'he wants me to handle the dudes that killed my brother. I'm not trying to have that on me though'" (Thomas 172). Here, we can observe how classism and adultism intersect in DeVante's exploitation by King Lords. King's order shows that DeVante is a victim of his oppressive circumstances. In addition, the latter's refusal to participate in acts of aggression challenges the widespread prejudice associating drug dealing with the archetypal imagery of violence which is thoroughly interrogated by Professor of Criminology and Sociology Ross Coomber (n.p.). Indeed, DeVante's opposition to killing the assassins of his brother emphasises his objection to the gang's activities. This passage is a crucial literary representation which breaks away from the widely accepted stigmas and visualises different

facets to drug dealers instead. As Helen Beckett Wilson and others reveal: “when people possess nuanced knowledge, they are able to prise themselves away from normative constructions” (77). DeVante’s characterisation presents a thorough counterargument against standardised perceptions of drug dealers as aggressive because it shows that even though he is deeply affected by the murder of his brother, his firm principles keep him at a distance from violent acts of revenge.

Thomas gradually reveals the motives behind DeVante’s illegal practices. As this character’s story unfolds, his representation moves from that of a rebel drug dealer and a gang member, to that of a teenager whose *life chances* led him to unfortunate practices. Confessing to Starr, Devante says:

> ‘I guess I am a thug, I don’t know. I did what I had to do. King Lords was the closest thing me and Dalvin had to a family. […] With King Lords, we had a whole bunch of folks who had our backs, no matter what. They bought us clothes and shit our momma couldn’t afford and always made sure we ate.’ (Thomas 235)

Thus, this example reveals that lots of teenagers from the lower classes find themselves caught up in illegal practices not because they are mischievous, but out of necessity. Indeed, the crucial role performed by teenagers’ social classes in their prospects does not come as a surprise. Steven Threadgold addresses this particular point admitting that young people’s *life chances* are heavily determined by class (21). Furthermore, Wilson and others reveal that socio-economic motivations are predominant factors leading to the drug market (76). Their findings identify drug dealers from underprivileged social backgrounds as either: “victims of the illegal drug market,” “exploited, vulnerable individuals in need of protection,” or

"vulnerable individuals whose perilous economic position left them open to exploitation" (Wilson et al. 76). In line with this view, the novel endeavours to dismantle class prejudice by uncovering how power systems unfairly impact young people of the lower class in shaping their associations and practices such as the case of Khalil and DeVante. The latter's reference to the gang as *the closest thing to family* reveals that he lacks the basic needs which made him join the gang to fill that void. He also alludes to the prejudices that are attached to drug dealers from disadvantaged groups when he admits unconvincingly that he is a *thug*. This is evident in his use of the verb *to guess* and the expression *I don't know* denoting that even if he may fall into this category in other people's eyes, he does not consider himself as such and he explains the motives behind his actions. This nuanced portrayal of the young drug dealer breaks intersecting widespread adultist and classist demonising perceptions.

Intersections of Adultism with Sexism

Still life with Tornado (2016) is a crucial read in this context because it acknowledges how adultism operates in conjunction with sexism at the family level. In this instance, it is the parents, guided by their overlapping sexist and adultist beliefs, who actively discriminate against both of their children Bruce and Sarah. Accordingly, the brother and sister receive a differential treatment that nonetheless constraints their experiences. For Bruce, it is a matter of constant physical abuse by the father consisting of hitting, slapping, and hairpulling (King 209). The son has previously had his bones broken at least twice because of this violence (King 211). Years later, he explains to his sister what drove him to run away: "I left because of a bunch of reasons. Mostly because Dad was abusive to us [him and his mother] and it really messed me up and then he hit me again in Mexico and I couldn't really forgive him, you know? And then Mom said–" (King 207). Even though the mother is also a

victim of her husband's maltreatment, she is considered also at fault as indicates the last unfinished sentence of the quote. Bruce's abrupt silence – conveyed through the dash – suggests that the mother's words were conclusive to his escape and led to a culminating point. The family dynamic within this household demonstrates the wife's submission to her husband who continuously abuses her physically and verbally (King 209-11). Hunner-Kreisel and März recognise that unbalanced gender relations asserting the dominance of men could lead to more pronounced forms of adultism (434). Indeed, the violence against Bruce demonstrates how the father claims power by using his force against his son. For this purpose, through the intersection of adultism and sexism, Bruce is stereotyped as the disobedient child who needs to be controlled to justify using violence against him.

This toxic family environment also negatively impacts Bruce's sister even though she is spared the physical violence. Sarah falls victim to excessive protectionism and suffers a great deal of emotional and psychological abuse even though the parents were supposedly looking after her wellbeing. Helen admits to her daughter that they meant well by confessing: "'We didn't want you to suffer,' she says. 'We made a deal'" (King 252). The mother's straightforward words suggest her obliviousness to the potential harm ensuing from her entrenched adultist as well as sexist beliefs. The deal consists of maintaining the nuclear family paradigm despite the parents' differences and disagreements until Sarah turns eighteen years old. This is a typical case of protectionism as recognised by Honeyman. The latter argues that these purported social units only cause minors further injustices (4). This is evident in the young protagonist's recognition: "I cry a little because even though I was never hit by my father, I feel as if I just got hit by him a hundred times" (King 210). This assertion confirms that Sarah is also a victim of adultist beliefs. However, the stereotype ensuing from integrated sexist discrimination in this case is that which Fletcher knows as

infantilisation (Fletcher 8). This is a prejudiced assumption which downplays the development of children, or their capabilities. Sarah, for one, is deemed to be in need of extra protection compared to her brother, and this is why they constantly lie to her and hide truths from her.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror offers an articulated depiction of the protagonist's multidimensional struggle with sexism, classism, and adultism. Kalhan's narrative places an effective counterargument against these interlocking systems of inequality by revealing the drastic impacts they impart on fifteen-year-old Jaya. Indeed, there is a discernible connection between Jay's oppressive circumstances pertaining to age, social class, and gender leading up to the novel's climax: the protagonist's rape. Accordingly, this young character experiences adultist domestic treatments heavily influenced by her gender and social class, in addition to violations of her participatory rights (which will be covered in the fourth chapter).

The first example of sexism is observed within the household distribution of chores at Aunt Vimala and Uncle Bal's house, where Jay and her mother Neela take shelter following the death of Jay's father and their subsequent bankruptcy. By doing so, the author establishes Jay's financial status as the starting point of her dilemma. Indeed, it is quickly revealed that the host exploits both Jay and her mother in return for letting them stay over rent-free for a short while. While her mother does not seem to mind the exploitation, Jay cannot overlook the partiality demonstrated in her aunt's perspective on gender roles. On that account, the narrator describes this woman as "a particular kind of Indian woman, one who had super-strict rules for girls and very different ones for boys, and the same went for her expectations of them" (31). Once again, Ash and Deven convey the same idea about their mother's sexist attitude. In the example of Ash, she writes: "Jay knew exactly why he

was embarrassed. There were rules for him and very different ones for her. It was an Indian thing" (Kalhan 55). This disclosure is made right after Ash attempts to warn Jay about his mother's viewpoint on gender roles. The narrator's mention of Ash's embarrassment suggests the latter's disapproval of his mother's sexist beliefs. Unlike his brother, Deven seems to condone his mother's discriminatory behaviour. Referring to his mother as "the old dear," Deven notifies Jay: "'Ash is way too moody – that boy needs to get out more, have some fun. And you, you're a girl, Jay, and you know the old dear's got strict ideas about girls and their place'" (Kalhan 98-99). Deven's playful tone shows that he does not consider Vimala's attitude as a serious issue which attests to the perpetuation of discrimination from one generation into the next. Indeed, his reference to Jay as a girl in *you're a girl* and *girls and their place* carries negative connotations. Deven's sexist beliefs are identified in his distinction between his brother Ash and his cousin Jay as the former is encouraged to enjoy himself, whereas the latter is rather pressured to be imprisoned at home. In this sense, it is established that Vimala's bias is not only something new to their family, but it is also transferable to her son.

It is true that helping around the house is not considered to be a form of child labour, as explained by Sánchez-Eppler who writes: "the 'work' from which children were exempted never fully includes household labor" (819). However, she also continues to point out that "these general shifts in the definition of childhood function quite differently for girls than for boys" (Sánchez-Eppler 819). In accordance, the distribution of domestic chores in Vimala's house is a questionable practice. While Jay is asked to "cook, serve, wash up and tidy up" (Kalhan 54), Ash had no house chores to perform, due to Vimala's firm belief that this kind of task is exclusively a woman's responsibility. Therefore, her sons are totally exempt from such

errands, which clearly exposes their gender privilege along with a sexist discrimination against young Jay.

This sexist discrimination also entailed an intense oppression considering the amount of work and the number of hours required to complete it. The inappropriateness of Jay's housework following the orders of her aunt, is highlighted in the party which Jay and her mother are supposed to cater – making all sorts of preparations for over one hundred guests. The narrator's word choice denotes Vimala's oppressive exploitation of Jay and her mother. Expressions such as "military campaign" (96), "a set of Herculean tasks that would tie them to the kitchen for hours and hours over the next few weeks" (Kalhan 76) and an "unreasonable request" (Kalhan 76), used to describe this party for uncle Bal's sixtieth birthday, reveal the aunt's abusive treatment. As for Neela and herself, Jay points out that they are being treated like "slaves" (Kalhan 78). Indeed, the narrator reports how the young protagonist had to help until very late in the evening precising that "it was almost eleven when she escaped her aunt's clutches, and even then, it was only because of Uncle Bal, otherwise it would have been even later" (Kalhan 96). Several other imageries illustrating the cruelty behind the aunt's oppression can be found throughout the novel. On the topic of house chores, Todres and Higinbotham acknowledge a distinction between "child work and child labor" (153). They specify that social scientists emphasise the child's age and development as the primary concerns and points of reference in drawing the line between the two (153). Along the lines of this delineation, it is, therefore, reasonable to agree that Jay's consuming house chores were in fact a form of sexist exploitation. The latter also intersects with adultism because it fails to consider the protagonist's *age* and *development*. Indeed, the amount of work required of Jay to perform puts her in the role of a domestic servant instead of a fifteen-year-old student.

Throughout Kalhan's portrayal of Vimala's discriminatory attitude, the author seems to construe a pattern in accordance with her interpretation of sexism. Indeed, on multiple instances, she endeavours to draw a link between the aunt's sexism and her cultural background. In a way, Kalhan seeks to demonstrate that Vimala's bias is in fact provoked by her Indian living standards. To that end, she writes explaining the cause behind this bias:

> When Jay thought about it, Aunty Vimala's Indianness was probably even off the scale she'd drawn. It was the kind that clung with grim determination to a way of life that had long since disappeared. Times had moved on in India, but in Primrose Avenue, they'd ground to a halt, trapped in a time warp of India circa 1950. That's what Jay would be trapped in (Kalhan 33).

Consequently, by setting the cause of the aunt's biased beliefs in her cultural background, there is an explicit inference that the traditional Indian lifestyle apparently involves sexist standards of living. Specifically, it involves discriminations in gender roles and especially within the household. Kalhan also demonstrates how this traditional sexist distribution of tasks against women starts as early as during childhood. Similarly, Lisa Rosenthal and other as well as Suzanne Hill and Tara C. Marshall bridge between sexism and cultural motives especially in societies assigning "traditional" gender roles (520; 421) like India. By addressing the opposition between the Indian way of life and children's rights, Kalhan's novel identifies a limitation to the implementation of the UNCRC to ensure a rightful treatment of young people on a structural level in accordance with what scholars identify as "cultural relativism" (Donnelly 400; Harris-Short 131). The latter is a concept that recognises that "children's rights cannot be assessed globally using a priori standards" (Nieuwenhuys 5) due to the

challenges met in the implementation of the convention in collectivist communities like India, where the rights of children contradict the traditional social and familial beliefs and practices. Thus, Sonia Harris-Short points out how opponents of the UNCRC claim that the provisions in this document are not tailored to adapt to the specificities of each culture: "to justify repressive internal practices and to shield themselves from justifiable criticism for gross human rights violations" (132). *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* portrays this universality versus cultural distinctiveness connundrum, pertaining to children's rights through the conflict between the convention's principles and Vimala's beliefs.

In a sense, the novel seems to interrogate these traditional Indian behaviours and their transmission to contemporary and differing societies (from traditional India to twenty-first century England). To break free from these sexist attitudes, Rosenthal and others suggest the potential of multiculturalism in the decrease of sexist attitudes provided that there is a readiness to embrace cultural change (519). Similarly, *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* endorses the dismissal of old cultural practices that have proved to be detrimental to the wellbeing of women – and particularly girls in this instance. Accordingly, the novel questions traditional Indian values that discriminate against girls and women. Through the following advice to Jay, Neela overlooks the deeper problem of discrimination that is embedded in their culture. She requires her daughter to behave once they move into Vimala's house saying: "'Things will be different when we are living there. Remember you are a well-brought-up Indian girl, Jaya,' […] 'Do not shame me in their house. They are proper Indians'" (Kalhan 45). Through this passage, the author acknowledges that according to "proper" traditional Indian values, Jay's autonomous behaviour is shameful and rebellious. According to the two classifications of ambivalent sexist attitudes (Rosenthal et al.; Hill and Marshall), this sexist assumption depicted by Kalhan falls under the category of "benevolent sexism"

which “involves stereotyping women in a way that some may think of “positively” but relates to paternalistic expectations that women need to be taken care of and protected by men” (Rosenthal et al. 520). This is reflected in Neela’s reference to shame suggesting that a subordination to sexist attitudes is honourable in the Indian context.

These outdated principles and practices manifest at Vimala’s house in a number of fixed rules such as denying Jay friendships with non-Indians and especially boys, meeting with friends after school, and attending sleepovers (Kalhan 32, 45, 55, 57). The interplay between different oppressive systems is also apparent throughout the intersection of sexist instructions with racial discrimination as Jay is only allowed to befriend Indians. The novel continuously disputes these traditional predispositions that the narrator refers to as “hypocrisy – the caste stuff, the rules and restrictions” (Kalhan 32) illustrating Vimala’s prejudiced beliefs. On the other hand, Jay’s determination to preserve her friendship with Chloe and Matt shows her openness to interact with other cultures. Accordingly, in its refutation of discriminatory attitudes pertaining to traditional cultures, Kalhan’s narrative calls for cultural change, a topic that is admittedly sensitive considering that in the words of Rosenthal and others it “could potentially make some people to feel defensive about their culture or upset about negative past or present cultural influences” (532). It is in this sense that YA fictional stories such as Jay’s provide a scope to initiate candid discussions about underlying social issues by breaking the silence and uneasiness around them (Hughes-Hassell 221). Accordingly, *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* offers nuanced views on cultural perspective and the opportunity to see the significance of the social environment in shaping child-rearing practices. In doing so, the narrative gives insight into the roots of adultist behaviours deeply seated in sexist beliefs in the Indian context by presenting an effective counterargument through the severe repercussions on Jay. However, this demonisation of India is problematic

because as Superle notes in her examination of 100 works of contemporary Indian children's literature written in English, this outlook often entails "a narrow, hegemonic version of the Indian nation, and essentialised, stereotyped, or exoticised versions of "Indianness'" (*Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* 4). Indeed, this oversimplified characterisation prescribes binary opposition between the Indian beliefs and practices (depicted by the aunt Vimala) and those of the West (depicted by the more liberal protagonist Jay) thus creating boundaries between different groups leading to further prejudice and discrimination. Hence, the deconstruction of Jay's adultist and sexist stereotype as the exploited and objectified young girl results in an endorsement of binary systems.

The worst outcome of the intersection of adultism and sexism endured by the young protagonist is her rape at the hands of Aunt Vimala's son, Deven. This oppressive act integrates sexist discrimination and physical violence, thus violating the rights to equality and protection from abuse – articles 2 and 19 of the UNCRC respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to address the implications of this infringement from the perspective of the convention's principle that ensures protection of life and development in the following chapter to consider the impacts on the protagonist's health and wellbeing. While the next chapter concerns itself with the aftermath of the rape, the reading of this plot point in this section strictly emphasises the intersection of discriminatory systems leading up to this incident.

Before the escalation of events to the appalling sexual abuse of the main character, the narrator emphasises Jay's cousin's prejudiced attitude towards the young female all along. One example of Deven's inappropriate behaviour is his sexualisation of Jay, seen in the way he looks at her body and compliments her on it saying: "'you smell good.

Irresistible,' he murmured before releasing her. He looked her up and down, his mouth sliding into a sideways smile, his eyebrow arched suggestively. 'And where have you been hiding those legs, huh? Sexy!' he added, leaning in close" (Kalhan 111). This excerpt marks the inappropriateness of Deven's words and behaviours. The detailed account of his gestures, stares, and facial expressions by the narrator in addition to his choice of words *irresistible* and *sexy* emphasise his sexist objectification of his cousin. He also makes similar provocative insinuations about Jay and her appearance on a previous occasion through a sarcastic tone (Kalhan 99). The narrator reveals that Deven resorts to this daring approach vis-à-vis Jay because he believes that her independent character invites it (Kalhan 100). Accordingly, he explicitly discloses on another occasion: "'we know all about you, Jay, what kind of fun you really like.' He wagged his finger at her. 'You naughty, naughty girl. But we can show you some fun. More fun than you can get with that *gora*'" (Kalhan 127). This quote exposes the cousin's sexist assumptions about the protagonist. His repetition of the adjective *naughty* emphasises his discriminatory mindset. According to Deven and his friends, Jay earns this kind of treatment because they saw her and Matt, to whom they refer as "gora" meaning "white boy," kissing. These sexist predispositions are known to Rosenthal and others as "hostile sexism" which holds women accountable for their acts of defiance to traditional cultural norms (520). The story depicts an effective interpretation of hostile sexism through Deven's prejudiced assumptions about Jay in accordance with her non-compliance to Vimala's rules. These interactions with Deven demonstrate a different stereotype of the same main character although ensuing from the same intersection of adultism and sexism. While the aunt treats Jay as a domestic slave, Deven rather objectifies and sexualises her.

In its attempt to denounce sexist prejudice, the novel uses intertextuality as a literary technique to foreshadow the protagonist's eventual sexual abuse. This is explicitly noted in the direct reference to Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) throughout the start of the book as the narrator reports: "She [Jay]'s picked up *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* again, even though Matt kept telling her to stop reading it because it was all doom and gloom" (Kalhan 64). This quotation points out the main character's obsession with Hardy's novel through the suggestion that she reread it on multiple occasions. Her friend's comment on this story as mainly *doom and gloom* emphasises Tess' tragic misfortunes and downfalls. Intertextuality in this example has a premonitory effect because as Whitehead argues, "In returning to canonical texts, novelists evoke the Freudian notion of the repetition-compulsion, for their characters are subject to the 'plot' of another ('s) story" (85). This appears to be the case of Kalhan's novel whereby the intertextual reference to the story of Tess indicates a foreshadowing of Jay's upcoming struggles with sexism. This alludes mainly to the re-enactment of Tess' sexual abuse in the novel of Jay.

Deven's sexist beliefs, language, and behaviour eventually led to the novel's climax consisting of the description of the rape of Jay. This appalling incident is narrated through an evocative imagery where the fifteen-year-old protagonist confuses the rape with a profoundly disturbing nightmare, because it all happens during her sleep the night following Uncle Bal's party. For this purpose, Kalhan uses suggestive metaphors to illustrate the horror of Deven's aggression of his young cousin. Hence, out of many giant threshing machines "in a version of Hardy's rural England" (Kalhan 144), the biggest and strongest machine personifies Deven and his repulsive deed. Expressions like: "creaking and scraping" (Kalhan 145), "thunderous roaring […], grotesque bodies […], tore up the fields […], gouging deep black scars into the ground as they churned up the earth below" (Kalhan 146), and

"unforgiving clutches" (Kalhan 147) describe his petrifying movements. The author's metaphorical rendition of Jay's rape allows her to convey the atrocity of the incident in a creative way by means of magical realism. Eva Davenport understands magical realism as the interlocking of realism with the fantastic through the incorporation of mystical features without being removed from everyday life (2). This literary tool is incisive because it serves as a means to challenge intersecting adultist and sexist powers by presenting a meticulous description of the harsh and disturbing experience of the main character through dreamlike elements. The mystical element in Kalhan's rendition of Jay's rape evokes literary features pertinent to Hardy's critique of industrialisation in *Tess of the D'Ubervilles*. Referenced repeatedly throughout the novel as the protagonist's favourite reread story, Hardy's lament about the industrialisation of agriculture is used to convey the horrific act of sexual abuse by likening it to the metaphorical rape of the rural landscape by the new machinery of the mid-Victorian period. Curtis Pickford recognises that Hardy's derogatory portrayal of industrialisation emphasises the latter's negative impacts from replacing long-established rural customs to breaking off the bond between the individual and the land (n.p.). Relying on these atrocious outcomes to the rural landscape, Kalhan transmits the grotesque rape of the protagonist. This vivid imagery thoroughly reports the victim's emotions and impressions as well as uncovers the pervasive threat posed by the intersection of different systems of inequality in private settings.

Conclusion

The Sun Is also a Star, *The Hate U Give*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* complicate the implementation of children's rights on the individual, familial and structural levels by effectively exposing the workings of interlocking systems of power and privilege in everyday social interactions. In doing so, these narratives demonstrate that these problematic

transgenerational predispositions are so prevailing that they unfairly influence beauty standards, language use, and social interactions, as well as they shape different characters' identity formation and self-understanding, sometimes leading to self-hatred such as in the case of body dissatisfaction. These interpretations effectively integrate the concerns of minorities even though the narratives chosen focus on the Global North.

This chapter examined representations of young characters to identify the ways in which discriminations against them occur in various contexts. The main findings suggest that adultism constructs a common struggle for the characters despite their dissimilar backgrounds. However, as these readings demonstrate, this discrimination does not happen in the same way for all young people. Instead, there are various adultist stereotypes distinctly shaping the lived experiences of each individual. From the conducted analysis, it is revealed that young characters can be perceived to be, for instance, vulnerable, burdensome, or dangerous. The application of the intersectional analysis pinpointed the significant role played by factors of race, class, and gender in determining which adultist stereotype applies to which character. For example, Sarah and Bruce are stereotyped differently by their parents on the basis of their gender differences. Accordingly, while Bruce is perceived as a dangerous threat to be omitted, Sarah is rather considered as a vulnerable child in need of protection. Intersectionality pinpointed that these interrelated sexist and adultist prejudices result in dissimilar, yet equally damaging impacts on the two children. Hence, the prejudice against Bruce provokes the use of physical violence to control him leading to his escape away from the family home, whereas the protectionism of Sarah causes mental health issues.

The intersectional analysis also revealed that the same discriminatory attitude towards two minors sharing the same gender, race, and class does not necessarily affect,

constraint, or shape their experiences in the same manner depending on their resilience and coping mechanisms such as demonstrates the example of Daniel and his brother. While they are both negatively impacted by their parents' strict attitude, the consequences manifest differently. The rigid and controlling upbringing of the two sons results in Daniel's failure to identify with both the Korean and the American lifestyles on the one hand, and Charles' complete rejection of Korean customs including the food and the language to fully embrace his American identity. For this reason, an extensive examination of various intersectional patterns is just as important as similar ones to achieve a more informed perspective.

The intersectional analysis of the YA novels in this chapter acknowledged the potential of the realist literary mode in exposing a variety of discriminatory treatments of young people which tend to be rationalised and widely accepted due to the prevalence of adultist beliefs and practices. Realist literary strategies such as the description of the quotidian and daily interactions between the protagonists and their adult relatives and non-relatives have a great potential in uncovering how adults might habitually violate young people's rights. It was also demonstrated that the focus of realism on deep psychological characterisations helps to pinpoint the workings of social hierarchy and inequalities as well as to raise awareness about the detrimental impacts constraining the lived experience of young characters with intersectional identities.

Due to limitations of time, I restricted the focus of this chapter to the three major identity markers of race, class, and gender. The field of YAL criticism could benefit from further explorations of different primary texts interrelating these and other systems of power and privilege – such as ableism and religious intolerance – to adultism for the purpose of identifying the maximum of the ensuing stereotypes and the threats they pose to young characters as a first step to refute them. This chapter concludes that there is a need for

further engagement with YAL from both the global North and the global South in this sense to spread awareness about these prevalent oppressive attitudes towards minors by exposing more of these adultist stereotypes that operate in conjunction with racism, classism, sexism, and other discriminatory systems leading to subtle yet dangerous threats to the wellbeing of younger generations.

CHAPTER TWO

Adultism and violations of youth rights to life and development

"And to every kid in Georgetown and all "the Gardens" of the world: your voices matter, your dreams matter, your lives matter. Be roses that grow in concrete"

(Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give* 2017 Acknowledgments).

Introduction

Adultism represents a threat to the physical and emotional health of young people, leading to detrimental consequences affecting their life and development. Accordingly, this chapter addresses the second principle of the United Nation Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which interrelates the vital rights to life on the one hand, and to ensure a full development on the other. However, despite the wide ratification of the convention by 192 countries, the implementation of children's rights to life, survival and development remains challenging on individual, familial and structural levels, requiring therefore further societal commitment to bring about a substantial shift (McCall-Smith 432-433). An important obstacle restricting an efficient implementation of the UNCRC is the "prejudice" also known as adultism, "that rationalizes and legitimates the maltreatment of children" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism* 6). Widespread adultist beliefs and attitudes – such as the outlook on young people as rebellious – justifies harmful conduct against them as means of discipline thus leading to violations of children's rights to life, survival, and development. This type of prejudice is extensively portrayed in YAL, as this chapter will show, revealing that the UNCRC cannot be properly implemented without the disruption of the prevalent adultist beliefs. This is where literature can be really significant, because it can draw attention to the workings of adultism

in various familial and national settings in facilitating violations of young people's rights to life and development.

To be sure, the global significance of the UNCRC providing the first and most comprehensive document on children's rights cannot be overlooked in any research on this topic (Todres and Higinbotham 4; Holzscheiter et al. 273). Accordingly, while placing the convention at the core of its framework, this thesis endeavours to problematise the UNCRC discourse by drawing on the crucial contribution of contemporary YAL in spreading social awareness about children's rights. Desmond Manderson firmly believes that "Children's literature is a vitally important source of law. It is not a question of 'law and literature' but of literature as law, and law as literature" (87). This blurring of lines between literature and law emphasises the need to examine YAL on the basis of this viewpoint. For this reason, this chapter demonstrates how YA texts voice a more powerful articulation of the third principle of the convention – the right to life, survival, and development – than does the UNCRC itself by revealing a variety of examples where young people's rights are continuously violated. In this process, this chapter pays particular attention to the encountered difficulties following the implementation of this legal principle on the structural, national, familial, and internal levels because of adultism, and how YAL not only compensates, but eloquently addresses this gap in a more accessible form.

The inherent rights to life, survival, and development emphasised within the UNCRC fall into the grouping of civil and political liberties pertaining to the existence of individuals (Todres and Higinbotham 121). Among these provisions there is article 7 – ensuring birth registration, name, and nationality for all children, article 8 – protecting the identity of children –, article 16 – ensuring their privacy –, article 19 – protecting children from violence, abuse, or neglect –, and article 37 – certifying against inhumane treatment of young

children. While these rights are set to attend to the well-being of children around the world, their conveyance from legal document to specific social contexts proves to be challenging, particularly, as Harris-Short argues: "when the rights in question impinge upon traditions and practices relating to children and the family" (134). The reason behind this obstacle in the protection of children's rights is the tendency "to focus on harmful actions against children, overlooking the more dangerous attitudes, ideas, or prejudices that rationalize such acts" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism* 18). It is in this context that YA fiction intervenes to reflect the complications ensuing the implementation of the convention in social settings.

In line with the second principle of the UNCRC, this chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which concerns itself with the right to life and survival, whereas the second one addresses the right to development. Another difference between the two parts is that the focus of the former is on national and institutional violations to children's rights, but the latter rather uncovers individual and familial maltreatments and issues. *The Hate U Give* (2017) constitutes the point of reference for the identification of the intersection of adultism and racism in the abuse of a young person's right to life, while other readings of this book solely foreground the racial criterion (Yunitri et al.; Pierce; Levin). Therefore, this chapter addresses this gap in knowledge whereby the age factor, despite its significance, is widely overlooked in interpretations of Angie Thomas' successful novel. It is in this sense that concepts such as y*outh demonisation* and *posthumous criminalisation* are hereby linked together to challenge discriminatory practices through this compelling correlation. The second part of this chapter reveals both overt and more subtle threats to young people's right to development within the family environment. It is therefore argued that *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) provide effective counterarguments against domestic adultism and the harmful

repercussions to development rights it generates. The examination of the three novels offers the opportunity to acknowledge the detrimental impacts of adultism whether the maltreatments occur intentionally or in an indirect manner. In doing so, the chapter emphasises the potential of YAL in addressing violations of children's rights through the different narrative devices and rhetorical techniques (such as the elaborate psychological characterisations and the descriptive language) that ensures the construction of nuanced and incisive views on the topic.

Physical Abuse and the Right to Life and Survival

Violations of children's right to protection against harm is a prevalent theme in realist Young Adult narratives, such as the hate crime in *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas. Their success in reaching a wide audience is evident through their popularity on popular social book websites like Goodreads, *The Guardian* and Amazon. According to the abundant reviews and annotations of this YA novel, the wide reach of the genre to the public becomes evident. *The Hate U Give* received 543,707 ratings and 60,570 reviews on Goodreads and 13,876 ratings on Amazon. Endorsing Todres and Higinbotham's view about children's literature compelling reach (XVI), it is hereby suggested that Thomas's novel has the potential to perform a more influential impact on society in denouncing violations of children's rights than the UNCRC itself because such narratives are fictional rather than legal texts (although as 'fiction' this is not entirely without complication). The significance of these powerful narratives lies in foregrounding voices of young victims of emotional abuse such as Sarah in *Still Life with Tornado* (2017), or survivors of discriminatory assaults or witnesses to hate crimes like Starr in *The Hate U Give* (2016), and incorporate different social ills into the

plot, including racism, sexism, and violence. Similar stories often present dramatic and insightful journeys of young adults' battles with oppression.

This section of the chapter examines the often-overlooked intersection between adultism and violations of youth rights to protection against harm and discrimination in *The Hate U Give* in view of its piercing interpretation of the topic which has resulted in its significant commercial success. This "classic of our time" (John Green) narrates the drastic implications following the murder of Khalil, a sixteen-year-old teenager, at the hands of a policeman – first introduced as officer one-fifteen, a reference to his badge number – through the voice of the only witness, sixteen-year-old Starr. *The Hate U Give* asserts early on a striking example of minority youth maltreatment on a national scale. The violation of an African American child's right to life at the hands of a law enforcement officer reveals the pervasiveness of interlocking systems of power and privilege.

The author draws an antithesis regarding the recount of Khalil's murder by depicting two contrasting versions told by the friend-witness and the offender. First, Thomas leads the narrative with the young protagonist's detailed perspective on the events prior to the gunfire. Starr reports the unjust successive shooting of her friend that takes place a few minutes after the officer (who we later find out is called Brian) pulls them over on an isolated street "where most of the houses are abandoned and half the street-lights are busted" (Thomas 25). The significance of the realist literary mode is evident in such examples showcasing a focus on the present moment as a speciality that is introduced by the movement of realism (Tadjibayev et al. 147). The emphasis on the now is a crucial feature whereby descriptions of settings become very revealing and play a key role in the storyline. Indeed, Starr's attention to these obscure details suggests her awareness about the precariousness of young black lives (Dohrn and Ayers 80; Moore et al. 254; Lee and

Robinson 143) in addition to what Lee and Robinson identify as a "heightened distrust of police officers and activated hypervigilance" (173). However, despite the backstory of the friendship between Starr and Khalil, Thomas sets an impartial tone in Starr's account of the events. To be sure, the victim's friend is open about Khalil's disagreement with the officer through her narration. To that end, she does not omit details such as his "cussing under his breath" (Thomas 25) or his referring to the officer as "a fool" (Thomas 25). However, she specifies that the officer is oblivious to both offensive incidents because they happened right before he approached the vehicle holding his flashlight. Indeed, the young narrator reports that Khalil's contestation when confronted with the officer is quietened down to a defensive objection.

Still, it is evident through Starr's account that Khalil fails to promptly comply with the police officer's commands as he groans and insists on asking about the motives behind the instruction to pull over and to provide his license, registration, and proof of insurance. Instead of doing as told, Khalil asks: "What you pull us over for?" and insists again when he is not provided with an answer to his question: "I said what you pull us over for?" (Thomas 25). The young character's defiant tone and his repetition of the question conveys his distrust concerning the policeman's motives as well as the certainty that he and his friend did not make any mistake. The use of slang here is incisive because it emphasises Khalil's opposition to the officer by embracing the African American dialect to confront suspected racism. Furthermore, Starr recognises that he makes the serious mistake of a sudden move when he is specifically told to hold still while the cop heads for his patrol car. Even though it is all in good intention, Starr admits that Khalil's attempt to open the driver's door to make sure she is fine is not a smart move. She then reports the dire consequences, which are by no means justifiable as the officer fires three consecutive shots at Khalil:

Pow!

One. Khalil's body jerks. Blood spatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

Pow!

Two. Khalil gasps.

Pow!

Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground.

[…] An earsplitting scream emerges from my gut, explodes in my throat, and uses every inch of me to be heard (Thomas 27).

The use of descriptive and figurative language, seen in the expressive verbs describing Khalil's body such as *jerks*, *spatters*, and *gasps* as well as the hyperbole *earsplitting scream* emphasising Starr's shock reveal the horror of the incident. By unfolding the backstory acknowledging Khalil's faults and the appalling details of the murder, Starr provides an unbiased account all the while stimulating their sympathy. Through this realistic, unembellished depiction of the victim's conduct, Starr anticipates a suspenseful imminent misfortune i.e., Khalil's murder. The bleak setting, the distrust of the police, the protagonist's watchful stance, Khalil's stubbornness, in addition to the evocative imagery of the murder scene work together emphasising the sense of verisimilitude. The latter literary technique is crucial because the interconnectedness between the various details in Starr's report of the incident and the events preceding it enhances the credibility of her point of view against that of the officer.

Far from being partial, the following prejudiced version of the shooting, told by the officer's father and broadcast through a TV interview, attempts to shift the blame away from Brian. Referring to the latter's father as One-Fifteen Sr., Starr recounts "One-Fifteen Sr. talks about his son's life before the shooting. How he was a good kid who never got into trouble, always wanted to help others. A lot like Khalil" (Thomas 242). Starr's nostalgic tone in the last sentence reveals the entrenched discrimination within the viewpoint of Brian's father interlocking racism and adultism and preventing him of recognising Khalil as *a good kid*. The protagonist points out the ironical reference to Brian in his young age to invoke the image of *a good kid* to appeal to the audience's emotions as a means to exonerate him. Starr recognises that this description similarly applies to Khalil. However, he does not embody what Gabrielle Owen recognises as the exonerating combination of "masculinity, whiteness, and wealth" (238), the social factors pertaining to gender, race and class which tend to be idealised. Therefore, in the case of Khalil, the youthful age is rather used to evoke negative connotations to portray him as *the suspect drug dealer* instead of the *good kid* because "*young Black* males are profiled as criminals, deviant, unapproachable, and to be greatly feared" (Moore et al. 258; my emphasis). Accordingly, this depiction identifies how the same social variables are used paradoxically to defend a killer all the while incriminating a victim due to the intersection of systems of inequality.

Further emphasising this bias, Starr quickly shifts to the differences between Khalil and Brian as she reports: "But then he talks about the stuff One-Fifteen did that Khalil will *never* [emphasis added] get to do, like go to college, get married, have a family" (Thomas 242). The protagonist's observation pinpoints how Khalil is robbed of a potential bright future because of this widespread prejudice against minority youth. Starr builds a contrasting effect by comparing Brian's fulfilled life and career against her friend's sudden

and unjust murder. This antithesis marked by the adverb *never* establishes how the intersection of adultism and racism denies Khalil of his right to life through the emphasis on the stark differences in the life chances of two *good kids*. This contrasting effect can potentially uncover how discriminatory systems regulate further violations of children's rights such as "the inherent right to life" (The UNCRC 4) in this example.

The interview reporting Brian's side of the story discloses the prejudiced perception of minority youth through the mistrust and hostility projected towards the two young adults. Brian's father emphasises his son's resentment: "'they kept glancing at each other, like they were up to something. Brian says that's when he got scared, 'cause they could've taken him down if they teamed up'" (Thomas 243). This perception of Starr and Khalil is a two-fold discrimination because it aligns first with the popular "insidious view of young people as lazy, mindless, irresponsible, and even dangerous" (Giroux 71) which then leads to the process of adultist *othering*. In addition to their young age, there are also racial motivations behind Brian's assumptions as Smiley and Fakunle agree that "the synonymy of Blackness with criminality is not a new phenomenon in America" (350). The young protagonist reacts to the police officer's prejudiced viewpoint relating: "he makes us sound like we're superhumans. We're kids" (Thomas 243). This rectification straightforwardly contests the misrepresentation of minority youth in the media. In his publication denouncing adultism, Adam Fletcher writes about the prevalence of this distortion maintaining that: "Any idea of 'fair and balanced' reporting goes out the window when children and young people are reported about" (168). The literary example at hand adds that African American youth in particular are even more liable to be victims of misrepresentation. Starr's blatant assertion is significant because it resists this unfair bias perceiving young African Americans as an enemy to be feared, and that therefore needs to be controlled to justify their maltreatment.

Brian's father's version of the incident is problematic because it rests upon questionable adultist and racist assumptions which are evident in his narration:

> 'Apparently, Brian pulled the *kid* [emphasis added] over 'cause he has a broken taillight and was speeding.' | […] |'He said the *kid* [emphasis added] and his friend immediately started cursing him out'" |[…]|'Brian says he had his back to the *kid* [emphasis added], and he heard the *kid* say, 'I'm gon' show your ass today.' (Thomas 243)

The character's repetitive reference to Khalil as *the kid* in this example carries rather negative connotations contrary to the previous except that emphasise the adultist prejudice against youth. Notice how an adjective is added in the previous example referring to Brian as a *good* kid to avoid the pejorative sense that is implied when referring to Khalil. The noun Kid alone here seems to be associated with rule-breaking and an unpredictable, violent behaviour. The insistence on this word choice evokes the "institutionalised mistrust of youth" (Kelly 166), or what Fletcher knows as "demonization" (8) which rationalises the false accusations against Khalil. Fletcher defines this concept as the "process for making young people evil in order to justify attacking them" (8) which is exactly what Brian and his father proceed to do in *The Hate U Give*. This depiction falls in line with Smiley and Fakunle's affirmation about the media's posthumous coverage of stories like Khalil's by creating an image that "either justifies or negates [… the victim's] death by law enforcement" (351). Accordingly, this narrative effectively integrates nuanced and insightful views on how discriminatory systems operate not only in harming the target group, but also to justify children's rights violations.

On the other hand, the protagonist counteracts the discriminatory claims – the stigmatising of African American youths as aggressive felons – made by the officer's father by using the same terminology while this time carrying rather positive connotations to emphasise the opponent's bigoted beliefs:

> 'He had a big heart,' I say. 'I know that some people call him a thug, but if you knew him, you'd know that wasn't the case at all. I'm not saying he was an angel or anything, but he wasn't a bad person. He was a…' I shrug. 'He was a kid.' | She nods. 'He was a kid.' | 'He was a kid' (Thomas 282).

Contrary to the previous example, the repetition of the word *kid* in this extract recalls positive connotations of youth suggesting favourable characteristics such as blossoming, hope, innocence, and potential, which Brian and his father fail to acknowledge. Hence, Starr's straightforward answer *he was a kid* constitutes a powerful statement in line with the novel's "attempts to claim childhood innocence for black youth" (Owen 240). Indeed, the protagonist's simple statement deconstructs the construed correlations interlocking adultism and racism in the oppression of young African Americans. It is used as a stylistic device to uncover the hidden discriminatory motives behind the brutality against Khalil through the confrontation with this plain yet cogent assertion. Addressing Starr's reactions to the antagonistic stereotypes of her friend is important because it creates momentum to contest subjugating outlooks of minority youth that engender oppressive actions such as the murder of Khalil.

Starr identifies the interwoven discriminatory motives, with regard to race,

class and age, behind the officer's acts against her and Khalil. Using her voice to fight back against these social injustices, she points out during an interview: "'This all happened because *he*' – I can't say his name – 'assumed that we were up to no good. Because we're black and because of where we live. We were just two kids, minding our business, you know? His assumption killed Khalil. It could've killed me'" (Thomas 285). The protagonist's careful choice of words places an effective counterargument against Brian's claims because it shows that the murder of Khalil is merely based on social stigma. Referring to race, class (where we live), and age, Starr's remark presents an intense and passionate defence case for African American youth because it is not merely a matter of race, but this book is specifically about "Black Youth Activism" as Kaylee Jangula Mootz puts it (63). Her inability to utter the officer's name is particularly relevant in this extract because it shows how she is deeply affected by the murder of her friend. The final note *it could've killed me* acknowledges the detrimental implications of prejudice and the major threats to the safety of all those who share the same identity variables as Khalil.

The officer's behaviour towards Khalil and Starr before, during and after the crime demonstrates an evident discriminatory treatment. First, his unjustified order for Khalil to pull over the car suggests his bias. At the crime scene, this prejudice is seen in Brian's unjustified gunfire. In the aftermath, it is shown through the blame shifting from himself onto Khalil and Starr, a tendency directly related to the stereotypical "posthumous demonization and criminalization" (Smiley and Fakunle 351). Young-Bruehl explains the mechanisms of prejudice according to "the modern field of Prejudice Studies" noting that "once the target group has been projectively constructed, the projector experiences the projections as traits belonging to the targets and coming *from* the target group, which is blamed for them" (*Childism* 37). Accordingly, exceeding the speed limit, shouting offensively

and threatening are all but Brian's constructed experiences of his target – Khalil. Moreover, modern social scientists also argue that "a target group in whom downwardly projected negative traits have been stored must be controlled or assigned a role or even eliminated in order to keep the projections away, to make the target group permanently "other" and less threatening" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism* 39). Similarly, this theory proves Brian's prejudice against Khalil through the former's *elimination* of his target – shooting Khalil to death. In this sense, being both African American and young, Khalil ticks all the boxes to symbolise the *perfect target* for elimination according to his predator.

In addition to the unjust taking of his life, the gunfire deprived Khalil of other fundamental rights like the presumption of innocence, the assistance of a defence counsel, or an impartial hearing. All these rights he did not have an opportunity to exercise are in fact ensured by article 40 of the UNCRC as well as wider principles of law. Even worse, there is no basis for Khalil's incrimination to begin with because the motives of the shooting stated by Brian's dad are all made up. Even so, according to law and children's rights protected by the convention, the officer should not have shot the victim even if the latter was guilty of the purported accusations. Khalil was not murdered because he is an illegal suspect, yet he is blatantly treated like one even after his death. Thomas' depiction of these parallels between crime and injustice, law and disobedience, truth and lies, provides a space to reflect on violations of children's rights, potential consequences and how best to cope with them. Manderson traces back this interpretation of law-breaking as the driving force of narratives as he asserts that "the authority of a children's story, then, in part derives from the way it transgresses the rules in the very process of introducing us to them" (92). In this sense, what makes this YA story more powerful than the UNCRC is its rendition of the violations of the very rights that the convention seeks to protect. It is the lived experience of such

transgressions through identification with young characters that emphasises the importance of rights.

The convention is important in presenting a list of rights, but the narratives of young adults contextualising those rights provide a further insight on the workings of law. The role of novels such as *The Hate U Give* is crucial because they do not merely list rights and their violations, but they also depict a set of contextualised judgements and reactions that shape an informative understanding of law. Starr's following statement depicts the level of engagement that young adult protagonists introduce to the discussion of children's rights:

> If it's revealed that I was in the car, what will that make me? The thug ghetto girl with the drug dealer? What will my teachers think about me? My friends? The whole [obscenity] world, possibly? […] │It's a betrayal […] I [obscenity] deny him, [obscenity] near erasing every laugh we shared, every hug, every tear, every second we spent together. (Thomas 115)

This interior monologue reveals Starr's inner conflict. On the one hand, she wants to bring justice to her friend, but she is also afraid of being racially profiled on the other. By delving deep into the thoughts and fears of the character, this narrative technique of realist fiction endorses the overall thematic objective of the text. Indeed, the dramatization of Starr's emotions and psychology has the potential to strengthen the novel's critique of systems of inequality. Having addressed the overt acts of discrimination against Khalil on a structural level, Starr's struggle on the individual level further exposes the detrimental workings of intersections of racism and adultism. This realist depiction of Starr's inner thoughts and worries along with her consecutive interrogations pinpoint the vulnerability of young people.

The first-person narrative voice of the victims of children's rights violations plays an important role in denouncing the widespread discriminatory practices. Indeed, it is observed that "looking at rights from this lived perspective, understanding children's views of their human rights, as seen and experienced through their own lens as a holder of rights, would add important and contextualised knowledge to the research field" (Harcourt and Hägglund 278). It is this perspective which allows to uncover the lesser obvious workings of discriminatory beliefs and practices which are nonetheless also harmful. It is for this reason that Starr's viewpoint, actions, and reactions create meaning for resistance against intersections of racism and adultism.

Domestic Abuse and the Right to Development

Another form of abuse that directly threatens children's right to life and survival is domestic violence. The abuse of children at the hands of their own parents is deeply rooted in adultist prejudice. Young-Bruehl explains this phenomenon through typical excuses created by adults to justify the discriminatory treatment of younger generations. She suggests that "each form of childism [adultism] also has a shadow or cover-up set of images" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism* 37). Then she gives three examples of widespread adultist pretexts grown-ups often use to exploit young people: "images of angelically innocent 'good' children and youths; ideally socialized and sexually purified servant children and youths; and children and youths obediently honoring their fathers and mothers without a trace of protest" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism* 37). While these outlooks on youth as innocent or courteous seem harmless at first glance, the following reading of three YA narratives acknowledges the abusive manipulation of children they often entail. Portraying these adultist ploys, *Still Life with Tornado*, *The Sun Is also a Star*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* reveal different examples of domestic

physical and emotional abuse whereby parents discriminate against their children. Consciously or unconsciously, this may lead to severe repercussions on the health and development of young people.

Domestic violence is hard to pin down in comparison to broader local or national forms of adultist prejudice such as hate crimes because it is a familial issue caused by the caregivers of children in privacy. To protect the latter from any form of abuse within the intimate domestic context, article 19 of the UNCRC ensures that:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child (*UNCRC* 7).

Still, the complexity to protect this right arises from the dominant discriminatory misconception of childhood known as adultism which is defined by Young-Bruehl as "a belief system that constructs its target group, "the child," as an immature being produced and owned by adults who use it to serve their own needs and fantasies" (*Childism* 36). This prevailing social construct (Fletcher 18) thus regulates the maltreatment of young people as it calls for the tolerability of such abuse and prevents the protection of children's rights. The novels under discussion bring to light these issues through an emphasis on the harm these attitudes cause to young people.

Still Life with Tornado's acute take on the topic demonstrates the severe consequences of domestic violence on brother and sister Bruce and Sarah. Indeed, A. S. King

addresses a familial issue that Doyle and Timms identify as one of the hardest cases to distinguish (89): “the Cinderella syndrome” (83). The latter entails that only specific children “may be singled out [for abuse] because they have the role of family scapegoat” (89). In King’s narrative, this role falls on Bruce who spends his entire childhood physically and emotionally abused until he is eventually kicked out by the father Chet. By dealing with domestic violence from the angle of “the Cinderella syndrome” (Doyle and Timms 83), King acknowledges that this abuse is a complex and multifaceted issue which might be carried out under different circumstances causing severe pain not only to the physically maltreated child victim, but also to the other siblings. The story of Bruce and Sarah as a counternarrative – a story voicing the perspective of target groups and revealing their struggles (Leon 5) – shows how the brother and sister fall prey to different adultist outlooks. While the former suffers corporal punishment under the pretext of discipline, the sister is emotionally and psychologically abused because of her parents’ constant lying as a means of preserving her innocence. Accordingly, this reading of King’s novel pinpoints the intersection of sexism (see chapter one of this thesis) in conjunction with adultism in the parental exploitation of the young characters. It should be mentioned, however, that this parenting scheme is a product of the father’s discriminatory beliefs. Thus, while the mother participates in the maltreatment of her children, she is also a victim of her husband’s sexist tendencies (see chapter five). This interpretation of the narrative further complicates the workings of adultism by linking the father’s abusive behaviour to the maltreatment he suffered himself as a child which led to an intergenerational transmission of adultism.

This chapter also uncovers the connection between rape and suicidal attempts in Savita Kalhan’s *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* to reveal the threatening impact of physical abuse on youth lives and development. Several scholars such as Joiner Jr. and others

establish the same link between sexual abuse and suicidal tendencies. In the same regard, Ystgaard and others conclude that "physical and sexual abuse are significantly and independently associated with repeated suicidal behavior" (872). Likewise, following the oppressive incident of rape in Kalhan's narrative, Jay attempts to take away her life fearing that no one will understand, or accept her (Kalhan 261). Accordingly, this reading of the narrative identifies the lingering effects of the violation of Jay's right to life behind the intersection of the two oppressive systems of sexism and adultism beyond the act of sexual abuse.

This interpretation of *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* pinpoints the narrative's significant potential to stimulate awareness about the deeper issues related to discriminatory systems. The contextualisation of Jay's traumatic journey of sexual abuse addresses suicidal tendencies as serious repercussions following the aftermath of rape. It is hereby recognised that in dealing with bleak topics such as rape and suicide, Kalhan's novel does not encourage suicidal behaviours, but instead it sends powerful messages about the determination to survive by denouncing abuse against young females. Eugen Bacon believes in the value of similar stories as she compares authors to messengers of social development and insists that their objective is not to promote self-harm to "any troubled mind," but rather to inspire "possibility" and "insight" (36). In the following examination of the novels under discussion, it is argued that these texts are not merely stories of crime, domestic, and sexual abuse. They are most importantly identified as stories about hope and empowerment.

The impact of emotional abuse is revealed to be a violation of children's rights directly jeopardising their chances to progress into their full potential throughout A. S. King's novel. A denunciation of this kind of maltreatment is emphasised in the following words

from Sarah to her brother Bruce about their mother's heedlessness and going along with her husband's oppressive ways "'I don't understand why she stayed. He broke her arm. He hurt you. She'd put up with him for twenty-six years. That's too long.' | 'I feel like I'm living a huge lie inside of a huge lie inside of a huge lie'" (King 210). The protagonist's words portray what Robyn McCallum knows as a psychological displacement experienced by the character and explained as a sense of alienation that is likely to provoke a questioning of the self (104). The transparent and straightforward language used by the protagonist emphasises her puzzlement regarding her mother's toleration of Chet over the years. Indeed, her enumeration of the latter's abusive actions in short simple sentences is a compelling textual technique in realism that serves in this instance to express Sarah's turmoil. Indeed, the realist literary mode is the ideal platform to condemn domestic abuse because it encourages social critique through stating facts in a straightforward manner. The realist tendency to stay away from decorative language is incisive in maintaining the focus on the message of the story without any attempt at covering the truth or embellishing it. In this extract, the protagonist is candidly disclosing the facts about the ongoing abuse within their family and revealing Chet's abhorrent behaviour. Unlike Bruce and their mother Helen, Sarah did not undergo any physical violence from the abusive father. Still, Sarah's repetition of the word *lie* alluding to the household's unhealthy atmosphere reveals her parents' manipulation of her, which caused the greatest repercussions on her psyche. At a time when Helen admits having made the decision to stay with her husband for the kids (King 39), their family environment was by no means favourable for Sarah's development. Indeed, despite being herself a victim of her husband's violence, Helen is also guilty of putting their children at risk of physical and mental injury. One adultist mistake of both parents is marginalising Sarah and lying to her while thinking they were protecting her. Creating an atmosphere of lies to

hide the ugly truth of violence does not equal a loving environment to protect the child from being hurt. The proof is that Sarah reveals a deep internal struggle due to these parental ploys.

Emotional abuse does not necessarily prompt an immediate recognition of or response to the damage caused to the victim such as in the case of Sarah. Because trauma, as explained by Joshua Pederson "hits the human psyche with such force that it delays (or even disables) the mind's ability to access memories of the event" (100), it is only at the age of sixteen that Sarah's existential crisis is triggered after years of emotional abuse. Gradually, the protagonist starts recalling a lot of emotional struggles which have been repressed for so long throughout her entire childhood and young adult life. This idea of trauma is conveyed throughout the narration of Sarah's story using shifts in temporal perspectives. For this reason, the plot of this novel is a nonlinear one as the chapters move back and forth from the protagonist's present time as a sixteen-year-old girl into flashbacks and memories from her childhood as a ten-year-old girl. The chapters where Sarah reports on past events are narrated in the past tense, whereas the other ones are in the present tense. These shifts in temporal perspective present a compelling element to the novel because they reflect the protagonist's posttraumatic state through the disruption of the chronological order of events.

By constantly dwelling in the past, Sarah seems to be caught in a cycle of repetition. This narrative structure provides an effective representation of Mirela Lapugean definition of trauma. According to the latter, "Trauma is a pathological condition having a compulsive-obsessive nature which does not allow the possessed individual to exit its never-ending repetition" (85). King succeeds in conveying the same idea of trauma through the striking chapter shifts in narration between the past and the present. Anne Whitehead identifies this

depart from a linear chronological order along with other narrative techniques such as repetition and indirection as an imitation of trauma and its symptoms. The scholar argues that this reproduction of the state of mind through the narrative style is the unanimous choice amongst writers to express the effect of trauma (Whitehead 3). The persistent recalling of unfavourable childhood memories of domestic abuse now and then throughout the narrative reflects how the main character's mind is trapped and unable to move past these incidents. Suzanne Keen recognises that the chronological order of narration is not the only mode adapted to the realist genre. The scholar understands *disturbances to chronology* in storytelling, or what literary criticism labels *anachronies*, as a compelling strategy to unfold the chaotic thinking of certain characters (Keen 98). This example attests to the potential of the contemporary realist novel in conveying impacts of abuse through the temporal structure of the narrative by denoting that the use of flashbacks is not an arbitrary practice but a meaningful device.

For example, memories keep coming back into the protagonist's mind about her parents' maltreatment of Bruce. Sarah remembers taking part in this abuse of her brother and blames herself for his eventual escape. Doyle and Timms recognise "the appearance that the siblings are co-abusers with the parents" (86) as the parental emotional abuse of such siblings. Hence, Sarah remorsefully admits:

> I'd seen that look before and I heard dad be rude to Bruce before and I felt bad right then for telling Bruce to shut up. I guess I was just used to everybody ragging on Bruce. It was a tradition in our family. But when I ate the three cream cake and cried, I wasn't crying because the cake was so good. I was crying because I'd goaded Bruce

> the way he'd been goaded his whole life. Maybe I was why he was moving so far away. Maybe I was one-third of it, anyway (King 238).

Gérard Genette's concept of focalization is relevant to address the chapters reporting on past events such as the one comprising this extract. The scholar's elaboration on the notion of the point of view in first-person narratives where a character recounts memories from the past distinguishes between narration and focalization. The criteria to differentiate between the two according to Genette depends on whether the past events are focalized through the narrator's present-time consciousness or the narrator's consciousness when the past events occurred (10). Following this logic, the happenings in the chapters focusing on ten-year-old Sarah are focalized through the consciousness of the sixteen-year-old protagonist while she is narrating her younger self's struggles within the family. The added knowledge of present-time Sarah at the time of the narration surpasses that of young Sarah who is *the focalized object* in Mieke Bal's terminology (137). As Perry Nodelman puts it "Past-tense narratives tend to offer the thoughtfulness allowed by distance–a view of what happened that shapes it in specifically meaningful ways" (30). This is seen in the expression *maybe I was why he was moving so far away* in the quote as Sarah *the focalizer* (Bal 133) adds her present-time insights into the narration of past events. The first-person narrator's added commentary is a compelling element to the plot because it captures the protagonist's gradual understanding of her trauma while reviewing childhood memories. The focalizer's contemplation of her potential role in the maltreatment of her brother in the past years signals her own suffering. King here demonstrates the consequences of the parents' abuse of Bruce on his sister which Doyle and Timms call "The Emotional Abuse of 'Non-Abused' Siblings" (86). Indeed, they suggest that while the latter might be temporarily safe, in the long run; however, this could

potentially result in a traumatic burden of guilt (Doyle and Timms 87). Thus, Sarah's trauma reveals that unintentional maltreatment, like physical abuse, can have severe repercussions on young people. For this reason, it is important to address the driving force behind youth oppression which is adultism whether it is blatant or entrenched.

Still Life with Tornado effectively challenges overt and covert forms of adultist behaviours by uncovering the trauma of the protagonist who – although she is spared the physical maltreatment – nonetheless witnesses the continual abuse of her sibling at the hands of their father. Doyle and Timms identify the emotional abuse of children who witness the abuse of their siblings in deeply repressed fear (Doyle and Timms 86). In time, however, these overlooked incidents become haunting memories and therefore resurface at some point to pose a threat to the progress of the protagonist. It is for this reason that images from Sarah's childhood start suddenly coming back to remind her of all the times she tried hard to overlook just like her parents wanted her to do. It is in this sense that the chapters channelling a focalization on ten-year-old Sarah through the consciousness of sixteen-year-old Sarah play a key role to uncover the hidden truth. Sarah's old habit of repressing her emotions is apparent when she admits: "You must know a part of me had to make up another story right there and right then when I was sitting on that balcony by myself with my sunburn and looking out into the sea where the sea god had no idea how to help me" (King 240). In line with William F. Edmiston's assertion that the first-person narrator reveals "more than his younger self knew at the moment of event" (730), Sarah's disclosure proves that the protagonist is starting to gain awareness regarding her younger self's tendency to run away from the hurtful truth of domestic abuse in their family. This confession portrays the struggle of ten-year-old Sarah to overlook the truth by *making up stories* to conceal her father's abusive attitude towards Bruce and Helen. Present-time sixteen-year-old Sarah on the other

hand is overwhelmed and can no longer suppress those memories as she continues to emphasise:

> You have to know. You have to know that this crisis didn't start with the headpiece in tenth grade. You have to know that from that moment when I turned around and saw my brother on the floor, spitting blood and my mother held tight by Dad's hand as the phone rang and rang and rang that I was alone and life meant a little less than it ever would mean again (King 240).

This extract is hereby identified as a *completing analepsis* – the function of which is to "fill in earlier gaps resulting from ELLIPSES in the narrative" (Prince 15). Completing analepses have the potential to explain the causality – an important influence in children's literature to link events into causes and effects (Nikolajeva, "Narrative theory" 169) – behind the protagonist's current state of confusion. This example of completing analepsis links back Sarah's present-time sense of isolation and emptiness to her childhood. By acknowledging the traumatic repercussions of the mentioned incident from six years ago, King points out to the long-term damage of emotional abuse of young children which is in fact a result of adultist prejudice on the part of the parents. Indeed, Chet and Helen's emphasis on controlling their daughter's experiences, by locking her in the balcony for example to hide Chet's beating of Bruce (King 239), is a case of adultism identified as "protectionism – the view that children are in need of great protection, control […]–" (Fletcher 9). Even though the intention behind this manipulation of Sarah is to protect her, this adultist view of the protagonist as "clay to be formed in the skilled hands of […] elders" (Qvortrup 632) is problematic because it ultimately results in mental health issues. Sarah's example is

important because it delineates the difference between children's right to protection from harm – a crucial principle in the UNCRC, and protectionism – the adultist view of young people as in need of control.

The examination of Helen and Chet's treatment of Sarah progressively unfolds their sexist and adultist beliefs. Unlike Bruce who represents what Manderson knows as a "danger to be suppressed" (94), their perception of their young daughter aligns with what Michelle Superle identifies as:

> earlier views on childhood—which remain actively influential today—positioned children as blank slates to be filled with correct ideas so that they could fit into society, or imaginative redeemers whose innocence needed to be preserved so that they could rejuvenate society ("The UNCRC: CCA" 145).

These traditional understandings deprive children of their rights to live in a convivial environment where they can develop to their full potential. King depicts how Sarah's parents look at her as "an imaginative redeemer" as they keep her at a distance from the familial brutalities in an effort to preserve her innocence. An example of this adultist view of Sarah is apparent in the parents' tendency – which the protagonist finds "annoying" (King 12) – to call each other Mom and Dad in her presence to create an illusion of a functional nuclear family but simply use their first names whenever she is not listening (King 12). Indeed, Helen herself admits this continual deceit by confessing: "Chet and I have been lying to her since she was born" (King 156). By thinking that they are protecting her from abusive incidents such as locking her in the balcony while she could still hear all the hitting and the yelling

(King 239), Helen and Chet are forcing Sarah to overlook their issues. By doing so, they force her repression of disagreeable moments and emotions.

The following interpretation reveals how *Still Life with Tornado* challenges adultist parenting by linking the continuous repression of emotions stimulated by Helen and Chet to Sarah's decision to drop out of school. Indeed, as it becomes a habit for the protagonist to contain unfavourable emotions, she is eventually overwhelmed and can no longer cope with all the pressure which prompts her to quit school. The following dialogue between Sarah and her forty-year-old self demonstrates her urging need to mute her emotions:

> 'Do you want to talk about what happened in school?'
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'I know you walked in on Miss Smith kissing Vicky.'
>
> 'So?'
>
> 'So you can't paint over that,' she says
>
> I think I can. I think I can paint over what I saw and unsee it and not tell anyone. I think I have to. (King 127)

The choice of words such as *paint over*, *unsee* and *have to* emphasises the burden of Sarah's compelling habit to hold back her feelings in accordance with her parents' scheme. When confronted with the incident between the art teacher Miss Smith and her classmate Vicky following the scam of the art show – where Sarah's promising project disappeared, and instead Vicky won the first prize – the protagonist attempts to overlook her problems in school just as she is used to do at home. Hence, Sarah's decision to drop out of school without explaining the reasons to Helen and Chet despite their insistence is likened to her

repression of her domestic emotional abuse. The protagonist's inability to address difficult situations in and outside of the family environment acknowledges the detrimental impacts of adultist outlooks and particularly protectionism. This emotional blockage is a crucial element of the story and serves as a significant strategy to challenge the coercive power of adults because it concretises the damage caused by parental control.

Sarah's elaborate psychological characterisation is important in the deconstruction of youth oppression because it contextualises the impact of children's rights violations through what is known to scholars as the unspeakability of trauma (Tang 5; Stampfl 16). An example of this cogent depiction of Sarah is noticeable in her reflection process as she considers: "I think about asking Mom to find me a therapist or something. I can't talk to anyone about anything" (King 137). The protagonist's contemplation of therapy and her inability to open up emphasise an underlying emotional avoidance which Kowalska and others recognise to be an indication of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (17). Sarah's psychological issues manifest through her stream of consciousness depict the child's vulnerability in the face of adultism. Another glimpse on her internal struggles is revealed in her disclosure: "I feel this burr in my chest, right behind the top of my sternum. It's where my tears live. They never come out. Maybe my muse is there, too. Stuck on a burr in my sternum" (King 72). These feelings of helplessness denounce the misuse of power by Chet and Helen all the while sympathising with the young character and her emotional struggles. It is in this sense that the immediacy of the first-person narrative voice of the young protagonist succeeds in depicting the symptoms of trauma both through the choice of words and the used textual techniques. This characterisation evokes Susan Honeyman's condemnation of protectionism in view of its endorsement of the nuclear family paradigm and subjecting children to harm and violations of their rights particularly with regard to participation (4). Accordingly, the

protagonist's disclosure of her psychological dilemma condemns parental control by offering insight into the negative consequences of adultism. However, this depiction of Sarah poses some ambiguities as it first incapacitates the child in the face of adultist threats and then places huge demands and expectations on the child to rise above the challenges (more on this on chapter six).

The narrative perspective in *The Sun Is also a Star* also denounces parental control by showing how it interferes with young people's development and their right to enjoy making art. This is evident in the sixteen-year-old protagonist's assertion that "writing at the kitchen table feels like a luxury. I wouldn't be able to do it if my dad were here. He doesn't disapprove of my poem-writing tendencies out loud, but disapprove he definitely does" (Yoon 28). The analogy between exercising one's right and luxury represents a powerful device exposing Daniel's oppressive circumstances. Moreover, the use of the conditional sentence, *I wouldn't be able to do it if my dad were here,* points out to the father's unquestionable disapproval of his son's inclinations. By denying Daniel the chance to practice his hobby, Dae Hyun is violating his son's right to develop to his full potential. Indeed, in line with the convention's principle of the right to life, survival and development, article 31 recognises "the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts" (*UNCRC* 10). In addition to the family environment, health care, education and school, the committee encourages young people's participation in "play, recreation, sports and cultural activities for their development and socialization" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 25). In the same 2009 general comment about article 12, the committee adds that such leisure pursuits "should be designed taking into account children's preferences and capacities" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 25). Yoon's text brings

to life a depiction of the violation of this article by revealing Daniel's viewpoint regarding his dad's opposition to his love of poetry. In doing so, the novel emphasises the significance of the atmosphere within the household as a crucial setting in the development of young people. Harcourt and Hägglund acknowledge the importance of an appropriate environment where children spend most of their time in securing their wellbeing and encouraging them to exercise their rights freely (286). Building on this viewpoint, Dae Hyun's restrictive attitude towards his son poses a problem in that it hinders his development to his full potential and the practice of his freedoms. Thus, this realist YA fiction narrative pinpoints how the daily settings surrounding children can either play to their advantage and support their growth and security or present an obstacle instead, due to entrenched adultist beliefs and abusive parental control.

Regarding *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*, the daily setting is just as unfavourable for Jay considering her living situation at Vimala's place. The third person narrative voice relies on literary techniques such as tones, plot twists and irony allowing for a strong denunciation of children's rights violations on account of omniscience, objectivity, and credibility. Indeed, this perspective accurately describes Jay's turmoil following the rape as it reads: "There was nothing to look forward to. Everything that was important to her was gone" (Kalhan 260). The internal focalization on the protagonist to describe her despair leads the omniscient narrator to adopt a gloomy tone. The narrator's acknowledgement of the severity of the situation by agreeing with the main character that life is no longer enjoyable emphasises how sexual abuse leads to further threats to the health and development of rape victims. Accordingly, it is argued that the protagonist's contemplation of suicide as the ultimate solution to escape her oppressive circumstances constitutes a poignant literary device of irony: self-destruction is not the answer. The suicide attempt plot twist creates suspense.

Emphasising Jay's willingness to take away her life, the narrator reports: "She was ready; ready to leave her body in the safety of the earth, so she could be set free and finally become a carefree spirit" (Kalhan 261). The instant change of tone from gloomy to bright when talking about suicide – suggested through words carrying positive meanings like *safety*, *free*, and *carefree* – sparks confusion to see the protagonist acting against her own well-being. These strategic literary tools work together to point out the lingering effects of sexual abuse not only as a physical maltreatment in the short term, but also as an enduring psychological agitation hindering the development of the young character.

The expressive language used to describe Jay's change of attitude towards life before and after her abuse is incisive because it concretises the protagonist's experience. The contrasting effect achieved by the antithesis, "There was a time when she loved the sun, loved its warmth and light. Now she prayed for a darkness that was eternal" (Kalhan 263) has a strong impact through the balanced emphasis on the opposite ideas of *light* and *darkness*. Moreover, the musical sound of this rhetorical device creates a memorable and vibrant impression that is likely to denounce the atrocity of children's rights' violations. In doing so, this juxtaposition of opposing outlooks on life offers the possibility of effectively communicating the drastic change in the character's attitude in the aftermath of rape. Kimberley Reynolds recognises the significant need of children's literature to address "disturbing experiences and overwhelming feelings of despair, anger, and frustration" (89) on account of the "positive long-term social and emotional benefits" (89) it offers. Indeed, the exploration of rape is important because of its correlation with adultism considering that adolescents constitute the primary target group of sexual assault (Malo-Juvera 410). Another example of the significant potential of powerful language use is apparent in this dreamy portrayal of suicide: "She wanted to soar, soar high above the clouds" (Kalhan 265). This

descriptive language offers a graphic representation of Jay's positive attitude towards suicide by creating a mental image through the figurative association of death with the freeing act of flying.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror uses hyperbole to address the underreporting of rape as a threat to young people's lives and development due to the endured trauma. Accordingly, the narrator recounts Jay's internal confrontation with despair:

> Jay had lost her life for ever. He had taken everything away from her, and she knew she would never be free of the pain he'd caused. Never. The memory would always be there, no matter how hard she tried to bury it – there wasn't a corner of her mind deep enough or dark enough for it (Kalhan 266).

The loss of life here is used figuratively to prompt the exploration of Jay's feelings of loss and helplessness. The exaggeration shown by words like *for ever*, *everything*, *never*, and *always* acknowledges the "dangerous consequences for adolescent rape survivors" caused by "the chronic underreporting and the absence of help-seeking behaviors" (Malo-Juvera 410-411). Similarly, the imagery of a search in *the corners in the mind* for a place to bury the incident expresses the severity of Jay's inner struggles and desperate attempts to suppress this distress. Indeed, the above figures of speech identify the vulnerability of young rape victims and their reluctance to seek help which presents a further menace to both their right to survive because of suicidal thoughts and to develop due to a decrease in the chance to recover from their traumatic experience. Because of widespread adultist prejudice, young rape victims are reticent about their sexual abuse for fear that they might be mistrusted. This is portrayed in Jay's question to her helper Sita: "'You don't believe me, do you?'"

(Kalhan 181), and in her expectations regarding her mother's reaction: "'she'll be ashamed of me. You know she will. She won't understand. But it wasn't my fault'" (Kalhan 185). According to her statements, the protagonist anticipates negative reactions such as doubts concerning the assault and victim-blaming. Among other factors, studies have shown that young age might negatively affect the credibility of the rape victim due to adult stigmas of teens (Patterson 330; Greeson 93). Thus, Jay's apprehension reveals how adultist prejudice also interferes with the healing process of young rape victims.

Kalhan's YA narrative also reveals how the lingering effects of sexual abuse turn victims such as Jay against themselves by prompting feelings of low self-esteem, self-loathing, and self-hatred, in addition to self-harm thus furthering the threat to one's health and development. This depreciation of oneself is shown in Jay's confession to Sita: "'You see, Sita, I'm a horrible person. I deserve to be dead. Don't try to save me any more'" (Kalhan 275). Jay's unfavourable outlook on herself is congruent with the spreading of rape myth acceptance observed in the previous chapter of this thesis. This raw and thorough psychological characterisation of Jay is a well-thought-out element of the contemporary YA novel because as Michael Cart explains pointing out the significance of richness of character in such texts: "although the actions of the characters may often contain an element of ambiguity, they are never arbitrary or dictated by the needs of a formula or a plot device. It is because they feature such fully formed, beautifully realized, multidimensional characters" (n.p.). Cart's observation applies to the characterisation of Kalhan's protagonist which meticulously traces how adultism and child rights violation impact her resulting in self-blame. Indeed, Jay's words in the preceding quotation reflect her inner struggle as her negative perception of herself distinctly denotes the implications following the traumatic sexual abuse. By mirroring the cognitive process of self-blame through the main character's

words of despair, the text reveals the impact of psychological and sexual abuse on the development of the young girl. By revealing how the intersection of adultism and sexism prompts self-hatred, literary interpretations like “She wished everyone would give up on her. She was a lost cause” (Kalhan 275) act as a wake-up call triggering the urgency to remedy these self-destructive attitudes. Jay’s failure to cope with her misfortunes appears to seriously impede the growth of the protagonist because self-blame leads her also to reject offered help from the people around her.

The Sun Is also a Star provides a similar opportunity to challenge self-loathing through its refutation of adultist outlooks by acknowledging the adverse impact they provoke on young people’s self-esteem. This can be demonstrated in Daniel’s disclosure of how his father’s perception of him influences the way he feels about himself when he recounts: “MY DAD LOOKS AT ME from head to toe, and I feel like the second-rate slacker he’s *always* [emphasis added] taken me for” (Yoon 234). The adverb of frequency *always* proves the father’s unwavering disapproval of his son, his choices, and his actions. Daniel’s uncensored thoughts disclosed in this quotation pinpoint the repercussions of Dae Hyun’s adultist outlook on the protagonist’s perception of himself. The father’s *persisting* condescending attitude is put into question since Daniel’s differing interests and aspirations – he wants to be a poet but is expected to become a doctor – do not imply inferiority nor laziness. Yet, the protagonist admits that Dae Hyun’s contemptuous manners such as looking at him with disdain affect the way he sees himself which presents a threat to his development considering that low self-esteem is associated with “poorer mental and physical health, worse economic prospects, and higher levels of criminal behavior during adulthood” (Trzesniewski et al. 381). The manifestation of Daniel’s self-doubt in his thoughts is clearly demonstrated in his sarcastic attitude when he refers to himself mockingly as

"Premium Yale material right here" (Yoon 234). Implying the opposite of what is said, the protagonist ridicules himself with Dae Hyun's point of view in mind. Tempered by humour, this literary device contributes to the theme of intergenerational conflicts between father and son by condemning Dae Hyun's constant belittling which results in the protagonist's lack of confidence regarding his potential.

YAL can be a useful platform to address the parent-child relationship considering the different textual tools it offers in revealing how age inequality creates a hostile environment for young people. Daniel's descriptive language and figures of speech, for example, succeed in communicating abstract feelings of resentment in a tangible manner thus effectively counteracting Dae Hyun's adultism. This can be demonstrated in this quote: "Sometimes I feel like we're on opposite sides of a soundproofed glass wall. We can see each other but we can't hear each other" (Yoon 151). This concretisation of the antagonistic relationship between father and son through the *soundproofed glass wall* metaphor strengthens the theme of intergenerational conflicts. The inability to hear each other refers to the lack of understanding and ongoing disagreement on how the main character should live his life due to the father's unwillingness to look at things from his son's perspective. The dyadic opposition is unfavourable for Daniel's development on account of the implications of Dae Hyun's apathetic and discouraging words and reactions. Indeed, Kelly E. Buckholdt and others argue that parents are likely to pass on their emotional unavailability to their adolescent children (329). Accordingly, the father's controlling attitude creates an unfavourable environment for Daniel's growth. Another incisive use of metaphor to denounce these oppressive circumstances is "The air around us is still and metallic. He looks at me and through me and past me to some other time" (Yoon 236). This visual representation of the toxic familial atmosphere helps to envision the scenes through the

embodiment of air used to express feelings of animosity. The novel's linguistic tools convey a sentient point of view that is more likely to reveal the detrimental impacts of adultism on youth lives and their development.

King's novel reveals how, despite its unintentionality, the harm inflicted by the parents on their daughter's psyche seriously impedes the latter's development. To that end, she recognises:

> 'I'm having an existential crisis.' […] It's a big deal. It's an even bigger deal now that I realize everyone I ever knew has always been lying to me since I was born. Maybe I was built to get screwed over. Maybe I was trained to be omitted over and over and over again. Exclusion: not at all original (King 216).

The emotional maltreatment endured by Sarah due to all the lies and the broken trust between her and her own parents deeply affects her development. The protagonist's interrogations regarding the purpose of her life attest to her confession to her brother. Sarah's existential crisis resulting from childhood abuse uncovers the durable negative impact the latter entails. Indeed, in their study of child maltreatment, Doyle and Timms maintain that an adult's character and functional ability depends greatly on the childhood lived (52). The protagonist's ongoing struggle with her childhood trauma is apparent in her attempts at uncovering the truth leading to her existential crisis. Lapugean argues that trauma in works of fiction is generally portrayed as a past event which the character is trying to grasp through a search in one's old memories to identify the source of the trauma (89). It is also in this sense that Sarah's reflections through techniques of flashbacks and the disruption of the chronological order, in addition to the switching of focalization between

sixteen-year-old Sarah and ten-year-old Sarah from chapter to chapter reflect her journey to self-understanding and finding her life's purpose to overcome her trauma.

It is this pastness of trauma which emphasises the enduring damage to the individual in the aftermath of child and youth maltreatment. The novel further recognises "the long-lasting effects of child maltreatment" (Dziri 28) through the character of Chet who himself "had a rough childhood" (King 194). This characterisation of the father presents an effective counterargument against child maltreatment by attesting to the World Health Organisation's affirmation regarding the perpetuity and transgenerational transmission of youth maltreatment (4). Indeed, Chet's alarming psychological state during his adulthood warns against the potential long-term damage that can emanate from adultism-based youth maltreatment on persons of all ages.

Still Life with Tornado cleverly portrays the detrimental repercussions of parental adultism in sixteen-year-old Sarah's existential crisis through the suggestion of the split selves. By means of magical realism, Sarah encounters and interacts with her three other selves – ten-year-old Sarah, twenty-three-year-old Sarah, and forty-year-old Sarah – effectively conveying her experience of trauma. This idea of fragmented selves used to convey the experience of trauma points out to the potential of YAL to articulate the struggles of a young individual in relation to larger familial and social systems. Indeed, this formal element of narration emphasised through the protagonist's disclosure: "I feel like I'm two different people. Maybe three. Maybe ten" (King 211) is a good example of the capacity of the novel to portray an engaging representation of child maltreatment. Furthermore, the novel's incorporation of magical elements by introducing unrealistic beings – past and future selves of the protagonist – is hereby interpreted as a textual technique that serves to undermine adultist practices. Don Latham establishes the suitability of magical realism to

tackle the complexity of the young adult novel by finding common ground between magical realism and adolescence in the *in-betweenness* they both reflect, the former midway realism and fantasy and the latter as a phase of life that comes after childhood, but before adulthood (59). Considering the transgressive nature of this literary mode, the scholar insists on the potential that the subversive narrative tools of magical realism bring into the young adult text to help undermine the oppressive power of the adult society (60). In the case of King's novel, the added magical element within the otherwise realist story contributes to the overall plot in putting into question adultist beliefs and practices. Indeed, the existence of the four Sarahs of different age groups in the same place at the same time challenges adultism by recognising childhood and youth as inevitable phases of the cycle of every person's life. The gathering of past, present, and future Sarahs simultaneously suggests that childhood and youth are just as important as adulthood instead of looking at them as ephemeral stages on the way to adulthood. The personification of each phase of Sarah's life promotes equality and emphasises the human dignity and the inherent rights of child Sarah, young adult Sarah, just as much as those of forty-years-old adult Sarah. Accordingly, magical realism here undermines age-based discrimination which targets the two young versions of the same person but exempts the other two.

King's novel effectively challenges both physical and psychological maltreatment by building an analogy between the repercussions of the two forms of abuse. This is apparent in Sarah's confession to her brother of her feelings of guilt for not enduring the same physical violence he and their mother suffered at the hands of Chet (King 212). Bruce's reply to his little sister acknowledges that she is also a victim but of a different form of abuse, namely parental manipulation: '"please don't feel guilty. It's normal to feel this way, but there was nothing you could do about it. They put you in a role and you had to play that role"' (King

212). By placing the novel's focus on Sarah's case even though Bruce was physically abused for so many years before being ultimately kicked out, this narrative recognises the severity of both forms of child maltreatment and their detrimental repercussions. On that note, the following quote from a study on the abuse of children defines the latter as:

> all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation of children that results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power (Norman et al. 02).

This comprehensive definition of child abuse denounces violations of children's rights altogether, no matter the potential impact carried on the victims. In this sense, there should be no distinction between various form of abuse based on the visibility of the harm done on the child's body. On a similar note, Bruce suggests the similarity between physical and emotional abuse to his abusive father as he retorts: "'You think because you stopped beating on us that this isn't the same? It's the same, Dad. You're the same psycho you've always been'" (King 239). Sarah conveys the same message in her assertion "*The absence of violence is not love*" (King 257). Thus, thanks to the elaborate psychological development of the characters, the systematic shifts in focalization between present time Sarah and her younger version throughout the chapters, and the concept of the fragmented selves, *Still Life with Tornado* offers nuanced views on the topic of abuse effectively challenging children's rights violations.

Conclusion

Through its critical reading of the four YA narratives, this chapter pointed out to the significant role performed by adultism in laying the foundation for the violations of children's rights to *life* and *development*. For this purpose, the chapter was divided into two sections in accordance with the two statements of the second principle of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The first part argued that the murder of young African American Khalil in *The Hate U Give* at the hands of the police officer is not only racially motivated, but there are also adultist preconceptions at its roots. Accordingly, this interpretation emphasised the potential of the YA novel in challenging oppressions of young people at a national scale through the contextualisation of interlocking discriminatory systems of power. For this purpose, the focus was on the narrative's thorough depiction of the topic and particularly its powerful references to the precariousness of the lives of African American youth, the criminalisation of this target group, as well as blame shifting and the media's posthumous demonisation of victims. Narrative and stylistic techniques such as the expressive language, the plot twist and the dynamic characterisation were reported to be powerful and effective tools in the pinpointing and deconstruction of abusive outlooks and behaviours.

The subsequent section of the chapter determined the intricacy behind the protection of children's rights to develop into their full potential as per demonstrated in *The Sun Is also a Star*, *Still Life with Tornado*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*. It is thereby identified that adultist prejudice led parents to infringe their children's right to develop whether it is intentionally or not. Whereas the interpretation of the first novel showed the detrimental impact of parental belittling outlooks on a young person's self-esteem, the reading of Kalhan's novel emphasised the denunciation of rape myth acceptance by revealing its severe impact on the victim. As for *Still Life with Tornado*, adultism in

conjunction with sexism was established as the primary motive behind the parental psychological abuse of the protagonist and the physical maltreatment of her older brother. This novel offered the possibility to problematise the discourse of children's rights at the family level through the integration of overt and subtle parental violations of their children's rights all the while acknowledging serious short-term and long-term damage to the young characters regardless of the parents' good or bad intentions. Overall, this chapter relied on critical discourse analysis to discuss themes, characters, and motives in the identification of harmful stereotypes denoting the ways in which adultism contributes in the facilitation of threats to children's rights to life on the one hand and to development on the other as per shown in the four primary texts.

CHAPTER THREE

Adultism and the Best Interest of the Child

"'She wanted what's best for us.'

'I hate to kill the forgiving mood,

but this was not the best for us.'" (King 210).

Introduction

The principle of the child's best interests is a tricky concept because it is often not only misconstrued by adults, but also used as an excuse to violate other rights and principles. In other cases, it is altogether dismissed. The following readings of the four chosen young adult novels seek to identify the challenges preventing the young protagonists from fully enjoying this particular right. For this purpose, it is crucial to establish the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the centre of this literary analysis to distinguish between the different ways in which this principle can be manipulated and violated by the adult characters in the narratives. According to the third article of the treaty, the principle of the child's best interests is acknowledged as a top priority in every single action relating to young people (U.N.CRC 2). Indeed, there are several direct references throughout the convention insisting on the paramount importance of considering the child's best interests while implementing different rights. This applies for example in article 9 relating to the separation of children from their parents (U.N.CRC 3), in article 18 requiring parents to share the same responsibilities in raising their children, or in article 21 concerning adoption matters (U.N.CRC 6). Other references insisting on the predetermination of young people's best interests include article 37 and 40 pertaining to children deprived of liberty (U.N.CRC 10), and those on trial (U.N.CRC 11).

In its consideration of the selected primary texts from the perspective of the best interests' principle, this chapter aims to determine the impact of adultism on the implementation of this right. To do so, the chapter is divided into two sections classifying the infringements of the young characters' best interests as illustrated in the four chosen young adult novels. The first part will identify how adultism might lead adult parents in *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), *The Hate U Give* (2017), *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) to misinterpret the young protagonist's best interests regardless of their good or bad intentions. In its analysis of the two last narratives, the second part will focus on pinpointing the detrimental impact of adultism resulting in the complete disregard of the principle under discussion. In order to bridge between adultism and either the manipulations or disregard of the young characters' best interests, the analysis will focus predominantly on realism to reveal the significance of the reliance on this literary mode in the critique of adultism. Therefore, the research questions include the interpretation of how the narrative structure serves to condemn adultist actions for instance, and how the exploration of the characters' quotidian is indicative of the deep-seated adultist beliefs embedded within the story. Realism's attention to detail is also of great importance to this analysis because it is likely to pinpoint cues reinforcing the overall arguments. This chapter relies heavily on pinpointing the significance of literary language and various narrative devices to challenge adultism and the infringement of the young characters' best interests.

Adultism and the misinterpretation of the child's best interests

A prominent illustration of the manipulation of the best interests' principle in *The Hate U Give* is identified in the adultist actions of the mother Iesha towards her children. This is noted in her reaction when her son Seven asks for assistance: "'Help you?' she echoes with a

laugh" (Thomas 379). The mocking tone along with Iesha's laughter show the mother's indifference as well as condescension towards her child in time of need. He starts again by calling her Momma and she immediately interrupts him: "'Now I'm Momma?'" Iesha's words suggest a vengeful attitude. The following quotation explicitly proves that she is holding grudges against her son:

> 'What happened to that 'Iesha' shit from the other week? Huh, Seven? See, baby, you don't know how the game work. Let Momma explain something to you, okay? When DeVante [her son's friend] stole from King [her husband, the leader of the neighbourhood's most dreaded gang], he earned an ass whooping. He got one. Anybody who helps him is asking for it too, and they better be able to handle it.' (Thomas 379)

Direct speech contributes significantly to the characterization and when a character's statements are about other characters, the speech has a dual function of integrating at once the characterization of both the speaker and the object of the speech (Nikolajeva *The Rhetoric of Character* 187). The mother's statements in the example above are instrumental to the characterization of her role vis-à-vis her son by portraying her as the perpetrator of children's rights violations, and Seven as the young good-hearted helper of his friend who is deprived of motherly affection. The mother's adultist treatment of Seven is evident in her demeaning expressions *See, baby, you don't know*… and *Let Momma explain*… Here, the words *baby* and *Momma* carry negative connotations expressing binary opposition of the child versus the adult. The capitalisation of the first letter in Momma further emphasises this distinction. Instead of referring to the mother-son closeness, *baby* and *Momma* rather

establish a profound divide between the two. This contrasting effect places Seven as the inexperienced and naïve child as opposed to the all-knowing mother. Iesha here is openly belittling her son.

Adultism is also expressed in the low expectations for Seven to grasp the big picture. In addition, Iesha seems to be supportive and approving of her husband's aggressive actions against DeVante. The latter suffered an attack resulting in a bruise around the eye, a swollen bleeding nose, and a cut in the lip. King also pushed his daughter Kenya as she tried to stop him from hurting DeVante (Thomas 377). Iesha shows her husband an unquestionable support by being indifferent to her daughter's wellbeing as well as that of DeVante. Furthermore, Iesha threatens her son in the last sentence not to oppose King's decisions as she justifies the latter's violent behaviour. Strong threats against young people, even when there is no looming risk or danger, are identified to be common practices among adults as a means to provoke fear and apprehension in younger generations (Fletcher, Adultism Kills:). This adultist tendency is dangerous because it leads to further antagonistic intergenerational conflicts whereby young people could live constantly in fear and distrust of adults. Indeed, Iesha's threatening words and adultist attitude prompt feelings of animosity between her and her son. This is portrayed in Starr's observation that "Seven's glare says what he doesn't" (Thomas 380). The fierce stare pinpoints Seven's deep anger towards his mother.

The novel then goes on to depict Iesha's adultist threats and mocking attitude as an act she put up to conceal her altruism. However, the reading of the following excerpt reveals the underlying manipulation of Seven's best interests as well as those of his two sisters regardless of Iesha's purported good intentions. Opening Seven's eyes to his mother's well-meant actions, the protagonist explains: "'She knows King will go off when he sees DeVante's gone, […] If Kenya's not there, Lyric's not there, who do you think he's gon' take it

out on?'" (Thomas 381). Starr's realisation leads to the conclusion that Iesha might have behaved out of a selfless concern for her children's safety because it is likely that King will be violent against her once he finds out that DeVante has escaped from his house. Iesha seems to be hereby applauded for putting herself at risk of being abused by her husband to protect her three children. This is acknowledged in Starr's reflection that: "He [Seven]'s been hurt by his momma so much that when she does something *right* [emphasis added] he's blind to it" (Thomas 381). While Starr recognises the damage Iesha caused to her son over the years, she believes according to this statement that the mother is for once looking after her children's best interests rather than harming them. This depiction is problematic because it downplays the detrimental impacts of this toxic living environment controlled by an abusive husband and father. Indeed, Iesha's deed might have saved the children from physical abuse in the short term, but there is an oversight of the deeper problem of adultism.

Seven, Kenya, and Lyric might have been spared their father's violence for the time being, but they still endure their mother's harsh words. The principle of the child's best interests in this example is manipulated in a way that overlooks the importance of a healthy living environment and the love and support of parents or caregivers. In the general comment established to guarantee the proper implementation of this principle, the committee on the rights of the child insists on assessing and determining all the elements of children's best interests depending on the specific case before taking action (12). Iesha in this example fails to consider her children's psychological wellbeing. In addition to her indifferent attitude and hurtful words towards Seven, she is also unkind towards her two girls. This is evident when she addresses her son ordering: "'And take your sisters. […] Take them to your grandma's or something, I don't care. Get them out my face. I'm trying to get my party on, [obscenity]'" (Thomas 380). The cursing and the careless tone point out the

mother's inaptitude to raise the children in a healthy environment. Regardless of Iesha's good intentions to protect the children from King's violence, the solution she chooses does not ensure their best interests. On the contrary, these harsh words show neglect and psychological abuse on the part of the mother. All the rights under the convention are of equal importance as explains the general committee on the Rights of the children:

> 'an adult's judgment of a child's best interests cannot override the obligation to respect all the child's rights under the Convention.' It recalls that there is no hierarchy of rights in the Convention; all the rights provided for therein are in the "child's best interests" and no right could be compromised by a negative interpretation of the child's best interests. (3)

The novel's interpretation of Iesha's actions seems to prioritize one right over the other. Due to the embedded adultism in the mother's attitude, she does not seem to realize that patronising her children in that manner and the constant verbal abuse is just as detrimental to their health as their father's physical mistreatment. Vanessa Joosen writes that "even adults who claim they have the best interest of the child in mind may thus be revealed to be childist" (Joosen, "The Adult as Foe or Friend?" 206). The internalised adultist beliefs misguide parents and adults in general in thinking they are doing what it best for children. The example in the novel reveals that regardless of the good intentions behind Iesha' actions, entrenched adultism prevents the proper assessment and determination of young people's best interests. Even though the novel depicts this gesture as a well-intentioned act of self-sacrifice on the part of the mother for the benefit of her children, it is hereby argued

that raising them in this violent environment puts not only their safety and wellbeing at risk, but also hers.

On the topic of the manipulation of young people's best interests at the hands of their parents, *Still Life with Tornado* is a significant read portraying deep seated adultist beliefs as well as the drastic impacts they are likely to provoke. As her brother informs her about all the domestic violence that was going on under their roof when they were growing up, Sarah cannot help but acknowledge that their best interests were widely misconstrued. This is evident in the siblings' dialogue: "'She [their mother] wanted what's best for us.' [says Bruce] | 'I hate to kill the forgiving mood, but this was not the best for us. Not for her, not for you, and not even for me.' [replies Sarah] | 'I can't deny that.'" (King 210). The protagonist's conversations with her brother about their past and the domestic physical and emotional abuse helped her gain an understanding of her trauma. The precise listing in the negative form *not for her, not for you, and not even for me* denotes the firmness in her voice and the categorical conclusion regarding the mis-implementation of their best interests. The bitter tone of her reply to Bruce shows that Sarah recognises that their best interests have been entirely misinterpreted. Lapugean writes that it is through linguistic awareness that the healing of traumatised people can finally start to take place (88). It is only after Sarah glues the pieces of their story together and succeeds in verbalising what happened that she is able to move forward. Language, according to Lapugean, has proved to be an effective tool with a great potential to guide to a thorough processing and grasping of the traumatic incident. Thus, the scholar explains that the narrative form transforms the haunting traumatic event into a memory stored and recalled at will (Lapugean 88). Hence, having put her recollections in chronological order led the protagonist to conclude that their parents failed to properly comply with hers and Bruce's best interests.

For the mother Helen, it is revealed that as much as she tried to look after her daughter and ensure the protection of her best interests, her nursing job and night shifts prevented her from doing so properly. When advised by her son to force Chet out of the house, Helen responds "'That's been the problem all along,' Mom says. 'I can't leave her [referring to Sarah] alone at night'" (King 256). The mother's reply and the disappointment in her tone of voice prove that she has indeed considered separation from her husband for her wellbeing as well as that of Sarah, but she did not proceed with it due to her working situation. Because Helen works night shifts, she assumes that it is better for the family to stay together so she can leave Sarah in the care of her father while she's at work. However, article 9 of the convention clearly states that while *family life* is a right, there are instances where the separation from parents is rather crucial to seek the best interests of the child. Child abuse or neglect by the parents are cited as the main examples of such cases (U.N.CRC 3). Because Chet falls into this category of abusive and neglectful parents, the children must not be left under his care.

It turns out that the chosen solution to keep the family united under the same roof that was meant to ensure Sarah's best interests is indeed the source of the violation of this very right. Listening to Bruce and Helen's serious talk mentioned in the previous paragraph, the young protagonist considers the situation: "This makes me feel like the problem-all-along but I decide not to think about it. Judging from the tornado in our house right now [her father is breaking glass and furniture], I know she [Helen] doesn't mean it that way. We all know who the problem-all-along is" (King 256). This extract emphasises the psychological displacement of the young character agitating her sense of identity. McCallum acknowledges this destabilising impact as a prominent element of character displacement in narrative fiction as she argues that it can either impair notions of selfhood or rather affirm them

(McCallum 100). In the case of Sarah, a disturbance in her perception of her self-worth is evident through her words. This is seen in her worries that it could be her fault that her mother had to put up with her father's abuse for all these years. However, she also demonstrates a notable affirmation of her role as she quickly dismisses the blame off her shoulders and acknowledges with certainty (*I know*) that it is not the meaning intended by her mother. The tornado inside the house is a reference to Chet and his violent behaviour. This metaphor is a literary symbol denoting the chaos and the madness that are unfolding under the victims' eyes while Sarah, Bruce, and their mother wait outside of the house hearing clashes of wood and glass (King 255). After years of being subjected to Chet's irrational conduct and continuous abuse, they are now seeing him as he truly is and realising (*we all know*) that he was *the problem-all-along*. In similar instances where the character is decoding the discourse around the object of displacement, McCallum recognises the potential of the examination of the impact of linguistic parameters on the character's cognition (100). The protagonist's attempts at linking all that she overhears, that she remembers, or that she witnesses participate together in her construction of subjectivity. Accordingly, once the family's troubles and her mental health issues are connected to her father's violent behaviour, Sarah exhibits a mistrust towards him. After all his yelling, cursing, and the breaking of furniture, Chet comes at the door and asks Helen and Sarah to come in as he apologizes. Judging from the gained knowledge, Sarah sets new intentions thinking to herself: "I decide that if I go in, I'm keeping my umbrella open" (King 256). The umbrella in this instance symbolises the protagonist's scepticism vis-à-vis her father as she relies on herself to ensure her protection. By keeping her umbrella open, she would be shielding herself against his abuse. This wariness is also perceived when she states: "I guess it doesn't really matter what kind of umbrella you have–as long as it keeps the bullshit off

you" (King 260). Thus, the protagonist is taking matters into her hands by using the umbrella as a shield to look after herself. Sarah's determination to protect herself pinpoints her awareness of her father's manipulative tendencies.

The manipulation of the protagonist's best interests at the hands of her father continues in the following exchange between the two. Sarah tries to make Chet aware of the seriousness of the situation by requesting him to reconsider his actions: "'Can you see yourself?' I ask. 'Can you see what you just did? Look around, Dad. You have problems. Okay?' | 'At least I have a high school diploma' (King 259) 'Touché, Dad'" (King 259). Chet's adultist reaction proves that instead of indulging in self-reflection, he would rather find a way to blame it on others. Therefore, when confronted with the harsh truth disclosing his violent behaviour and anger issues, instead of admitting to his faults, the father further attempts to verbally abuse his daughter. Chet's pitiful counterattack denotes the adultist manipulation of his child's best interests in a way to prioritize one right over the other. Fletcher argues that "Adultism also becomes apparent through mental abuse as paternalism and infantilism permit adults to deliver constant verbal put-downs, […]" (36). Chet's retort to his daughter shows that he has no consideration for her mental wellbeing. According to his response, he claims that her right to have a proper education is more important than living in a healthy environment free of domestic abuse. The committee on the rights of the children recognises that it is a customary tendency among caregivers, governments, or other State authorities to abuse children's best interests for a variety of purposes whether by manipulating the principle or ignoring it altogether in some cases. The cited examples of reasons behind such violations include institutional rationalisation of racist programs and the parents' prioritisation of their own interests over those of their children such as in

custody conflicts (9). In the case of Chet, his manipulation of his daughter's right serves his own interests and allows him to stay in control of the family matters.

The real motifs behind Chet's manipulation of Sarah's rights are revealed to be entirely selfish. When Helen tells him to leave the house, he contests in exasperation: "'Give me a break! I just got fired'" (King 256). After hiding it to the family for a while, Chet finally admits that he lost his job proving that he's the one who needs them and not the other way around. He acknowledges this verbally: "'I need you guys'" (King 257). Sarah reports Chet's following words: "'It's embarrassing when a man gets fired,' he says. Art. Art. Art (King 257). The protagonist's sarcastic comment following her father's explanation as to why he lied, in addition to her mother's cynical tone as she replies "'Where are you from, Chet? The 1950s?'" (King 257) emphasise their distrust towards him. Realising that self-victimisation is not working and that his family has lost faith in him, he instantly brings up their parenting deal which is supposed to last until Sarah turns eighteen years old. For that, he merely objects: "'Helen. Please. You can't kick me out now. Sarah has two more years.'" | "'I'm fine, Dad.' I keep telling myself that I'm not the problem all-along." | "'You're a kid! You don't even go to school!'" (King 257). The husband's retorts show his selfishness, desperation, and adultism. This extract discloses that while pretending to have his daughter's best interests in mind, Chet is using Sarah's young age and vulnerability as an excuse to remain in control of the family. The change in the tone of his voice from imploring Helen, to controlling and abusing towards Sarah provides ample evidence of his manipulative ways. His patronising interjection at Sarah that she is a *kid* reflects his egocentricity, as well as the fact that he fails to identify her mental health issues as the reason why she does not go to school. Moreover, he does not realise that what she needs the most is a protection from this abusive environment. Chet seems to use the motif to stay in the family for Sarah's own benefit to

shield himself rather than his daughter. According to article 9 of the UNCRC insisting on parent-child separation when required for the best interests of the child (3), Sarah's separation from her father is hereby recognised as necessary for her wellbeing considering all the years of psychological abuse and neglect she suffered.

The following reading of *The Sun Is also a Star* reveals that adultist beliefs mislead parents in determining their children's best interests by focusing on the latter's future as adults instead of their current wellbeing as young people. This is seen in Dae Hyun's consideration of his son's future career, marriage, and the overall American dream as he explains:

> 'The only thing that matters is what is good for you. Your mother and I only care about what is good for you. You go to school, you become a doctor, you be successful. Then you never have to work in a store like this. Then you have money and respect, and all the things you want will come. You find a nice girl and have children and you have the American Dream. Why would you throw your future away for temporary things that you only want right now?' (Yoon 235-236)

While Dae Hyun believes to have Daniel's best interests at heart, all his projections aim towards the protagonist's future life and prosperity. The father's argument depicts Daniel's present life as only a path towards adulthood. This view is discriminatory because it belittles the present of young people to an investment while denoting adulthood as the objective. The expression *temporary things that you only want right now* pinpoint the father's adultist views and carelessness about his son's *current* wants and interests. This idea is problematic because it perceives youth as an insignificant and fleeting phase of life that is not worthy of

consideration. Meanwhile, the same passage expresses a longing for adulthood as a desired future state where one can finally enjoy the long-term results of the sacrifices made earlier in life. Therefore, Dae Hyun's attitude is identified as a violation of Daniel's best interests. According to the committee on the rights of the child, the fundamental purpose of this principle is to challenge beliefs, outlooks, and behaviours failing to recognise that young people are entitled to their own rights (5). There is a clear conflicting tension in Dae Hyun's role as a parent. He is so keen on ensuring his son's future success that he fails to assess the present best interests. The committee insists that the proper implementation of this principle entails a consideration of all the physical, psychological, moral, as well as spiritual factors of children's well-being, in addition to the recognition of their value as a human beings (Committee on the Rights of the Children 4). Whereas Dae Hyun's wishes might come from a good place, the claims he made above demonstrate that he made no effort to reflect on Daniel's psychology and how these pressuring projections about the future could negatively impact him in the present moment.

Having identified that Daniel's best interests are misinterpreted and manipulated by his father, it is important to denote how this leads to further violations of the protagonist's rights. Whereas the interpretation of Daniel's participatory rights is the subject of the next chapter, this part establishes an irrevocable link between the violation of Daniel's best interests on the one hand, and his participatory rights on the other. Tobin maintains that in advocating for child- and youth rights to participation, article 12 additionally implies that the best interests of children cannot be exclusively determined by adults (Tobin 431). This view supports the notion that parents like Dae Hyun cannot decide on their children's best interests on their own. Instead, Daniel should have a saying in the matter for a better assessment and determination of his best interests. In this case, by ensuring the protagonist

best interests, his participatory rights would also be respected. Tobin's argument is grounded in the social interest theory of rights he offers throughout his work as a new dynamic conception of rights (395). By doing so, Tobin seeks to extend the reading of the UNCRC to elucidate the ambiguities preventing the full implementation of children's rights. Thus, he endorses the idea that the principles under the convention (such as children's best interests and right to participation) are complementary rather than conflicting. Moreover, the UN Committee supports this view as it insists that: "in fact, there can be no correct application of article 3 if the components of article 12 are not respected. Likewise, article 3 reinforces the functionality of article 12, facilitating the essential role of children in all decisions affecting their lives" (18). Hence, Daniel's right to take part in making decisions should not be overshadowed by that of his best interests because the former provision also indicates that he has a saying in what is indeed best for him. In this sense, all the rights under the convention are interconnected and equally important, and thus should not be regarded as detached and contradictory principles.

In *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018), Savita Kalhan draws a similar picture of adultist parenting leading to the disregard of the protagonist's views in assessing and determining her best interests. Like Dae Hyun, the mother Neela takes a decision directly affecting the life of her daughter Jay – moving into their relatives' house – all by herself, then informs her afterwards without seeking her consent. In addition, Kalhan's scenario also depicts the same controversial argument as Daniel's father referring to the best interest principle when Neela states that: "'It's for the best'" (Kalhan 30). The mother's dominant tone and neglect of Jay's opinion on this issue (see chapter four) marks a clear example of adultcentrism which Fletcher defines as "the practice of regarding adult[sic], including their opinions, interests and actions, above young people's opinions, intrests and actions" (7). It is

this bias towards adults, which according to Fletcher, "*systematizes* adultism" as it regulates youth subordination (43). Young people's best interests cannot be ensured without first addressing entrenched adultist beliefs. The latter are likely to delude even adults with good intentions into believing they are doing the right thing when in truth they are violating various principles. Furthermore, these infringements of children's rights often come at a great cost as demonstrate the young adult narratives under discussion. In the example of Jay, the outcomes are detrimental not only to the protagonist's psychology, but also to her physical health as determined throughout the rest of the chapter.

Adultism and the disregard of the child's best interests

There is a poignant example of the total disregard of the best interests of one's child portrayed in *The Hate U Give*. This is expressed through the perspective of young Starr as she reproachfully criticises her late friend's mother: "Khalil needed you, I wanna say. He waited for you and cried for you. But where were you? You don't get to cry now. Nuh-uh. It's too late" (Thomas 93). The protagonist's display of emotion through this conversational tone emphasises her disdain towards Khalil's mother, Brenda, who failed to provide a proper care for her son while growing up. The attention-grabbing rhymes of her sentences pinpoint at once Khalil's sorrowful quotidian as a child and Brenda's carelessness towards him. Starr's colloquial interjection *Nuh-uh.* suggests a clear-cut disagreement with Brenda's parenting style. The realist literary form allows for a detailed account of the violation of the second principle which is evident in the accurate description of the characters. In this respect, Starr makes an attentive remark to Brenda's red eyes by connecting them to an image drawn by Khalil years ago: "Her red eyes remind me of what Khalil said when we were little, that his momma has turned into a dragon" (Thomas 92). Starr's observation presents a mixed

analepsis to emphasise the continuity of Brenda's addiction from an earlier time preceding the beginning of the novel's plot and lasting through the extent of this plot. The red eyes expose the mother's addiction to drugs and the metaphor of the dragon here is a symbol of the evil and the untamed. The meaning of the name Brenda reinforces this depiction as it is linked to a "Germanic word meaning 'flame' or 'sword'" (Collins Dictionary n.p.). According to Nikolajeva, name giving to secondary characters in children's fiction is a significant strategy of implicit characterization because names are strongly related to identity (*The Rhetoric of Character* 212). While the name Brenda when associated with the words flame and sword could refer to feminine strength and energy, in this specific example it appears to carry rather pejorative connotations of the dragon's flame as an uncontrollable force of destruction to denote the mother's negative portrayal. According to article 18 of the convention ensuring that the child's best interests are the parents' main priority (U.N.CRC 5), Khalil's right is entirely dismissed. Starr reports to what extent Brenda was absent from her son's life even during important times: "'How come she gets to be upset? She wasn't there for Khalil. You know how many times he cried about her? Birthdays, Christmas, all that. Why does she get to cry now?'" (Thomas 94). The consecutive rhetorical questions indicating completing analepses pinpoint Starr's vehemence as she seeks to persuade her mother of how horrible Khalil's mother has been to him throughout his childhood. The main character's bafflement vis-à-vis Brenda's grief following Khalil's murder reveals the latter's total neglect of her son when he was alive even during memorable events such as his birthdays.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror is yet another narrative that is replete with examples of the violation of children's best interests. The adult perpetrator this time is an aunt disregarding the safety and wellbeing of the young Jaya. As the latter moves with her

mother into her aunt Vimala's house in exchange for helping with the domestic chores, the omniscient narrator reports: "Jay had assumed she would be sharing a room with her mum, and the thought of being stuck down here on her own – in the furthest reaches of the house, with her mum two floors away – was disturbing" (Kalhan 48-49). The narrator's accessible and succinct language as well as the all-knowing point of view suggest a shocking turn of events in the life of Jaya following this change of setting. The latter is a compelling element contributing to the characterization by signalling not only the character's frame of mind, but also the power position (Nikolajeva, *The Rhetoric of Character* 214). Indeed, the narration in this extract closely associates the protagonist's emotional state with the disempowering new setting which functions as a catalyst for Jay's downfall. This example also acknowledges the young character's subordinate position by pointing out how Jay's social environment is imposed on her despite her displeasure. The grim choice of words in this description such as *stuck*, *on her own*, and *disturbing* signal the protagonist's new alarming living conditions. In addition, the narrator focuses on the separation of Jay from her mom specifying the distance between the two through the superlative form in *furthest reaches*. This example is reminiscent of article 9 of the UNCRC warning against the separation of children from their parents without their consent because this is a breach of the child's best interests (U.N.CRC 3). Even though the separation in this case is still within the same house, the outcome is rather worrisome. Whereas the mother Neela is given a room in the attic, Jay's is in the basement. This is interpreted as a breach of the second principle due to the emphasis laid on it and the consequences that follow primarily in the mother-daughter relationship, but also in other severe repercussions leading up to alcohol consumption without adult supervision and rape as will be examined in the upcoming paragraphs.

The narrator insists on the infringement of Jay's best interests by continuously referring to the detachment that is slowly but surely making its way between the young protagonist and her mother. On that account, it is written that: "they *hardly* [emphasis added] saw each other," "she [Neela] *never* [emphasis added] came down to the basement," "the distance between the attic and the basement grew bigger on a daily basis – as did the gulf between her and her mum" (Kalhan 66). The adverbs of frequency *hardly* and *never* emphasise the falling apart of Neela and Jay's bond. Further attesting to the relevance of the setting to the characterization, the analogy drawn between the two rooms on the one hand, and the mother-daughter disconnectedness from the other puts the blame on Vimala's problematic decision to separate the young girl from her mother. This example is interpreted as a parent-child separation which article 9 of the UNCRC warns against for the best interests of the child (3). Under such circumstances, Neela even misses her daughter's birthday for the first time (Kalhan 67). At some point, Jay breaks open to her mother concerning their living situation: "We never see each other anymore, haven't you noticed? I – I miss you, Mum" (Kalhan 104). The protagonist's use of the adverb of frequency *never* and the rhetorical question create a dramatic impact portraying the gravity of the situation as an attempt to raise the mother's awareness about this hostile environment. The strategic pause in the last sentence just before opening up is a powerful tool bringing attention to her vulnerability as a young person and the need for the presence of her parent in her life. The tone in this excerpt depicts Jay's cry of despair to Neela and a longing to win her back. The narrator identifies Jay's internal as well as external conflict due to this dilemma noting that "it was hard maintaining a calm exterior when inside she was boiling over with anger and frustration and – and loneliness" (Kalhan 105). The use of the verb *boiling over* indicates the intensity of Jay's struggle to a point that can no longer be contained. The intentional pause before

loneliness acknowledges the seriousness of this feeling. The protagonist's living condition is deeply affecting her mental and emotional health. All these quotations emphasise the importance of motherhood and the presence of the mother figure in the life of her young daughter which is a dominant theme in this novel.

As the protagonist's external and internal struggles reach a culminating point, she presents her arguments one more time to her mother pinpointing how she desperately needs her:

> Mummy, we had less money when we lived in the flat, but we could be ourselves – and laugh and smile and giggle as much as we wanted. We were together. Don't you remember? We weren't that much more broke than we are now. Can we move, Mum? Please, will you think about it? (Kalhan 105)

The use of the past tense is incisive to the protagonist's argument. It suggests a nostalgic tone as Jay reminisces about the old happy memories that she shared with her mom previously to moving into Vimala's house. In this extract, Jay resorts to pathos to evoke a keen sense of empathy in her mother. The positive word choice used to talk about the past such as *smile*, *laugh*, and *giggle* illustrates how happy they used to be compared to the loneliness and dreariness they are currently enduring (see the preceding paragraph). Then, Jay summarises her case in the succinct and straightforward, yet poignant sentence *We were together*, followed by a rhetorical question. The protagonist concludes her arguments imploring the mother to reconsider this living situation. The nostalgic tone, the flashbacks, and the word choice are all incisive in appealing to the mother's emotions to influence her decision to move out. Above all, this cry for help points out Jay's longing to emotionally

reconnect with her mother. This depiction supports Selin Onayli and Ozgur Erdur-Baker's research findings endorsing the significance of connectedness between mothers and daughters for the latter's self-esteem and overall psychological and social functioning (329). Indeed, the novel constantly goes back to pinpointing Jay's vital need to either talk to her mother or be with her throughout the different life struggles she is facing.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror acknowledges the pivotal role that the presence of a mother plays in the life of a young girl. Accordingly, the best interests of the protagonist depend heavily on her mother's help and care especially through the difficult times she is confronting. For example, when Jay found herself stuck in her room in the basement and felt insecure with her drunken malevolent cousin Deven partying with his friends right outside of her door, her mind went straight to her mother. The narrator reports that "She climbed up on to her desk, hoping to get a glimpse of her mum" (Kalhan 123). This proves that in times of need, the young girl seeks her mother to navigate such challenging situations. Again, the narrator emphasises the same thing after Deven found her alone in her room and started to behave inappropriately: "Her mum would come down. They hadn't seen each other all day" (Kalhan 132). Even though Jay feels that Neela is increasingly drifting away from her, she cannot help but count on her mother when she is at risk. These excerpts portray the mother as the saviour who is bound to come to the child's rescue in times of need. However, because Vimala separated Neela from her daughter, the latter is compelled to do something to shorten the distance between them. Accordingly, the protagonist is determined to open her mother's eyes once and for all. Having been a victim of molestation, it is noted that: "Fresh tears sprang to her eyes and her body heaved as sobs tore through her. Tomorrow she would force her mum to listen – and she wouldn't spare her any details. |Surely Mum would have to do something about it then?" (Kalhan 143). The descriptive language reveals

Jay's great physical pain as well as a deep emotional distress. The decisiveness to *force Neela to listen* insists on the importance of healthy conversational exchanges between mothers and daughters. Indeed, Haley Kranstuber Horstman's work recognises the mother-daughter dyad's worth in the development of childhood resilience through storytelling specifically about struggles (1163). The mother's love, support, and understanding are powerful tools that are likely to help Jay and guide her throughout any challenges. The absence of the mother figure from the life of the protagonist is considered a violation of her best interests because it deprives her from the positive influence that Neela can bring about especially in these difficult times. The young girl is denied the motherly bond that is likely to nurture resilience in her to help her face and overcome different hardships.

The cruel separation from her mother is not the only violation of Jay's best interests in Aunt Vimala's house. The choice of the room that is given to the protagonist raises a lot of questions regarding the safety and wellbeing of the young girl. The description of the path leading to Jay's room alone sounds menacing. "She [Vimala] led Jay to the bottom of the steps, past the utility room and through the narrow corridor" (Kalhan 47). The expressions *bottom of the steps* and *narrow corridor* carry negative figurative connotations of descension and constriction. Symbolically speaking, this passageway could refer to the protagonist's state of being leading her thus downwards and further restricting her. Indeed, going down the staircase indicates the destructive journey awaiting Jay. This extract builds tension as it signals the complication of the narrative. This depiction is reminiscent of *the imprisonment of a character by the villain*, one of Vladimir Propp's acts of villainy set to introduce the complication in fairy tales (34). Vimala here performs the role of the villain as she leads the main character to the basement which is interpreted as a prison. This example reveals the resourcefulness of YAL in borrowing the structure of fairy tales and readjusting it to the

contemporary realist narrative by moving away from *the happily ever after* promise as will be noted in the following chapters. This example pinpoints how form contributes to condemning the aunt's adultist choice of bedroom for Jay by equating it with imprisonment in fairy tales. The narrator's words are premonitory and allude to the forthcoming unpleasant events. The protagonist's misfortunes start the minute she reaches the room that is assigned to her in the basement. From the narrator's description of the place, it appears to be an inhospitable and an unsafe environment. Signalling the room's uninhabitability, it is explained that: "It wasn't exactly a dark, dank dungeon with iron bars across the windows, but it did feel like a prison" (Kalhan 49). On another occasion, Jay's room is directly referred to as "the dungeons of Primrose Avenue [the name of the neighbourhood]" (Kalhan 60). The comparison between the room and a prison suggests its unsuitability for a fifteen-year-old girl. *Bleakness* is used to describe the atmosphere within it (Kalhan 49) emanating feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, and anxiety. Another reference to this prisonlike grimness and the negative thoughts it brings about is pinpointed in the description of Jay's evenings in her room as "solitary confinement in the cellar" (Kalhan 63). At some point, the protagonist discloses to her mother: "My room is like a morgue. I can't bear it!" (Kalhan 106). The exclamation denotes Jay's suffering trapped in this unsafe room. These living conditions fail to ensure her best interests because they do not provide her with a safe environment where she can develop to her full potential.

In addition to the separation from her mother and the isolation of the protagonist in the basement, Uncle Bal on his turn has also disregarded the child's best interests by offering her alcohol the evening of his birthday party and leaving her without parental care or adult supervision. In this regard, the narrator relates:

> And then Jay's uncle surprised her again. He weaved his way back towards her, bearing a plastic cup, which he thrust into her hand with a slurred, 'Thank you for helping, Jaya. You are a very good girl. A beautiful young lady. Here. We need to get you into the party mood!' (Kalhan 115).

The verbs *weaved* and *slurred* suggest the uncle's drunken state. The beverage turned out to be a cup of wine. Whereas the UK law allows young people of 16 and 17 to consume alcohol – beer, wine, or cider – with a meal, the condition is that it must be under adult supervision (Gov.UK). In the novel, Jay has just turned fifteen a month before this occasion (Kalhan 75). Jacqui Wise reports the advice of England's chief medical officer (CMO) insisting on the importance of safeguarding young people consuming alcohol between the ages of 15 and 17 by an adult parent or caregiver (Wise). This guidance is not ensured in the case of Jay because the drunk uncle goes his way as soon as he hands her the cup of wine. In the meantime, her mother is busy cooking and serving for the party while the aunt is entertaining and talking to her guests. Therefore, the uncle, drunk as he is, does not take the young protagonist's best interests into consideration and leaves her at risk through his action.

The uncle's negligent act leads to even more serious violations of Jay's rights as the alcohol consumption causes her to feel lethargic and exposes her to danger. It is narrated that "Halfway through the drink, when her head felt like it was about to drift off with the white puffy clouds floating across the sky, Jay topped her glass up with orange juice" (Kalhan 115). The imagery drawn in this extract thoroughly describes the effect of wine on the young protagonist as she slowly loses consciousness. The narrator insists on the depiction of the wine's impact by pointing that "The wine had made her drowsy" (Kalhan 117), and that she

could not resist falling asleep (Kalhan 118). After her nap, Jay also has a hard time waking up as it is recounted that “She sat up slowly, grimacing at the sudden pounding in her head” (Kalhan 119). The same idea is conveyed in the words “Her head was splitting. There were painkillers in the drawer of the bedside table. She rummaged around blindly, but night was falling and she couldn’t see a thing” (Kalhan 120). Using hyperbole in *splitting head* and *rummaged blindly*, the narrator emphasises the severe state of the young character. These details acknowledge the harmful effects of alcohol on the body of the protagonist and endorse the advice of the CMO that it is best for children under 18 years of age to not consume alcohol to preserve both their health and safety (drinkaware).

In their recent research about the impacts of alcohol consumption on the brain and behaviour of adolescents, Briana Lees and others’ findings report unfavourable results such as the decrease in gray matter and an abnormal neural responsiveness (1). Considering the harm that alcohol is likely to cause, supplying young people under the age of 21 with alcohol is considered a misdemeanour in other places in the world such as California (California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control). Indeed, 21 years old is the legal drinking age in the U.S. (American Addiction Centers). Examples of other severe impacts of alcohol intake on young people are dangerous sexual behaviour, violence, and criminality (Wise). Similar unfavourable outcomes following drinking are represented in the novel under study through the character of Deven. At his father’s birthday party, the protagonist’s drunk cousin becomes aggressive and attempts to fight his brother Ash (Kalhan 135). The climax of the story consists of his sexual abuse of his cousin (Kalhan 144) in the room that was assigned to her in the cellar short after she had the glass of wine. Hence, the rising action in this novel involves consecutive violations of Jay’s best interests ranging from the separation from her mother, her isolation in the basement, to handing her alcohol without adult supervision.

Conclusion

In its analysis of the thesis' contemporary realist young adult novels from the perspective of the child's best interests' principle, this chapter established an unequivocal link between adultism and the violations of this right. The literary analysis of *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), *The Hate U Give* (2017), and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) revealed that the effective implementation of the best interests' principle cannot be achieved without first addressing internalised adultism. Indeed, the first part of the chapter demonstrated that even well-meaning parent characters, when guided by their entrenched adultist beliefs, can in fact misinterpret their children's best interests and end up harming them. It was also recognised in the same section that this principle can also be manipulated by adultist characters to serve their selfish needs while pretending to have young people's best interests at heart. The second part of the chapter established a connection between adultism and the complete disregard of the young characters' best interests. This revealed that adultist characters take risky decisions and dangerous actions without any consideration of the safety and wellbeing of the young protagonists.

Pointing out the various misinterpretations of the young characters' best interests despite the good intentions of the parents is important to expose the inevitable, yet hidden workings of adultism. An important finding in this regard is that well-meaning adult parents and caregivers who end up violating this principle fail to acknowledge all the factors involved in the assessment of young people's best interest because of adultism. Whereas the efficient determination of a child's best interests requires the integration of the physical, the psychological, the mental, and the spiritual states of the young person, adultist parents tend to overlook one if not several factors. Additionally, it was argued that adults cannot exclude

young people from participating in the determination of their own best interests. It was established that, influenced by adultcentrism, parents are likely to put their interests, opinions, and needs ahead of their children's. For this reason, they might pretend to look after their child's wellbeing, when in truth they are using this as a pretext for their own benefit.

This chapter identified the realist literary techniques and devices pinpointing the dismissal of the young characters' best interests such as the narrative structure, psychological characterizations, attention to detail, direct speech, and the setting. Various textual techniques including flashbacks, descriptive language, analogies, symbols, comparisons, and hyperbole, in addition to the significance of the tone of the protagonists signalled perilous adultist actions. The interpretive readings of the four young adult narratives in this chapter placed a crucial counterargument against adultist beliefs and behaviours by proving the severe impact on the health and wellbeing of the young protagonists when their best interests are violated. While the chosen primary texts provided a rich scope of analysis whereby multiple infringements of the principle under study were acknowledged, many more instances equally important still need to be investigated in the large body of realist YAL. Indeed, this is not an exhaustive list of the ways in which adultism hinders or entirely prevents the appropriate assessment and determination of young people's best interests. Further work in this respect can potentially reveal more misinterpretations of this principle. Furthermore, upcoming research on contemporary YAL could address the paradigm of adultism and children's best interests in novels written about the Global South.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adultism and young people's rights to participate and to be heard

"What's the point of having a voice

if you're gonna be silent

in those moments you shouldn't be?"

(Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give* 2017 synopsis)

Introduction

Besides the three principles covered in the previous chapters ensuring the protection of young people from discrimination, from emotional as well as physical harm, and from the violation of their best interests, there is another significant area of rights endorsing the voice and agency of girls and boys. The former provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provide young people with shielding under the care of their adult guardians and by state parties to guarantee their safety. *Participation* rights on the other hand encourage young people's self-determination and autonomy. In the light of article 12 of the UNCRC, participation is promoted in two distinctive areas, namely judicial and administrative, the second of which represents the topic of this chapter. The former concerns itself with issues such as custody, but administrative rights include "[…] decisions about children's education, health, environment, living conditions, or protection" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 11). This chapter uses YAL to reflect on youth participation in decision making about education, environment, and living conditions. In addition, in his definition of youth participation rights, Nigel Thomas identifies two more distinctive parts of decision making; the collective and the individual (199). Hence, it should

be noted that this chapter considers young people's participation in decision making on *individual* cases such as within the family rather than collective matters perhaps on a national scale. Apart from government related decisions, personal everyday life choices, Barry Percy-Smith and Thomas emphasise, are crucial in building for the future of individuals and societies (359).

However, as is noted below, there seems to be an agreement within the works of scholars like Gerison Lansdown and Anne B. Smith noting that the implementation of article 12 proves to be most problematic. Indeed, views expressed on the subject divide into two opposing poles, the first of which – including researchers such as Martin D. Ruck – resents attributing due weight to youth voices on the grounds of young age. For this reason, this chapter reflects on the challenges preventing the enactment of this particular law, identifying thus, in line with views of youth activists such as Adam Fletcher, adultism as the main issue. Therefore, I present hereafter wider interpretations of youth involvement relying on contemporary realist young adult texts – namely Nicola Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* (2016), A. S. King's *Still Life With Tornado* (2016), and Savita Kalhan's *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) – to identify areas beyond the national scale, voting and governmental matters, where the views and agency of young people should be encouraged rather than repressed. By doing so, this chapter promotes youth participation in everyday matters directly affecting the lives of children and young people at home or in school, thus boosting their determination and empowerment.

I would like to conclude this introduction with the words of Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta and Audrey Cheynut, aged thirteen and seventeen-years old respectively, while addressing the UN General Assembly in 2002. As official representatives, the young girls recite a

statement developed by 404 children describing a world respectful of their rights. The following extract demonstrates their insistence on the implementation of article 12:

> We see the active participation of children:
>
> • raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
>
> • children actively involved in decision-making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child (Children's Forum n.p.).

Taking the above words into consideration, this chapter pinpoints narrative examples that deconstruct the "view that [… young people] are passive victims" (Feinstein et al. 53) as it promotes the legitimacy of their voice and agency.

Adultism and Participation Rights at Home

Contesting the old saying that "children should be seen but not heard," the last principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child covers participatory rights. This principle is divided into two sections, the first of which ensures that:

> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (*UNCRC* 4; article 12).

Therefore, this UN article empowers the role of young people within society and allows them to make a change in their lives. Anne B. Smith elaborates on this principle explaining that it acknowledges the voice of young people and enables them not only to receive information from adults, but also to share their own insights (11). The purpose of this policy is then to make sure that children are well informed on matters affecting their lives, whether at home or in school, so they can make the appropriate choices for themselves. However, the phrasing of the terms of the principle on whom this right shall apply: "*in accordance with the age and maturity of the child"* appears to be rather vague and open for interpretation. Laura Lundy specifies that this right is applicable to all children capable of forming views, regardless of the maturity of these views (935). Building on this view, Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham understand this phrasing to offer an unlimited scope of age, writing that: "it is not limited solely to older adolescents nearing adulthood" (35). However, after the child's view is expressed, the inexact wording of the provision still leaves room for manipulation as to whether the maturity of a particular child makes it worthy of adult consideration or not.

Together with child and youth rights to equality, to life and development, and to the prioritisation of their best interests, discussed in the previous chapters, participatory rights constitute another challenging principle of the convention when it comes to its implementation both at the macro- and micro levels. More notably, scholars agree that out of the convention, article 12 proved to be the most problematic to adapt from principle to action (Lansdown 11; Smith 12; Collins 14). Smith recognises the innovation behind the advocation of children- and young people's "agency and voice" (12) which nonetheless prompts debate. Tarra M. Collins and E. Kay M. Tisdall report that youth protection works

conducted towards this goal are merely rhetorical and do not produce substantial progress (14; 59). The persistent issues in this regard according to Tisdall are: “tokenism, limited impact and unsustainability” (59). This means that the inclusion of young people in decision-making is still at an early stage as article 12 reflects but a symbolic effort thus far. John Wall instantiates child and youth lack of participation on a national scale through the minors’ suffrage rights polemic debate. In his words: “children remain the poorest and most exploited social group because they lack the political franchise to assert their own interests and demand political accountability” (Wall 651-652). His choice of words *poorest and most exploited social group* emphasises the rhetorical efforts following the ratification of the convention when it comes to child and youth participation. In an earlier work, Wall relates children’s absence from the political scene to “a lack, not in children themselves, but in existing conceptualisations of democracy” (87). On that same topic, Todres and Higinbotham recognise that young people have high potential when it comes to decision-taking in matters affecting their lives regardless of their deprivation from their voting rights (121).

There are opposing views relying on neuroscientific arguments regarding the brain development of youth that refute the legitimacy of article 12. Brian C. Partridge, for instance, argues that: “The empirical psychological and neurophysiological data weigh against augmenting and expression of the rights of children” (518). These assumptions claim that young people lack analytical skills, and thus are deemed incapable of making sound decisions. On the other hand, Lansdown lists limitations to studies that question children’s capacities to form and express views (15). From limited scope and conditions to inconsistent findings, Lansdown warns against drawing dubious conclusions about children’s competences. Opposing hegemonic discourses targeting young people, Benjamin Bowman and Chloé Germaine Buckley’s research report on the climate strike movement attests to

young people's attempts at transcending conflictual tensions around the climate crisis by encouraging intergenerational solidarity and transcultural alliances for envisioning a better world (17). The work of the two scholars recognises the potential of young people in tackling important issues of the world.

Contrary to Partridge's views, other researchers such as Martin D. Ruck and others use children's relative inexperience in favour of securing children's rights. The scholars report on findings from the field of neuroscience admitting that adolescents are not fully mature and consider the influence this imparts on the implementation of protection rights as a necessity (18). Nonetheless, they emphasise that their ongoing development should not be an excuse to dispute the implementation of their right to participation that is equally important in achieving a balanced growth between protection and autonomy (Ruck et al. 18-19). In fact, it is recognised that participation rights are necessary for children to attain their protection rights (Percy-Smith and Thomas 358). Moreover, research shows that the active engagement of young people "politically and civically" is crucial in enriching their experiences towards "political socialization" (Torney-Purta and Amadeo 182-183) thus, benefitting not only children and their families, but also their communities (Fitzgerald et al. 294). Indeed, creating a safe space, where young people can learn about – and exercise – their rights, allows them to perform an active role in society as "political agents in their own right" (Gordon, Gendered Paths to Teenage Political Participation 31). Hava Rachel Gordon especially opposes looking at this group of people "as citizens-in-the-making who develop into actual political actors and engaged citizens only when they reach adulthood" (Gendered Paths to Teenage Political Participation 31) which constitutes a purely adultist perception. Indeed, Todres and Higinbotham list the benefits of "exposing children to the breath of civil and political rights:"

> human rights education can impart lessons on the sanctity of life, children's rights to hold and express their own views and to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, the rights and duties associated with participation in a community or society, and the importance of respecting the human dignity of all individuals, even those who are guilty of wrongdoing (121-122).

Accordingly, the advantages behind the implementation of article 12 are not solely restricted to young people, but they extend to the entire community considering the morals and integrity installed in them. Furthermore, Smith affirms that participation is the key for children to develop competence (15). This thesis analyses extracts from the selected YA novels in the light of children's rights to participation to expose instances where adultism constrains the implementation of this fundamental UN principle, and how the young, targeted characters strive for the exercise of their freedom to take part in decision-making.

If we want to see substantial social change regarding youth participation, it is crucial to look at the persistent challenges first to ensure the proper implementation of this right. Adam Fletcher, an activist in the fields of youth development and education, is convinced that a grasp of adultism is the key to youth engagement (13). Likewise, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child declare that the success of article 12 is dependent upon the readiness to change adultist beliefs about children's potential all the while creating the appropriate space for them to develop and practice their capacities (31). Hence, by identifying the innerworkings of adultism, we can strive to liberate young people from this social discrimination, and it is only then that the advocation of youth participation can truly be impactful. Therefore, this chapter provides critical readings of three YA narratives with

the aim of identifying adultism as the "hidden toxin" (Brett n.p.) behind the failure to appropriately implement article 12. The chosen primary texts perform the role of young people's testimonies reporting on the misuse of power by adult relatives and non-relatives to demonstrate how this age inequality reinforces youth subordination.

It is important to see what kind of language and behaviours young people consider to be prejudicial and antagonistic. Gordon emphasises the need to look at how young people conceive of social hierarchies based on age if we want to examine how this target group reacts and fights back for equal power dynamics (663). Indeed, it is only after hearing what youth have to say on the subject, that adults can contribute to their empowerment and ensure their protection. Gordon continues explaining that:

> Given that the terrain of adolescent political action is one that is dominated by adult political players (whether they be allies or foes), the ways in which youth interpret adult power and understand their own social status become particularly important guides for organizing their movements. (663)

Gordon is not alone in thinking that youth participation is crucial in challenging adultism. Indeed, Genia M. Bettencourt believes that: "to oppose these systems of disenfranchisement [adultism in conjunction with other systems of inequality], youth need to be trusted as equal stakeholders and valued for their contributions" (Bettencourt 158). It is the very absence of this trust and value which Bettencourt mentions that creates room for adultism. In line with Gordon and Bettencourt's points, the following interpretations of YA texts seek to identify contextualised examples of violations to the protagonists' participatory rights and the impacts engendered in these instances.

The Sun Is Also a Star (2016) and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) shed light on conflictual intergenerational relationships between young and older relatives. Both novels address young people's rights to participation through the illustration of recurrent violations caused by adults. More particularly, this reading emphasises the adultist outlooks on the protagonists which constitute the driving force behind these violations. While Nicola Yoon explores topics of immigration, interracial and intergenerational relationships, she emphasises the importance of youth participatory rights from the point of view of Daniel Bae versus that of his father Dae Hyun. On the other hand, Savita Kalhan examines the same notion between a mother and her daughter on the topic of housing decisions. In both instances, the authors demonstrate how age inequality deprives young people of their right to participation.

In the case of Daniel, Yoon addresses parental authority over children's educational prospective and career choices. Whereas children's rights advocate for young people's participation in matters affecting their lives, it appears that this freedom "does not apply to decision-making within families" (Thomas and Campling 59). In the same context, John Tobin recognises the vagueness around youth participation rights as he declares that: "this provision remains clouded by ambiguity" (417). However, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child provides a further reading into the implication of the participation principle stating that:

> In decisions about the transition to the next level of schools or choice of tracks or streams, the right of the child to be heard has to be assured as these decisions deeply affect the child's best interests. Such decisions must be subject to administrative or

> judicial review. Additionally, in disciplinary matters, the right of the child to be heard has to be fully respected (25).

Still, the enactment of this provision remains a persisting issue. Yoon's novel suggests potential challenges in the implementation of the convention with regards to participatory rights. This analysis of Daniel's story identifies how internalised adultist beliefs facilitates the violation of article 12 using deep-seated cultural motifs. The purpose behind this reading of the narrative is to reveal the potential of YAL in empowering youth by reinforcing the implementation of children's rights to participation without compromising family life.

At a time when the young protagonist of *The Sun Is Also a Star* stands out as the poet-dreamer of the narrative, his father does not agree with Daniel's literary inclinations and therefore chooses a different path for him. This type of intergenerational conflicts over career choices according to Pei-Wen Winnie Ma and others is very common in Asian American families (487). Hence, Yoon's narrative offers an interpretation of power relations between a family of Korean American immigrants. And so, the novel portrays a day in the life of Daniel where, despite his resistance, he still must go to a college admission interview according to his parents' wishes for him to become a doctor. The analysis of this text sheds light on the challenge in the implementation of article 12 in collectivist societies such as Korea where career choice is not a personal matter, but a family decision instead. In similar cases, Ma and others cite among negative consequences of parent-child conflicts regarding the latter's orientation: psychological disorders, somatic symptoms, and indeterminacy (489). Mijin Choi and others also affirm that "IFC [Intergenerational Family Conflict] was positively associated with depressive symptoms" (27). These severe psychological impacts on youth call for the need to address the prominent reasons behind parental disapproval of

young people's personal interests leading to the recurrent breach to their right to participate in matters affecting their lives.

Yoon identifies cultural beliefs and practices as a crucial factor in the intergenerational conflict between Daniel and his father. To be sure, age difference is not the only barrier between Dae Hyun and his son because whereas the former is a first-generation Korean immigrant in the US, Daniel was born and raised in the US. What this implies is that the two have very different experiences. When Natasha Kingsley asks him if his parents are *making him* apply to Yale, he merely admits: ""My parents are first-generation Korean immigrants"" (Yoon 98) as a self-sufficient clarification. Because Natasha fails to understand his answer, he then further explains: ""it means it doesn't matter what I want. I'm going to Yale. I'm going to be a doctor"" (Yoon 98). The protagonist seems to be presenting factual knowledge through his use of short and simple sentences. The emphasis on the modal verb *going to* pinpoints his certainty about the future plans for his education as well as for his career. Thus, Yoon infers that Daniel's disagreement with his father is due to the perception of his career choice as a family obligation according to their collectivist culture. Indeed, researchers recognise that Asian American intergenerational conflicts are predominantly rooted in cultural values (Juang et al. 966; Ma et al. 488). And more recently, Pratyusha Tummala-Narra and others point out "the seriousness of acculturation-based intergenerational family conflict and the commitment dimension of ethnic identity" which they reveal "were associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety" (1). While Daniel admits enduring an identity crisis (see chapter three), the novel does not portray depressive tendencies in his case as he will eventually defy parental control and follow his own aspirations (see chapter five).

Daniel's lack of enthusiasm to attend the admission meeting and eventually go to Yale is established on several occasions to mark his discontent with his father's wishes. At one point, he blatantly states: "there are exactly no items on the list of the things I want to do less than go to my interview" (Yoon 106). The adverb exactly points out the character's firm conviction about his preferences. He also shows no hesitance when confessing: "'I don't want to get stuck doing something that doesn't mean anything to me. This track I'm on? It goes on forever. Yale. Medical school. Residency. Marriage. Children. Retirement. Nursing home. Funeral home. Cemetery'" (Yoon 100). Whereas this contemplation reveals that Daniel would rather follow his ambitions through his pessimistic tone and bleak choice of words *funeral home* and *cemetery* as he concludes the imposed track by death, it also acknowledges his forward thinking. Indeed, this confession shows that Daniel is capable of weighing his options and understands the stability that a career in medicine can procure, but he still does not want it.

Dae Hyun demonstrates a total disregard of his son's aspirations when he blatantly asks Daniel: "'Why do you think it matters what you want?'" (Yoon 235). This citation explicitly shows a definitive dismissal of Daniel's input. There is an apparent discrimination against Daniel based on his young age in the father's question. This condescending tone did not go unnoticed by the protagonist as he shrewdly comments: "the way he asks, it's like he's genuinely confused by the emotion. What is this *desire* and *wanting* that you speak of? He's confused by why they matter at all" (Yoon 235). Throughout this extract, Yoon presents an example of internalised adultism whereby without necessarily realising, parents or adults in general behave in ways that discriminate against young people and their opinions simply because of the age difference. Internalised adultism is problematic because it discredits the voice and experience of children and youth. However, an effective counterargument to this

prejudicial tendency is seen in Daniel's immediate observation. The protagonist's internal monologue proves the significance of the realist literary mode in pointing out deep-seated adultist beliefs within the words of a father to his son while aiming to advise him. Realism is hereby acknowledged as an incisive tool because of the potential it offers in its exploration of mundane and daily dialogues which might seem banal and inconsequential but end up uncovering important messages. Blanka Grzegorczyk and Farah Mendlesohn observe that only little attention has been paid to the role of realist literary fiction and its techniques in addressing young people's confrontation with surrounding challenges contrary to the great focus which has been placed on researching dystopic fiction from this angle (2). Daniel's internal monologue portraying his reaction to Dae Hyun's entrenched adultism reveals how realist YA is likely to efficiently address important issues pertaining to young people considering that social critique is a fundamental element of this literary mode. Indeed, Yoon's contemporary realist novel offers compelling textual strategies such as the strong emphasis on characterisation rather than the plotline which depicts only one day in the life of this main character throughout the 348 pages of the book. While this focus on characterisation over plot does not take away from the originality of the plot as Cart mentions in his examination of similar works of fiction (n.p.), it attests; however, to the richness of the character. It is this detailed description of Daniel which endorses the validity of youth experience through the protagonist's contemplation of his father's shocking question. Through the emphasis placed on the words *desire* and *wanting*, Daniel seems to acknowledge his father's oblivion to basic children's rights, needs and the alternative values that they both hold.

As the eldest of his brothers and the heir to his family's poor crab fishing business back in South Korea, Dae Hyun had the same experience with his own father when he

rebelled and escaped to America to start a black hair care business (King 238-239). Still, the lesson Dae Hyun learned from this past experience is not to encourage his sons' right to choose their own careers, but to guide them to a life away from poverty. The father's backstory is significant because it draws similarities between Daniel and young Dae Hyun attributing them with the same sense of willpower and readiness to take decisions. In fact, Harcourt and Hägglund understand that: "rights in the view of the children seemed to be linked with action, with a preparedness to act according to one's own and others' rights. […] This may be seen as an expression of their view on themselves as rights agents and rights actors" (298). Indeed, in addition to offering an example whereby the young Daniel recognises that desires and ambitions are also significant when choosing a career, the narrative also emphasises young people's (young Dae Hyun and Daniel) urgency to draw their own paths.

Kalhan's novel addresses the struggle faced by young people who are continuously deprived of participating alongside adults in taking decisions concerning family matters. The following passage depicts how despite being firmly resolved to speak up, the protagonist is denied the chance to perform her right: "Jay had her words ready – lots of them – but the look her mum shot her was so venomous that she was stunned into silence" (Kalhan 77). This example brings attention to the adultist tendency to silence young people without using a single word. The narrator qualifies this act as a *venomous look* reflecting not only the adversity it creates between Neela and Jay, but the potential damage that it can cause to the young character. Indeed, the narrator denounces the mother's violation of Jay's participatory right by relating it to poison. The poisonous stare is hereby interpreted as a symbol of the detrimental impact of adultism on young people.

The Girl in the Broken Mirror further complicates Neela's transgression of her daughter's participatory right by reflecting on how far parents would, when guided by their adultist beliefs, go to impose silence on their children. To do so, the novel denounces violations of young people's participation in decision making at home by demonstrating the complementary asset linking this principle to that of protection from harm. In doing so, the story depicts a scenario disclosing how the violation of the former right might lead to physical abuse. This is revealed in the narrator's words: "'Just shut up!' Her mum's hand flew towards her face and Jay flinched instinctively, a small crying escaping her lips. But the slap didn't reach her cheek. It stopped inches away" (Kalhan 78). Jay's unyielding character and her insistence on speaking up for herself is met with a rather aggressive reaction on this occasion. After several attempts at shushing her for quite some time, the mother ran out of patience and raised her hand at her daughter. Even though Jay escaped the slap before it reaches her cheek, this reading points out how the infringement of the protagonist's right to participate could potentially lead to further infringements such as physical harm in this example. Due to adultist beliefs conceiving of young people's opinions and concerns as trivial and inconsequential, the mother assumes that whatever her daughter has to say is of little value and in the heat of the moment she thinks that resorting to violence would silence her once and for all. This passage is significant because it brings attention to how adultism operates paving the way for intersecting infringements of young people's rights even within families who have never used violence against the young.

Adultcentrism represents a major threat to the implementation of article 12 of the CRC. In order to successfully include young people in decision making, adultcentric practices need to be put into question. Youth patronising claims like Dae Hyun's "Doesn't matter what you think. You do the right thing" (Yoon 237) discredit the growing capacities of youngsters

and their experiences as *individual* and *unique* human beings. On the same note, Thomas and Campling describe this tendency, writing that:

> Children are silent or muted. They are seen as incompetent, as unable to judge what is best for them. Their interests are identified with those of their parents, or are seen in terms of a future and not a present orientation. Finally, they are identified as a separate kind of being from adults, with their own distinct, and disabling, status. (50)

In other words, by disqualifying the voice and opinions of young people, this disparaging outlook associates their needs and aspirations with those of the adults in their lives, robbing them accordingly of a sense of self and purpose. In the case of Daniel for instance, his contribution becomes permitted only when he reaches adulthood. Until then, young people are expected to blend in with the wishes and expectations of adults, to follow their directives and obey passively and indisputably.

This is exactly the view that the Children's Forum of 2002 intended to oppose when the two young representatives reported: "We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world. […] You call us the future, but we are also the present" (n.p.). The first line urges adultist people to look beyond the age difference between them and youth, to recognise their similarities instead of highlight their differences. The second line expresses young people's yearning for an active involvement in society, not only to build the necessary assets and foundation for brighter future generations, but also as present time collaborators. However, for this constructive inclusion to be achieved, the participation and voices of young people should not be muted. Instead, as Tobin insists: "the views of children must be taken into account and treated seriously in decision-making processes; and that decision-

makers must explain to children why certain decisions have been made" (Tobin 432). Nonetheless, the confusion arises from what Thomas and Campling identify as the lack of clarity around the UNCRC provision as to whose views ought to prevail when in disagreement, those of young people or those of the adults in their lives (68). This is also a question raised by Yoon in *The Sun Is Also a Star* throughout Daniel's Yale interview.

Daniel's interaction with his college interviewer Jeremy Fitzgerald indicates the age inequality between the protagonist and his father evident in the imposed career. Discerning the young protagonist's carelessness about going to Yale, the interviewer asks him why he bothered coming at all. After Daniel answers: "My parents made me," the Yale alumni's subsequent question: "How old are you?" (Yoon 290) denotes his surprise to see a seventeen-year-old forced into a career of his parents' choice rather than his own. Fitzgerald's question pinpoints the injustice behind the obligation to sacrifice one's personal interests to meet parental expectation. Indeed, the interviewer's remark falls in line with Thomas and Campling's suggestions that: "In the case of adolescents, from about age thirteen, many would agree that the 'default' position should be the opposite: that unless there are strong reasons to impose an adult view of what is in a young person's interests, his or her own wishes and feelings should prevail" (68). Yet, Daniel was not given a chance to express his wishes, nor to be heard, or to participate in the decision about his future career. Realist YAL has a great potential in promoting the participation of young people in making decisions that concern them through depictions of simple and meaningful dialogues such as the short but revealing exchange between Daniel and Fitzgerald.

Adultism and Participation Rights at School

Just as adultism prevents youth participation within the family, the following reading of *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) pinpoints how the same thing occurs also in schools. Despite the relevance of the subject, researchers identify teachers' non-physical abusive treatments of young people as an area of investigation which has not yet been explored at length (Whitted and Dupper 330; Chen and Wei 382; Hattab and Ba- Saddik 1; Nearchou 96). Still, Finiki Nearchou reports on the severity of the subject: "results revealed that exposure to emotional abuse by teachers predicted behavioural problems in school students suggesting a negative effect of these experiences on psychological functioning" (96). Along with this, A. S. King demonstrates the pervasive misuse of power by adult teacher Miss Smith against sixteen-year-old Sarah. The author exposes the negative impacts of the young protagonist's exclusion from participating in an art show as the last straw (in addition to the parents' emotional abuse seen in the second chapter) leading to her withdrawal from school, and thus triggering her mental health problems.

Poor student-teacher relationships can stem from a variety of teachers' aggressive behaviours which Chen and Wei recognise to include hitting, sexual assault, humiliation, mockery, and insults (388). These exploitations can be classified under either physical or emotional abuse and neglect, and they can be either active or passive (Theoklitou et al. 64). Whitted and Dupper's findings demonstrate that "students are being bullied by teachers to a surprising degree and in a wide range of destructive and harmful ways" (329). Nonetheless, out of these forms of abuse, D. Theoklitou and others' findings reveal throughout their study that neglect is most prevalent with 52.9% victims from the sample of school children they investigated (1339 pupils) (64). Whereas Miss Smith in the novel under study is also guilty of an active physical maltreatment of another adolescent in the narrative, namely the sexual abuse of Vicky, it is her neglect of Sarah that is rather more thoroughly considered by the

author. Indeed, just like the right to protection from harm or discrimination, King demonstrates the significance of children's right to participation via the portrayal of the impacts of Sarah's exclusion within the classroom environment.

Still Life with Tornado addresses teacher-student interactions, student participation and teachers' role and how it becomes destructive when mismanaged. Sarah's school misadventure starts when she arrives at her school's art show all dressed up and excited thinking that she has a chance at winning judging from her teacher's amazement the first time she saw her project. However, she is disappointed to find that her artwork into which she put so much effort is missing from the display. When telling her brother Bruce about the latter incident, Sarah reports on Miss Smith that: "'she was kinda rude about it. Told me *good luck* and *have fun* and stuff. She told me I could search the whole room, which I thought was weird because I was only going to search the obvious places'" (King 218). The sarcastic tone of the teacher, whom Whitted and Dupper would identify as a *primary caregiver* (329), denotes what they perceive as "a vast power differential between teachers and student" (Whitted and Dupper 330-331). Hence, Miss Smith takes advantages of this authoritative position to misuse her power as an adult over young Sarah.

Indeed, adultism marks a clear disparity between Sarah's stance and that of Miss Smith. In fact, even though the former recognises the wrongs of the latter, she constantly finds herself unable to react. Sarah's vulnerability is marked through her interior monologue: "I know if I told him [Bruce] about Vicky and Miss Smith – about seeing what I saw – that he would be able to get Miss Smith fired. But I don't want to tell. They already hated me. How bad would they hate me if I told about *that*?" (King 221). This passage demonstrates the potential of realism in delving deep into the psychological characterization of the young protagonists to uncover the workings of power hierarchies. Despite knowing the severity of

the teacher's infringements, Sarah's focus on the potential consequences awaiting her emphasises her weak position compared to her teacher. Moreover, this power inequity is further accentuated through future Forty-year-old Sarah's question to her younger and present self: "'you're afraid because it would be your word against theirs?'" (King 127) marking thus once more Sarah's subordination. On a similar note, Whitted and Dupper recognise teacher's aggressive behaviours as a double oppression against young people as they explain that:

> It may be argued that students are victimized twice by teacher bullies. Students who are victimized by adults in schools are involved in a power imbalance that makes them extremely vulnerable to ongoing mistreatment and abuse. Being "pushed by an adult into a snack machine" or being told by an adult that you "dress like a whore" is humiliating enough, but in not being able to defend yourself against such hurtful or demeaning comments, you are further victimized (339).

Indeed, it is the inability to defend oneself out of fear of further repressive consequences (due to teachers' commanding roles both as adults and instructors) which further complicates student maltreatment by teachers. Among potential dreaded costs following confrontation, Whitted and Dupper refer to detention and suspension from school "for being 'disrespectful' toward an adult in authority" (339). This *adult in authority* position leads Sarah, as a vulnerable student victim, to refuse her brother's interference to sort out the situation with the school's principal (King 220).

The novel further complicates teacher's abusive treatments of pupils by acknowledging the influence that such a hostile environment is likely to have on classmates

in provoking adversity among them. Miss Smith's pervasive power even influences the rest of Sarah's art class friends to join her in her maltreatment of Sarah. Indeed, the latter recounts to Bruce how everyone sides with the teacher:

> the seniors came in for first-period class and they laughed at me the whole time I searched. No one offered to help. It was so weird. They were my friends the Friday before. Now they just seemed to be Miss Smith's friends. Even my sophomore friends wouldn't help. Not even Carmen during second period. She just played it cool. (King 218-219)

Direct speech is incisive here because it points out the young protagonist' vulnerability in her narration of the events. King here portrays how adverse student-teacher relationships can also pave the way for animosity among students or even rejection altogether. The process of how student victimisation at the hands of teachers, such as Sarah's case, perpetuates peer bullying further attests to Teresa Graham Brett's words that: "adultism creates fertile ground for all other forms oppression to exist" (n.p.). Bullying is indeed another *form of oppression* and relevant issue in the lives of young people frequently covered in strong anti-bullying YAL narratives.

King builds up the plot equating what starts as the violation of Sarah's right to participation in the art show with ultimate teacher and peers bullying. By excluding her from classroom activities, Miss Smith prompted Sarah's rejection by all her friends. This plot development attests to the UN Committee on the CRC's recognition that children's participation: "is particularly important in the elimination of discrimination, prevention of

bullying and disciplinary measures" (24). The following dialogue between Sarah and her brother shows how King emphasises the significance of student participation:

> "The principal should know about this. That's bullying."
>
> "Nobody beat me up."
>
> "They destroyed your art project."
>
> "They just ignored me."
>
> "Exclusion is bullying" (King 220).

Indeed, King here demonstrates that bullying does not always take the form of physical violence, but it can still carry severe outcomes on the target of abuse, nevertheless. In fact, Fletcher links teacher's aggression directly to student disengagement (20). To this effect, he writes that: "many young people who don't know how to please adults or fail to accept being discriminated against simply stop performing in school, either barely making it through or dropping out" (Fletcher 20). This is exactly what happens to Sarah. As she finds herself the target of Miss Smith's maltreatment out of the entire classroom, the protagonist admits: "'Then the art club stopped talking to me. They wouldn't even hand me tools in class if I asked. They pretended I was invisible. So I stopped going to school'" (King 220). The last statement starting with the conjunction *so* makes Sarah's leaving school seem to be the inevitable outcome of the abuse she endured. Tate and Copas assert that: "adult actions that are discouraging, distrustful, and controlling often lead to unnecessary conflict and severely impede the child's productive problem-solving abilities" (41). Likewise, Miss Smith's oppressive treatment of Sarah resulted in the latter's giving up on solving her problems altogether.

King insists on the significance of youth participation in school activities through Sarah's assertion:

> I remember feeling like someone had cut me in half and never finished. I remember wishing someone would have put *me* in the trash. It was the day I first saw ten-year old Sarah, only I didn't let myself see her. She was sitting on a bench outside school chewing bubble gum and blowing bubbles. At the time I thought it was a hallucination, but now I know she was real (King 219-220).

Sarah's internal monologue presents a strong case defending participatory rights. Equating the ruining of the project with Sarah's own pain draws similarities between participation and the right to protection from physical abuse. This emphasises young people's yearning for their involvement because as Todres and Higinbotham maintain: "denying children an opportunity to participate can lead to their feeling left out, devalued, and anxious about the future" (46). In Sarah's case, due to the additional emotional and physical abuse that was simultaneously going on in her family life (see chapter two), her school exclusion triggers mental health issues.

Adultism and the Right to Have a Voice

Together with children's participatory rights goes the right to appropriate consideration of young people's voices. Indeed, the UNCRC grants children along with the right to speak, the "opportunity *to be heard* in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law" (4; article 12; my emphasis). This implies that the

ideas, opinions, or even complaints of young people should be duly considered. Todres and Higinbotham further explain the broad scope of this provision stating that "expression-related rights constitute a second area of civil and political rights. This includes freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly and association" (Todres and Higinbotham 121). This interpretation of article 12 attests to the interconnection between various rights previously mentioned. In this sense, *freedom of assembly and association* could be closely linked to the right to non-discrimination whether it pertains to racism, sexism or social hierarchy (see chapter one).

The Girl in the Broken Mirror (2018) by Savita Kalhan depicts drastic outcomes following the silencing of the protagonist's voice. Whereas YA books are usually recognised for the immediacy of the first-person narrative voice of the main characters (Bacon 34), Kalhan opted for the third-person omniscient narration. This all-knowing perspective on the story is a key element because as Nikolajeva notes, such narration offers a reliable unbiased account that is not filtered through a single character's point of view ("Guilt" 3). The second peculiarity is the opening of the storyline first with the climax (Jay's rape), then proceeding with an ulterior narration – explained by Suzanne Keen as the narration, often in the past tense, of events after they have already happened (100) – of past events leading to the culminating point mentioned in the start and following to the aftermath of the incident. This unconventional revelation of the climax at the very beginning presents a dramatic opening that is captivating because the narrator does not disclose the identity of the rapist just yet. Therefore, more tension and speculations arise in analysing the protagonist's interactions with different characters preceding her rape to identify the culprit. The third differentiating element consists of Jay's characterisation and her strong sense of willpower. Unlike Sarah from *Still Life with Tornado* and Starr from *The Hate U Give* among other protagonists, Jay is

not on a quest to find her voice. Fifteen-year-old Jay already knows what she wants and is not afraid to speak up her mind. However, she is constantly denied the opportunity to be heard which came at a great cost: her rape and consequently the loss of her voice. Overall, the omniscient narrator and the disruption of the chronological order of events, together with Jay's distinguished characterisation are essential elements allowing for the denunciation of child abuse while establishing the credibility of the story as well as the recognition of youth voice.

Perhaps the most notable emphasis on children's right to be heard in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* is the narrator's contemplation of what could have been avoided had the protagonist's mother Neela allowed Jay a chance to speak up on different yet connected occasions. To this effect, Kalhan writes:

> If her mum had *listened* (added emphasis) to Jay instead of to Aunty Vimala, they would have been sharing a room, and it wouldn't have happened. If Neela had *listened* (added emphasis) when she told her that she couldn't bear living there anymore because it was turning them into strangers, it wouldn't have happened. If her mum had *listened* (added emphasis) to her before that, and found them somewhere else to live, *it* wouldn't have happened. If… (Kalhan 230).

The verb *to listen* is repeated three times in three consecutive sentences, each time denoting how imperative Neela's listening to Jay in a separate situation could have been in avoiding terrible consequences. Throughout the novel's scenario, the author addresses children's rights to participation in housing decisions and daily home life. The remorseful tone of the narrator as well as the insistence on the conditional type three denotes a deep

regret which could be interpreted as an alert to the necessity to pay attention to young people's opinions in similar matters and include them in the decision process to avoid negative outcomes such as Jay's sexual assault. In contrast with the lack of clarity around the UNCRC which briefly endorses the voice of young people, the impact of YAL on youth empowerment is stronger due to the ample examples and precise scenarios it has to offer. This quotation portrays how the novel envisions a space where young people are respected, and their voices are taken into consideration. Such supportive environment, according to the narrator would perform a key role in preventing detrimental consequences to the protagonist's health and wellbeing.

Kalhan partakes in the negotiations interrogating the paradoxical positioning of the child (as either too young or of appropriate age to have a saying) amidst the presumably conflicting rights to protection and to participation. In doing so, the author endorses the implementation of children's right to be heard through her protagonist's strong sense of willpower. Indeed, Jay demonstrates in her interactions with her mother an awareness about the importance of her thoughts on housing decisions as she blames her mother asserting:

> 'Then you should have listened to me!' she shouted.
>
> 'I didn't want to live there! You did. I hated it – I told you that a thousand times. I wanted to leave, and I told you that, too. But, no, you wanted to stay. You didn't listen to me' (Kalhan 226).

The accusative tone in this quote pinpoints how the young protagonist's exercise of her right to be heard would have been vital to escape the current dreadful outcome. The persistent

repetition of the right to be heard continues again when she says: "'You're my mother – you're supposed to protect me. I kept telling you, but you didn't listen to me. It's all your fault…'" (Kalhan 227). The last example is insightful because in it, Jay bridges the differences between the right to protection (*UNCRC* 5; article 19) on the one hand, and the right to participate and to be heard (*UNCRC* 4; article 12) on the other, settling thus the clash of the two provisions discussed above. In her assertion, Jay establishes a supportive rationale demonstrating how youth protection is contingent upon the exertion of youth participation. Throughout this example, it appears clear that the involvement of young people can help to prevent their abuse. This powerful example effectively integrates law and literature offering an insight into the perspective of the young adult victim.

Similar to several children's books which Todres and Higinbotham understand to challenge the problematic adult's tendency to depreciate and disregard what children have to say (41), YA novels also have much to offer on the subject. Both Kalhan and Yoon portray parental dismissal of children's opinions between mother and daughter as well as father and son respectively. In the case of Jay, the narrator recounts that "her mom's hand shot straight up into the air, her palm warding off all objections" (Kalhan 77). Likewise, the same thing happens to Daniel as soon as he opens his mouth to express himself: "'Appa-' I begin, but he holds his hand up to silence me and keeps it there" (Yoon 236). Accordingly, *the hand up in the air* becomes an embodiment of muting young people and denying their participation according to what George Lakoff knows as "co-occurring embodied experiences" (776). He recognises that: "meaning in natural language activates imaginative circuitry that is the same as for perception and action" (Lakoff 778-779). Therefore, the instant physical act of raising the hand is directly related to the perception of young people's opinions as insignificant and therefore becomes the adult's automatic response. It is in this sense that the commonality

of this simple gesture and its immediate interpretation by the receivers invokes the two parents' underlying adultist belief that whatever their children may think or say is of no value, thus depriving them of their right to speak.

Kalhan relies on yet another physical motion signalling the end of the conversation between Jay and Neela in the following passage:

> She always says tomorrow, but never has time.
>
> "Please, Mum, let me finish."
>
> The weary slump of her mum's shoulders told her she could continue if she wanted, but that in the end it wouldn't matter (Kalhan 104).

The pertinence of this extract stems from what Maria Nikolajeva knows as the "representation of spatiality, including characters' position in space, movement, interaction and understanding" to convey "cognitive and emotional states of fictional characters" ("Haven't you ever felt like there has to be more?" 66). Accordingly, *the weary slump* is an expression pertaining to the character' body language revealing the mother's fatigue and remoteness. Indeed, the description of the characters and how they are positioned within the setting is a key element in this realist rendition conveying the disconnectedness that is slowly isolating Jay from her mother due to the latter's entrenched adultist beliefs and carelessness about Jay's feelings and opinions.

Similarly, Yoon also portrays the same practice of immediacy through spatiality and movement. This is clearly apparent in Daniel's stream of consciousness as he recounts:

> I'm going to tell him that I don't want the things for myself that he wants for me. I'm going to tell him that it'll be okay anyway. | "Appa-" I begin again, but again his hand goes through the air. Again I am silenced. He knows what I'm going to say, and he doesn't want to hear it. (Yoon 236-237)

His urgent need to open up to his father is met with the latter's determined refutation which is vividly captured through the protagonist's interpretation of the contemptuous holding of the hand to dismiss his arguments for the second time. This close attention to detail is particularly relevant to the novel considering that the plot covers only one day in the life of the protagonist. Nikolajeva points out to the changing aesthetics in children's literature with regards to duration as novels are moving away from depicting long life stories to focus on a rather specific turning point. For this reason, details have become essential ("Narrative Theory" 169). It is in this sense that the realist literary mode can perform a significant role in thoroughly depicting scenes giving its great emphasis on details. Daniel's description of his interaction with his father is consequential to the narrative as it reveals how young people's rights to articulate their views and to be heard can be easily dismissed due to adultism.

In *Still Life with Tornado,* King also addresses the adultist muting of her protagonist, only her interpretation establishes a link between young people's voice and discrimination. Thus, after she was deprived of participation in the art show, Sarah vainly attempts to report on the disappearance of her project the day of the display and the condition in which she ultimately found it in the wastebasket. In her words, Sarah narrates: "No matter who I talked to about it after that day, they said I had to 'let it go' or 'stop obsessing.' I tried to talk to the guidance counsellor. He said, "There are always other art shows, Sarah" (King 220). The response Sarah receives following her complaints not only treats the abuse of her right to

participation lightly, but it also dismisses her voice when she speaks up for herself. Smith emphasises the importance of attributing due weight to young people's concerns "In order [for them] to be able to formulate and express a view" (15). Thus, she states that: "children should receive appropriate support" (15), which is the exact thing that Sarah attempts to look for but fails to find. In her analysis of feminist voices in children's literature, Roberta Seelinga Trites identifies voice as "essential to a girl's subjectivity" and explains that "those who are denied speech, denied language, are also denied their full potential as humans; they are denied community" (62). Indeed, King shows how Sarah's silencing completely isolates her and robs her of a proper school experience when everyone starts ignoring her leading her to drop out. The UN Committee explicitly argues that: "respect for the right of the child to be heard within education is fundamental to the realization of the right to education" (24). Therefore, this novel portrays the importance of young people's voice through Sarah's exclusion from community and the abuse of her right to education as direct consequences of her silencing.

King's bridging between adultist practices, namely silencing and sexism, is accentuated in the following passage:

> But now it's been so long that if I bring it up, I'll look like a girl who can't let go of things. Teenage girls always have to let go of things. If we bring up anything, people say we're bitches who can't just drop it. | Anyway. There's nothing we can do about it. (King 172)

Through her narration, Sarah exhibits an awareness about the stigma attached to teenage girls identifying them as obsessive and dramatic. What's more is that she attempts to break

the stereotype by keeping her silence about the discrimination she endured in the art show and in the classroom to avoid the sexist *and adultist* label. The protagonist's contemplation of the issue is incisive because she remarkably demonstrates the interconnection between the oppressive systems of adultism and sexism which proves the importance of her voice. However, similar to the link established between existing forms of oppression is the one between child rights. Indeed, Sarah's viewpoint also attests to the complementary asset of all rights. Indeed, Todres and Higinbotham understand that: "one notable element of many children's stories that address the child's right to be heard is what the children in these stories say when given a chance" (42). In the case of this YA work, the chance to speak presented itself to Sarah through the first-person narrative voice as she delves deeply into her thoughts sharing important connections to spread awareness about interlocking systems of inequality.

Conclusion

The selected YA narratives portray empowered youth who communicate what they perceive as unjust behaviours against them considering "children's sense of unfairness" (119) that Desmond Manderson identifies as being "acute and sometimes noisy" (119). Through YA literature's emphasis on this articulate sense of injustice, authors shed light on standardised discriminatory acts against young people such as the deprivation from participation and from being heard as seen in this chapter. Michelle Superle recognises the current omnipresence of this sophisticated figure of youth in her assertion that "representations of the empowered child, as well as children agitating for empowerment, have long been central to children's literature" (Superle, "The UNCRC: CCA" 145). Therefore, the examination of

these depictions is essential in highlighting persistent challenges depriving young people of their basic participatory rights.

The unanimous core issue preventing the implementation of article 12 established throughout the above readings of *The Sun Is also a Star*, *Still Life with Tornado* and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* is adultism. This discriminatory outlook on young people propagated a pressing controversy between the different principles of the CRC, thus making children's participation the most contentious provision. However, the recurrent conflicting tensions established by researchers between the right to protection versus participation, as well as between participation versus children's best interests are put into question in the primary texts. Through the dreadful consequences following the exclusion and silencing of the protagonists, these narratives' contextualisation of the convention demonstrates that these rights are all complementary and equally necessary for the healthy development of young people.

The readings in this chapters emphasised a variety of examples of situations where the contribution of young people should be encouraged beyond the national and political scales, such as at home or in school. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child establish that: "if participation is to be effective and meaningful, it needs to be understood as a process, not as an individual one-off event" (29). Congruent with this assertion is the portrayal of different areas of the life of youth where they can perform active and impactful roles. In doing so, they emphasise the constructive advantages of participation which Shepherd Zeldin and others summarise in three points: an advocation for- social justice; youth empowerment and civic engagement; and community building (337). Likewise, Linda A. Camino lists the same benefits and adds that "adults' negative attitudes about youth can be overcome when adults work with youth to address community concerns" (13).

Accordingly, youth participation is an important initiative to deconstruct adultism, which constitutes the primary obstacle to its implementation in addition to paving the way for other forms of oppression to coexist such as sexist discrimination and bullying seen in this chapter. Moreover, “this lack of faith in our youth” denying them their participatory rights is, in the words of Tate and Copas: “discouraging to those in our care and limits their ability to contribute meaningfully in our society” (41). In contrast, John-Akinola and Saoirse link pupils’ healthiness and wellbeing to school participation (n.p.). In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that youth participation is not a single common process for everyone as it differs according to the setting, the circumstances and the degrees of involvement. However, what remains constant is the need to allow young people to participate and make their voices heard regardless of their age. In like manner, Percy-Smith and Thomas explain that children should not be expected to contribute in the same fashion, and therefore they should not be forced into the same path. Instead, they advise that adults offer young people opportunities to participate depending on their preferences and capabilities (362). The chapter at hand adds the important point that the needs of each child ought to be carefully considered because they perform a significant role in determining the most impactful and beneficial ways for the participation of the child. The field of YAL criticism could benefit from further readings of other stories highlighting more examples of similar and differing children’s needs for participation. These interpretations are useful because they form an incisive counterargument against adultist outlooks depriving youth participation in various settings.

PART TWO: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

CHAPTER FIVE

Negotiations of Power Dynamics between Youth and Adults

"'Parents are pretty stupid.' He's only half kidding.

'I think they think they're protecting us,' I say.

'From what? […] We should know better by now.'

'Maybe our kids will,'"

(Nicola Yoon, *The Sun Is also a Star* 312-313).

Introduction

In the chosen realist young adult (YA) novels of this thesis, the violations of children's rights at the hands of adult "villains" (169), to use Todres and Higinbotham's terminology, constitute the impelling cause behind the protagonists' journey throughout the plotline. As it is established in the former chapters, young characters are threatened by the maltreatment they endure at the hands of either members of their family such as parents, an aunt, or a cousin, or by non-relatives like a teacher or a policeman. Accordingly, these primary texts are built around: parental emotional and physical abuse in *Still Life with Tornado*; the racist hate crime in *The Hate U Give*; the silencing of Daniel and the rape of Jay in *The Sun Is also a Star* and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* respectively. Furthermore, adultism is revealed in the prior chapters to be the hidden motive at the heart of these violations. Indeed, Vanessa Joosen acknowledges that this is also the case for several children's stories whereby adultism (which she refers to as childism following the rationale of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl – see Lit Rev) "is often what moves the story forward" ("The Adult as Foe or Friend?" 208).

However, besides these "Perpetrators of children's rights violations," there are other adult characters whose primary function in the narrative is that of the "defenders of children's rights" (Todres and Higinbotham 171) such as Sita Anandhati in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*. For this reason, considering this "prominent" role performed by adults in fiction (Todres and Higinbotham 170), the characterisation of adulthood ought to be carefully examined.

In the light of the overriding presence of adult–villains or ally–characters in the studied YA novels, the analysis of this characterisation is crucial to determine how adulthood is constructed. Vanessa Joosen, perhaps the most notable scholar in this respect, herself encourages more research into this subject first in "The Adult as Foe or Friend?" (205), and again five years later in *Adulthood in Children's Literature* (5) attesting thus to the significance of the topic. Indeed, children's literature studies tend to focus more thoroughly on the figure of the child, sometimes overlooking that of the adult who represents an important point of reference in the child/adult binary at the heart of the narratives. Maria Nikolajeva endorses this idea as she identifies the struggle for power dynamics between the two parties as the focal point of children's literature. She even compares this specificity to "gender-related power structures" as the essence of feminist literature, and the "ethnic-related power structures" as the essence of postcolonial literature (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 8). It is my intention thus to contribute to young adult literary criticism by studying the narrative construction of adulthood in *The Sun Is also a Star*, *Still Life with Tornado*, *The Hate U Give*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*.

The analysis of power structures between young people and adults in this chapter is threefold. First, it uncovers the prominent paradigm of *youth adultification* in the selected primary YA novels for this research. In doing so, this reading pinpoints role reversals essentially between young characters and their parents. Second, in considering the

construction of adulthood within this spectrum, the analysis reveals *adult irresponsibility* as a narrative counterstrategy against hierarchies based on age. Because the adultification of young people results from adult irresponsibility, the analysis of these two concepts cannot be fully separated. Therefore, instances of both portrayals are intertwined in the first and second sections to emphasise adultification in the former and adult irresponsibility in the latter. Third, an examination of *adult allies* identifies a distinction between two types: those with supportive roles from beginning to end like Lisa in *The Hate U Give*; and other complex characters like Helen in *Still Life with Tornado* who undergo a change throughout the novel from partly antagonists to allies. Since the roles of this second type are partly antagonistic and partly allies, their examination is interlaced between the second and third sections of this chapter. The development into awareness of this type of adults throughout the plotlines is likened to that of young characters' growth. It is therefore argued that similar to youth development, these depictions emphasise maturation as an ongoing process which continues during adulthood. Accordingly, the chapter points out that the examined narrative portrayal of this stage of life resists conflicting binary notions of adult wisdom and autonomy as opposed to the dependency and recklessness of young people.

Youth Adultification

In chapter four, this thesis focused on the ways that age is used in YA fiction against young people as an excuse to deprive them of participatory rights in matters affecting their lives whether at home or in school. The following reading of *The Hate U Give* (2017), and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) further complicates this adultist attitude by looking at power dynamics between adults and young people by referring to instances where young characters are *prematurely burdened* with age-inappropriate roles such as the

parentification of Seven, Khalil and DeVante in *The Hate U Give*. Accordingly, role reversals are identified between parents and their children whereby the latter take up the former's responsibility.

A prominent example of role reversals between parent and child in *The Hate U Give* occurs between Starr's paternal half-brother Seven and his stepfather King. This relationship becomes evident when Starr's father, Maverick Carter, addresses Seven saying: "'You can always move in with us'" (Thomas 36), to shelter him from King's abusive behaviour. Seven's reply reveals the fatherly role that he plays in the family as he admits: "'I know, but I can't leave Kenya and Lyric [Seven's stepsisters]. That fool [his stepfather] is crazy enough to hit them too. He don't care that they're his daughters'" (Thomas 36). This statement not only emphasises King's careless attitude, but it also condemns him as the source of trouble in the family which leads Seven to assume his stepfather's responsibility. Indeed, by declaring his *obligation to stay* with his sisters through the use of the modal verb *can't*, Seven indicates that he has no other choice but to undertake the role of the protector. In this sense, Seven, being himself a target of his stepfather's domestic abuse, is forced to bear the maltreatment as well as to take charge of parental protective duties vis-à-vis Kenya and Lyric. This unreliable parent and responsible child paradigm is known as "parentification," recognised by Lisa M. Hooper and others as the "phenomenon whereby parental roles and responsibilities are abdicated by parents and carried out by children and adolescents" (811). This familial concept is also used synonymously with the term "adultification" (East 5; Garber 322), while the child/adolescent assuming his parents' duties such as Seven in this example is referred to as the "young caregiver" (East 1), "*parentified child," "adult child*" (Hooper et al. 811), or "Little parent" (Doyle and Timms 94). Through the portrayal of the simultaneous

abuse and burden of the young character, *The Hate U Give* directly intertwines youth maltreatment with parentification to denounce the latter phenomenon.

Another example of parentification in the same novel is demonstrated through the character of Khalil Harris, the victim of police brutality. As soon as Starr learns that the reason why her late friend was involved in drug dealing is to pay his mother's debt to King–the leader of the neighbourhood's gang known as King Lords–she instantly remarks: "That was classic Khalil. No matter what his momma did, he was still her knight and he was still gonna protect her" (Thomas 235). Emphasised by the word choice *classic,* Starr's interior monologue shows that role reversals in Khalil's relationship with his mother represent a repetitive tendency. This characterisation deconstructs the adultist stigma of young people as "lazy, mindless, irresponsible, and even dangerous" (Giroux 71) or as "juvenile delinquents" (Young-Bruehl, *Childism—Prejudice against Children* 254) by shifting the blame of Khalil's involvement with drugs on the adult mother. Indeed, instead of providing her son with his rights to care and protection, in this example it is the adult drug-addict mother who acts irrationally. Accordingly, there is a twist here to the binary outlook holding adults at the top of social hierarchies based on age and youth at the bottom. As Yukino Semizu observes in her study of adultness in children's literature: "Parents are no longer the wise, stable figures who provide support when the child is in distress" (Semizu 65). On the contrary, emphasised by the word *knight,* Khalil is the one playing the role of the saviour, whereas his mother is portrayed as the burden. This nuanced characterisation performs an act of defiance interrogating the legitimacy of adult supremacy all the while dismantling adultist stereotypes.

Similar to Khalil, DeVante is another adolescent who finds himself compelled to step into the role of the provider in his family. Justifying his and Khalil's associations with King

Lords and drug dealings, DeVante explains to Starr: "'Like I said, nobody likes selling drugs,' he says. 'I hated that shit. For real. But I hated seeing my momma and my sisters go hungry, you know?'" (Thomas 236). This confession reveals the parentification of DeVante for being what Linda Burton identifies as: "the household financial manager or primary care provider for one's siblings," a role she declares "nonnormative" (Burton 330). Through its brevity, immediacy and directness, this character's colloquial language creates a conversational tone which builds a casual and relaxed atmosphere. This communication style acts as an effective literary device in revealing nuanced views on people from the lower class and their severe living conditions. Additionally, as a narrative that denounces racial discrimination, colloquialism here also serves to expose the distinction caused by social inequality. In this sense, DeVante is portrayed as the product of racial, class and adultist disparities. It is this social environment which leads the character "into service as the parent's caregiver" (Garber 322). Indeed, the intersection of these oppressive systems plays a defining role not only in DeVante's life chances, but also those of Seven and Khalil.

The parentification of Seven, Khalil and DeVante appears to establish a prototype. Besides their young age and adultification, what these three have in common are their cultural background and social class. This similar characterisation is an essential reflection on the influence of the social variables of culture, class, and age in binary role reversals of parents and their children. Indeed, the analogous characterisation of the three boys as African American young adults from the poor neighbourhood of Garden Heights emphasises Burton's belief that "aspects of family context that appeared most influential include family needs, capital, and culture" (Burton 334). Accordingly, Thomas' interpretation of the parentification of Khalil, Seven and DeVante effectively challenges the interlocking systems of inequality, power, and privilege. These age-inappropriate roles are deemed to be

counterproductive for the developmental wellbeing of young people (Burton 329; Garber 324; Hooper et al. 211) who fall victims to their social and economic disadvantage and end up associated with dangerous practices like drug trafficking or performing extensive adult tasks such as DeVante's providing for his family. In fact, Burton suggests the child's mere exposure to knowledge concerning the family's financial difficulties as a form of adultification in itself as she identifies a "heightened awareness and anxiety about their families' financial woes" (337). Hence, economically disadvantaged young people are burdened with adult concerns. In this sense, *The Hate U Give* reveals through these examples, deeper problems of youth maltreatment besides its focus on police brutality against African American youth.

On the topic of exposure to issues beyond the child's responsibilities, Starr is also a victim of what Burton identifies as *precocious knowledge* (336) being another facet of adultification. This is evident in Starr's outburst while talking to her mother:

> *Nobody* understands! *I* saw the bullets rip through him. *I* sat there in the streets as he took his last breath. *I've* had to listen to people try to make it seem like it's okay he was murdered. As if he deserved it. But he didn't deserve to die, and I didn't do anything to deserve seeing that shit! (Thomas 339).

The protagonist here points out not only to the injustice that Khalil faced and is still facing throughout the media's "posthumous demonization and criminalization" (Smiley and Fakunle 351) of young African American victims, but she also reveals how this entire experience negatively impacts her. The foregrounding of the personal pronoun *I* is significant because it effectively emphasises Starr's emotional state. Indeed, as the last part of the

quote shows, this protagonist recognises that these circumstances are not appropriate for her young age. Similarly, Burton identifies the conditions to which Starr is subjected as adultification explaining that the latter also "involves witnessing situations and acquiring knowledge that are advanced for the child's age" (Burton 336). Accordingly, this precocious knowledge robs Starr of her youth as it *re*introduces her to a world of hate crimes because Khalil is not the first friend whose murder she witnesses.

Describing Natasha's murder, Starr recounts: "She looked scared. We were ten, we didn't know what happened after you died. Hell, I still don't know, and she was forced to find out, even if she didn't wanna find out" (Thomas 33). The word *forced to* denounces the injustice behind these child and youth crimes. Worried about her daughter, Starr's mother asserts as she argues with her husband to convince him to move out of their neighbourhood to a safer area: "'Maverick, she's seen two of her friends get killed. Two! and she's only sixteen'" (Thomas 55). Through the focus on age, these depictions draw a link between Starr's precocious knowledge and the intersection between race and class. Hence, Starr exemplifies what Burton identifies as "consistent witnesses to the harsh realities of life in high-risk environments" (Burton 336). In this sense, this interpretation effectively proves how different systems of inequality, namely class, race and adultism, are interlaced to cause further injustices to young people.

The interpretation of Kalhan's novel from the perspective of adultification of young people pinpoints the intrinsic link between issues of class on the one hand, and entrenched adultist beliefs on the other. Whereas intersection of classism and adultism have been covered in the first chapter, this section refers to the double oppression of the protagonist to understand the causality of her adultification. In doing so, this reading uncovers the paradox underlying interwoven inequalities whereby worries and tasks beyond her age are

imposed on the young character while her basic rights are blantantly dismissed. The following passage from the novel explicitly denotes this controversy as the narrator reports: “As for her mum – what did she think Jay had been doing the past few years, while she was out working her two jobs? Jay had been forced to grow up fast, and being independent and free to make choices was an intrinsic part of it” (Kalhan 61). The first part of the statement recognises that Jay is not fully enjoying her youth like a person of her age should due to her circumstances. This is evident in the description of her daily routine as she comes home from school, “The first thing she always did when she came in was switch on some lights and the radio. It made the flat feel more alive, more like Matt’s house or Chloe’s. Their mums were usually at home when they got in” (Kalhan 18). This description of the mundane is incisve because it thoroughly contributes to the overall meaning of the narrative. The comparison between Jay’s routine following her return from school and her friends’ warm and welcoming ambience emphasises the main character’s resort to take matters into her hands to create a cozy atmosphere to assuage her solitude. Class inequality is identified as the reason behind Jay’s lonely evenings at the apartment as the narrator points out her mother’s absense as a necessity (Kalhan 18). Between shivering because of the cold, but worrying about the gas bill (Kalhan 19), doing her English homework while staring at the paint that she keeps reapplying on the damp ceiling of her bedroom to no avail (Kalhan 20), and rushing to make dinner before her mother comes home from her cleaning work (Kalhan 22), there is no doubt that Jay’s daily concerns are rather adult responsibilities. This depiction of the main character’s daily life is a compelling element of the realist literary mode which aims to uncover deep-seated truths through the incorporation of many intricate and interconnected details. Realism offers cogent textual and narrative strategies to expose the plights and tribulations of young people especially in relation to systems of inequality. The narration of

Jay's routine is significant because it reveals the impact of class inequality leading to her adultification. However, this reading of the narrative points out the irony which compels Jay to perform adult duties, but prevents her from enjoying her basic liberties to be *independent and free to make choices* due to embedded adultist outlooks.

Irresponsible Adults

The Hate U Give continues to identify the other facet linked to young people's parentification which concerns parental behaviour. This is apparent in Seven's interjection against his birth mother, Iesha who shows up uninvited to his eighteenth birthday:

> 'Nah, Pops! Let me tell her how I didn't invite her because I didn't wanna explain to my friends that my stepmom isn't my mom like they think. Or how I never once corrected anybody at Williamson who made that assumption. Hell, it wasn't like she ever came to any of my stuff, so why bother? You couldn't even show up to my graduation yesterday!' (Thomas 359).

Seven's outpouring of emotions reveals Iesha's lack of involvement in her child's life. Her neglectful attitude is emphasised through Seven's search for a mother figure in Lisa, his stepmom, to fill that void. Indeed, together with young people's adultification comes the problem of parent immaturity, which according to Lindsay C. Gibson has been around "since antiquity" (Gibson 2). Thomas' narrative emphasises this adult irresponsibility through the son's objection to his mother's behaviour. For this purpose, the author focuses on detail, which is an important technique of realism, to convey the negligent conduct of Iesha. Accordingly, on the spur of the moment, Seven paints a detailed report holding Iesha

accountable for her bad parenting and lack of involvement in his life throughout the years. He goes as far as to precise that she fails to attend his big events such as his graduation to the point where his peers mistake his stepmother for his birth mother. The meticulous attention to detail in this example is a convincing tool effectively challenging parental misuse of power through the young character's responsiveness.

Similar to Thomas' novel, *The Sun Is also a Star* portrays several examples of adultification and parental immaturity. Indeed, Daniel draws attention to his father's flawed behaviour. The son reports on the cause behind his father's unreasonable attitude towards his children relating that it's "not because he's evil. And not because he's a stereotypical Korean Parent. But because he can't see past his own history to let us have ours" (Yoon 292). This assertion affirms that there is a reason beyond Dae Hyun's cultural background governing his harsh adultist behaviour and it is his emotional immaturity. Gibson recognises emotionally immature parents to be "*Self-Referential, Not Self-Reflective*" (Gibson 32) which clarifies what Daniel means by the last part of the quotation. The protagonist's contemplations of his father's conduct attests to what Semizu knows as "eliminating one of the traditional distinctions between adults and children in children's literature" (Semizu 65) which is the wisdom of adults. Indeed, this characterisation in *The Sun Is also a Star* blurs the lines between youth and adults effectively challenging social hierarchies based on age.

Dae Hyun's disregard for his son's participatory rights (which is explored at length in the fourth chapter) reflects several personality traits associated with emotional immaturity in accordance with Gibson's analysis of parental irresponsibility. Among these peculiarities, is the father's unyielding "*and Single-Minded*" character (Gibson 29). Similar to Gibson's interpretation of parental rigidness (29), after Dae Hyun set his mind on his son's future career as a doctor, or about the latter's choice of girlfriend, the choices are no longer open

for discussion. The father's cold assertions show that Daniel's father does not even tolerate the idea of difference in opinion because to him "There's one right answer" (Gibson 29). This brings us to the other evidence to Dae Hyun's emotional immaturity which is his "*Little Respect for Differences*" (Gibson 31). Indeed, the father's inability to consider his son's aspirations because they do not match his expectations (Yoon 235) falls in line with Gibson's analysis that: "Emotionally immature people are annoyed by other people's differing thoughts and opinions, believing everyone should see things their way. The idea that other people are entitled to their own point of view is beyond them" (Gibson 31). In addition, Dae Hyun also shows signs of a lack of empathy (Gibson 35). This is evident in his interjection: "'Who cares what you *want*?'" (Yoon 236). The protagonist's contemplation of his father's unsympathetic stance deconstructs the widespread claim that "grown-ups as more mature than their children" (Gibson 1) as it is the son who recognises his father's flawed reasoning. The focus on Daniel's reflections and disappointment in Dae Hyun is a compelling element in the denunciation of adultist beliefs and practices as well as age-based hierarchies by challenging notions of adulthood.

Like Daniel, *The Sun Is also a Star*'s other protagonist, Natasha also experiences a conflictual relationship with her father. Natasha's following reflection effectively challenges adult supremacy as she contemplates: "Growing up and seeing your parents' flaws is like losing your religion. I don't believe in God anymore. I don't believe in my father either" (Yoon 215-216). The protagonist's observation implies that just like young people, who are typically condemned to be immature and thus prone to make mistakes, adults are not faultless either. At the end of the narrative, she instructs him saying: "When we get to Jamaica, you have to at least try. Go on auditions. And be better to Mom. She's done everything, and she's tired, and you owe it to us. You don't get to live in your head anymore"

(Yoon 328). In this quotation, the role reversal between Natasha and her father is evident through the way the daughter addresses her father and the latter's subsequent submissive reaction as he remorsefully joins his wife and younger son for a family hug. The use of the verb *have to* expressing obligation as well as the repetitive focus on the imperative form to give orders emphasises the disciplinarian stance of young Natasha along with her father's compliance. By doing so, this characterisation inverses the usual family structure by revealing that parents are not always more knowledgeable than their children. Semizu observes that recent children's literature twists family relationships, maintaining that: "now that adults and children share the same world, parents are not only being observed but they can be almost patronised by children" (Semizu 66). Indeed, the protagonist's authoritative tone breaks free from earlier depictions of youth subordination.

In *Still Life with Tornado,* the protagonist Sarah is also contemplative of her father's behaviour. After Chet loses his job, Sarah observes that: "Last week, he was processing insurance claims in a cubicle in a skyscraper. This week, he is an unshaven, greasy man who locks himself in his room. He doesn't even come out for baseball. He doesn't say hello" (King 200). The protagonist's attentive description falls in line with Joosen's assertion that children's narratives interrogate the construction of adulthood and whether "age and the characteristics of one's body" are the only points of reference in this matter (*Perspectives on children's literature* 5). Indeed, Sarah's attention to her father's recent sloppy and withdrawn attitude compared to a week ago mirrors the impact of socialisation which Joosen identifies as a potential factor in the construction of adulthood (*Perspectives on children's literature* 5). It is in this sense that Sarah's observation raises the question of "whether the entry into adulthood is reversible" (Joosen, *Perspectives on children's literature* 5). Between last week and this week, Chet seems to be falling behind instead of going

forward. Sarah continues her examination of her father's behaviour recapitulating: "Dad has been a grizzly bear. A prizefighter. He's been a bully. A rat. | Outside of that, he's been a blank space" (King 200). These consecutive pejorative metaphors emphasise Sarah's negative outlook on Chet. The four first metaphors describing the father all draw attention to his negative portrayal as an abuser in the family. The last sentence is particularly relevant because *the blank space* suggests that outside of that abusive role, Chet does not fulfil his responsibilities as a husband and a parent. Similar to what Semizu recognises in children's literature starting from the 1980s onward, "parents' authority was no longer the given but that which they had to earn" (67). For this reason, Sarah does not embellish her father's image, but portrays him as the abuser that he really is. The word choice *grizzly bear*, *prizefighter* and *bully* provide a thorough description of his violent conduct towards Helen and Bruce. Sarah also adds that: "anyone can see through dad's complicated-man shit. He's just a big hole. A big hole who takes up space and doesn't mind being a big hole because he doesn't know what else to be since he stopped being a rat" (King 201). Chet's characterisation here draws an unidealized picture of parenthood. It shows that adults can be irresponsible and confused (*doesn't know what else to be*), thus breaking free from "the traditional image" of the father as an adult role model (Semizu 67). Instead, in Semizu's words, "parents in children's literature today are allowed to be themselves" (67). Chet clearly portrays what Maria Nikolajeva identifies as a "bad character" (*Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature* 145) that is easily construed as a villain (146) due to the role he plays as the perpetrator of human rights' violations. However, King offers a more dynamic characterisation of the mother Helen, making her hard to cast as either *good* or *bad*. Still, despite the dissimilarities between Helen and Chet, the author provides evidence of role reversals between youth and adults through both parents.

Sarah's mother represents a complex character with what Nikolajeva knows as "contradictory psychological traits" (*Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature* 146). This intricacy, Bettina Kummerling-Meibauer suggests, challenges the understanding of the character's journey (132). Being herself a victim of her husband's abuse, Helen is also seen throughout the novel as a participator in the adultist subjugation of her children. A prominent example addressed in King's novel is the intricate mother-daughter relationship that is seemingly acceptable on the surface level but reveals a rather adultist outlook on Sarah. For instance, the latter reports her mother's words from six years ago during a vacation in Mexico:

> 'We waited years to go on a real vacation–until you were old enough to take care of yourself,' she said.
>
> This was a compliment and I took it as one, but the comment made Bruce click his teeth and shake his head. The week went downhill from there (King 26).

Helen's statement carries negative connotations because it depicts children as a burden. Similar to what Joosen observes in her examination of a children's literary work regarding "mild childism" (*Perspectives on children's literature* 138) of Thomas' mother), it is not because the mother "is loving and caring" that she cannot be guilty of adultism towards her child (*Perspectives on children's literature* 137). Indeed, Helen's words reiterate the stigma that children are "passive receptacles of provision and protection, inept and vulnerable as they are presumed to be" (Qvortrup 632), which further asserts "the title of "adult-in-the-making", "less-than-fully-human", and "under-developed/under-educated" (Fletcher 22) human beings. Hence, Helen unconsciously discriminates against her daughter. Still, the

mother's unintentionality does not protect the protagonist from the impact of this entrenched adultism.

By taking Helen's comment as a compliment now that she is in her mother's words *old enough*, Sarah reveals that she is pressured to grow up. Gibson recognises young people's eagerness to grow up and become self-reliant due to a deprivation of a nurturing parental relationship (Helen works night shifts and sleeps during the day, and Chet does not provide an appropriate care or support for his children (King 63)) as a form of adultification. She also specifies that this category of adultified children suffer loneliness (Gibson 11), a feeling which Sarah repeatedly acknowledges (King 57, 240). By clicking his teeth and shaking his head, Bruce's reaction reveals his awareness about this underlying adultification because at ten years old, Sarah is still a child in need of her mother's care and protection. The proof is that when left to take care of herself during this vacation, she suffers a *severe* sunburn because she forgot to apply sun protection onto her skin (King 182-186). This is a significant part of the story seen through the emphasis placed on this incident considering that there is an entire chapter devoted to it. Sarah's painful sunburn in "Mexico–*Day Six I: SPF 0"* (King 182) foregrounds Helen's part in the maltreatment of the protagonist because of her adultist assumptions about Sarah as a burden and for pressuring her to grow up.

Another example indicating Helen's complex characterisation is revealed throughout her interaction with Bruce. In this instance, it is the child who leads his mother into a state of awareness. Helen reminisces about earlier days before her son walked away from the family recounting:

> Bruce told me once when he was in high school that if Chet and I didn't stop arguing that Sarah would be one of these damaged girls who gets pregnant at thirteen or

> gets addicted to heroin or something. I blew him off at the time, but he put it in my head and I couldn't stop thinking about my own parents and Chet's father and how fighting adults were normal for us both. (King 50)

This exchange between the mother and her son shows that parents learn from their children and not just the other way around. Indeed, now that Sarah is going through an existential crisis, Helen admits that young Bruce previously warned her that the *parental deal* between herself and Chet could severely impede his sister's development at a time when the mother could not see it coming yet. By *blowing him off at the time*, Helen succumbs to the prejudice that adults know better than young people which in this case proves to be wrong. The fact that *he put it in her head* attests to the influence of Bruce's words, the contemplation of which led Helen to learn about herself and her husband's behaviours. Bruce's remark allowed his mother to establish a link between her childhood and that of Chet and the impact of this past on their current relationship and parenting. Charles A. Corr affirms this possibility under a section of his article entitled "Parents who learn from their children" (247). He maintains that "Parents truly can learn from their children sometimes" and cites examples from children's literature which endorse this point of view (Corr 247). Similarly, King's YA narrative depicts how a mother can achieve self-awareness thanks to the help of her children which will eventually empower her to make the necessary changes to improve their family life.

Helen starts the story as an unhappy submissive wife, but with the assistance of Sarah and Bruce she ultimately asks her abusive husband Chet to move out of their house. Accordingly, *Still Life with Tornado* consists of the bildungsroman – "the novel of human *emergence*" (Bakhtin 21) – of the protagonist Sarah, as well as the coming-of-age story of

adult Helen. Indeed, although most of the novel is narrated by Sarah, few chapters here and there channel the narrative voice of the mother as she moves from passive submission to Chet's parenting deal into a state of awareness. Helen's formative journey of self-discovery is highlighted in her last narrative passage as she concludes: "And then I look in the mirror and there I am. | Pretending. Always pretending" (King 243). The mirror here embodies a powerful symbol of knowledge and understanding as opposed to the repeated word *pretending* which denotes deceit and falsehood. Therefore, the mirror reflection as a literary device carries a symbolic meaning of a transition from obliviousness (going along with Chet's abusive plan) into discernment and realisation. The mother's reiteration of *pretending* emphasises a recognition of her mistakes. Moreover, the mother's tone in this passage suggests regret and a willingness to take action. In this sense, by the end of the novel, Helen is able to achieve self-wisdom and consciousness and is ready to confront Chet. Thus, it becomes clear that this YA narrative, works similarly to the children's story *The Little Prince* (1943) by Antoine Saint-Exupéry, in that, as Todres and Higinbotham suggest, it: "functions on some levels as a coming-of-age story, only it is the adult and not the child who achieves a new level of maturity. Unlike the traditional coming-of-age story, in which the child learns the values and roles of adult society" (187). This interpretation of *The Little Prince* points to the narrative construction of adulthood depicting maturation as an ongoing process which is not merely specific to childhood and youth. In like manner, *Still Life with Tornado* portrays the mother's journey through a series of internal monologue emphasising her gradual awakening, or in Bakhtin's terms *emergence* (21). Accordingly, King's novel blurs the lines between youth and adulthood as it demonstrates that just like young people, adults are also subject to growth.

Throughout her journey into awareness, Helen reflects on her husband's behaviour in the same way that young Sarah is critical of his role, adulthood, and parenting. Thanks to its multiperspectivity, *Still Life with Tornado* insists on the depiction of Chet's emotional immaturity by providing ample evidence either through the children's viewpoints or that of the mother. Out of the various uses of multiperspective narrative structures summarised by Marcus Hartner, the function as a strategy to emphasise a thematic element (355) applies the best to this example considering the reproving stance taken by the mother and daughter vis-à-vis Chet and his abusive behaviour. Hence, as Helen develops morally and psychologically, she reports examples that reveal her husband's irresponsible conduct. On one occasion she recounts that:

> When the kids were little and I went to work seven-to-seven, Chet called his time with them 'babysitting.' I'd come home at seven thirty in the morning, and the dinner dishes would still be in the sink, the house was a mess, and the kids would be late for school, homework undone. That's not even babysitting (King 63).

This extract shows that while Helen is at work, Chet does not fulfil his responsibilities as a parent to Sarah and Bruce. The mother's concluding comment about babysitting reveals how Chet fails not only to accomplish his duties as a father, but also at performing what is presumably a "teen job" (Entwisle et al. 3). Semizu observes about recent children's literature that: "Parents have work to do and various responsibilities but other than that they do not feel any need to behave differently from their children" (Semizu 65). This is also noticeable in the YA narrative under discussion through the character of the father who does not perform his duties to look after the children or to do any house chores. Article 18 of the

UNCRC distinctly states that both parents share the same responsibilities with regards to raising the children and ensuring their development (U.N.CRC 5). Multiperspectivity performs a fundamental purpose in King's text because it allows the author to convey through the character of the mother ideas beyond the young protagonist's grasp. Indeed, Nikolajeva pinpoints the issue underlying the relationship between the implied author in children's literature and the young protagonist, who cannot accurately transmit the mature ideas of the latter without compromising the tone of the narrative. The scholar suggests the reliance on an adult secondary character as a viable strategy in this situation to portray the thoughts of the implied author that would otherwise sound unnatural for a young person to recognise (*The Rhetoric of Character* 12). Helen in the primary text under study fulfils this purpose by consolidating the ideas about Chet, which Sarah has already started to acknowledge, and to report exchanges between the couple critically from an adult's standpoint such as the example above. The mother's words not only add credibility to her child's story, but also emphasise the negative role performed by Chet both as a father and as a husband.

It appears that Chet's neglect of his responsibilities as a parent is a characteristic which Gibson relates to the fourth type of *emotionally immature parents* known as "Rejecting parents" (70). She specifies that this type of parents tends to keep a distance from other family members (77), a trait that is easily identifiable in Chet's conduct. Indeed, his lack of involvment in the family life is discernable for example in Helen's words: "All he does is go to work, shrug, and eat vendor hot dogs on the way home" (King 62), or as Sarah believes: "I think Dad's idea of a good time is sitting in one place, doing nothing" (King 163). See also his tendency to isolate himself in his room (King 200), as well as the fact that "He doesn't want to talk to anyone" (King 253). The alternating perspectives of the mother and

daughter are incisive to Chet's depiction because as Hartner pinpoints, multiperspectivity's contribution to meaning making is invaluable to narratives (355). Shrugging and doing nothing reveal Chet's disinterest and indifference towards the people around him. The other traits of rejecting parents, according to Gibson, also apply to Chet. Indeed, he is "capable of punitive physical attacks" (Gibson 78) towards both Helen and Bruce, his lack of empathy (Gibson 78) is distinguishable in the episode of Sarah's severe sunburn. While her mother expressed a deep concern when seeing her, Chet just lay there sunbathing and did not even bother to take a look at his daughter. Sarah notices the difference in her parents' reaction to her sunburn as she reports: "Dad lay there with his hands across his belly and didn't even open his eyes, but I knew he couldn't be asleep" (King 184). Through her last attentive remark, the protagonist insists on precising that this is a matter of indifference. Chet's parenting deal also suggests that he is the one to "rule the home" (Gibson 78), being another characteristic of emotionally immature rejecting parents. This dynamic characterisation of the father's immaturity puts adulthood under the microscope. *Still Life with Tornado* looks at this stage of life critically and resists the widely accepted adult supremacy.

In its advocation of equal power dynamics between youth and adults, King's narrative examines adulthood through the eyes of the young protagonist. Sarah concludes one of the chapters with the following observation:

> Anyway. There's nothing we can do about it. | That's what Miss Smith said when I found it [art project]. She said, 'Well, there's nothing we can do about it now.' | I'm sixteen years old and this is the main idea the *adults* [added emphasis] in my life have given me. Whether it's seaweed in Mexico, missing art projects, or Dad

> shrugging, the message is clear: The older people get, the less they can do about things. They seem to be stuck. They seem to be glue (King 172-173).

The structure of Sarah's sentences creates a meditative tone as she gloomily considers the adults around her. This passage depicts adulthood as the stage of life which resonates with incompetence, powerlessness, and surrender. The protagonist refers to her teacher's refusal to resolve the issue of the missing art project from the art show, her father's constant indifference, and she even hints at her mother's unwillingness to leave her husband when using the glue metaphor. In fact, Helen uses the same words referring to herself when admitting: "I'm embarrassed about my bad choices. I'm embarrassed by being stuck and being the glue all by myself" (King 151). This confession also reveals the adult helplessness described by young Sarah, hence calling adultism, i.e., "the bias towards adults" (Fletcher 7) into question. Indeed, Sarah's depiction of adulthood contradicts the view of grown-ups as "independent, self-sufficient, and responsible" (Fletcher 7) people. In addition, the protagonist's use of the present perfect while asserting that this observation stems from *the idea that the adults in her life have given her*, suggests that adult powerlessness is not something new nor ephemeral, but it is rather an ongoing issue that started in the past and is still in process today.

Sarah's contemplation of adulthood as an impotent stage of life is similar to Todres and Higinbotham's reading of *The Little Prince* by Saint-Exupéry. Indeed, they maintain that the latter "portrays adults as dull, mundane, reductive, and as incapable of seeing the mysterious and invisible. Grown-up is a limited state of being, consumed by 'figures' and 'matters of consequence' that the child considers inconsequential" (186). This interpretation emphasises the shift in children's literature towards the focus on the "psychological

dimension" of characters as opposed to "action oriented" (Nikolajeva, *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature* 147) stories. The thorough psychological characterisation in *Still Life with Tornado* is significant because it effectively challenges parental adultist practices through the integration of Helen and Chet's background stories, mood changes, and motives. It calls into question their authority and behaviour as parents and adults.

When Helen reaches psychological growth by the end of the narrative, she finally confronts her husband by asking him to move out of their house. Chet on the other hand, shows no sign of maturity as he lies to the police and denies he has ever been physically abusive to any member of the family (King 266). As his son tells the truth to the police, Chet immediately makes false accusations about Bruce and accuses him of incest: "'What the [obscenity] are you even here for? […] I kicked you out six years ago for what you did to your sister'" (King 266). The father's angry interjection and insolent tone show his bad temper. Chet's reply emphasises the role reversal between him and his son whereby the adult behaves irrationally while the younger person seeks to put an end to years of domestic abuse. This exchange between father and son reveals the static characterisation of the father from the beginning of the novel till the end. As the other three members of the family develop throughout the storyline, this static character remains unaware of the part he played as the perpetrator of human rights' violations. Chet's depiction is significant because it emphasises the contrasting difference between him and the dynamic development into awareness in Bruce, Sarah, and Helen.

Adults with Positive Roles in Young Adult Fiction

The examined novels present another type of adult characters that are known to Todres and Higinbotham as "human rights defenders" (170). These adults are often secondary

characters who play positive roles in the protagonists' journey to assist them throughout their struggles. They can be either parents like Maverick and Lisa in *The Hate U Give*, or non-relatives like Sita from *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*. Adam Fletcher defines the "Adult ally" as "an adult who rejects adultism and takes action to balance adultism out of a belief that would benefit young people and adults" (Fletcher 7). Maverick, Lisa, Sita, Neela, and Helen assume the duties of children's rights protectors in a manner that ensures the well-being of young people in these novels, so the latter are better equipped to confront adultism. Barry Checkoway explains that these allies can be teachers or neighbours that partner up with young people "for a common purpose, and play various roles in the process" (Checkoway 94). However, the following interpretation of the construction of adulthood in the chosen texts resists Checkoway's assumption that "Adult allies" are solely "older people *from outside the immediate family* [added emphasis] who work with and support young people in working for social justice" (94). The readings in this thesis argue that adult characters of the immediate family, like non-relatives, are prone to take up either negative or positive roles in the lives of young people. Therefore, there is a recognition of their potential as either perpetrators of children's rights violations such as the father Chet or as adult allies also like the father Maverick. This section also addresses "the challenge" to all adults, suggested by Tate and Copas "to build respectful alliances with children in which they sincerely believe adults care for them, value and understand their points of view, and work with them toward common goals" (41). Indeed, there is an emphasis on adult allies' efforts towards building a safe environment for young people in order for the latter to trust them. The role performed by Sita in allowing Jay to trust her even though they are almost complete strangers offers a good example.

In *The Sun Is also a Star*, *Still Life with Tornado*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror,* it is the protagonists' parents who carry out the role of *perpetrators of children's rights violations*. However, in *The Hate U Give*, Starr's parents are rather human rights defenders not only to their children Starr and Seven, but also to other young characters like DeVante. In the case of Starr, Maverick's constructive relationship with his daughter is discernible in his stimulating interactions with her such as when he explains:

> 'So, what's the hate they're giving the 'little infants' in today's society?' | […] '[…] Why are so many people in our neighborhood drug dealers?' […] | '[…] How did the drugs even get in our neighborhood?' | […] 'Lack of opportunities,' Daddy says. […] That's the hate they're giving us, baby, a system designed against us. That's Thug Life' (Thomas 167-169).

Maverick's questioning method is an efficient strategy because it creates an active discussion whereby Starr is encouraged to think critically. Indeed, the protagonist herself reports the benefit of this engaging approach acknowledging: "He always makes me think" (Thomas 167), following another one of his thought-provoking questions. In this enriching discussion, Maverick even refers to "the Black Panthers," "The slave rebellion of 1831," and "Nat Turner" (Thomas 167) to delve deeper in issues of social injustices as an attempt to strengthen and appease his daughter. Corr maintains that: "Parents and other adults often draw upon the value of memories and legacies […] in seeking to help their children in the aftermath of a death" (Corr 246). Similarly, this embrace of the value of history shows the part played by the father in assisting Starr's healing following the murder of Khalil. In addition to the insightful exchange, Maverick's use of the term of endearment *baby* in the

passage above emphasises his affectionate support. The father's empowering attitude towards Starr is also shown when she recounts: "he nudges my chin", followed by his invitation for her to stay strong: "'keep your head up'" (Thomas 166). Likewise, Starr's narration: "He gives me a dap" (Thomas 167) reveals Maverick's cheering of her. This depiction falls in line with Todres and Higinbotham's belief that *protectors of children's rights* prompt positive relationships with young people (Todres and Higinbotham 170-171). Hence, from giving insight, to showing affection and empowering Starr, the parts played by Maverick are likely to inspire alliances between youth and adults.

Starr's mother Lisa also shows a great support for her daughter throughout the narrative and symbolises the figure of the nurturing parent to her stepson Seven. Lisa's caring nature is shown not only through her spoken words, but also through small everyday gestures such as brushing Starr's hair to help her sleep on the night of Khalil's murder and remaining by her side for a long while afterwards (Thomas 31) or how she comfortingly keeps hold of her daughter's hand while driving (Thomas 154). Indeed, the protagonist reads the meaning behind Lisa's embrace reporting: "Momma takes my hand, and her tight squeeze tells me what she doesn't say out loud – *I got your back*" (Thomas 97). In like manner, Starr interprets her mother words on another occasion emphasising the sentiment felt as she narrates: "Those words feel as good as any hug I've ever gotten" (Thomas 96). Thomas here builds an analogy between the mother's words and actions to demonstrate the matching impact they both bear on Starr. Lisa's ability to communicate encouraging emotions, love and support through both gestures and spoken words shows the inherent goodness in Lisa's motives. Thomas's display of Starr's responsiveness to her mother's caring attitude acknowledges the importance of a healthy mother-daughter relationship. Checkoway insists that the battle against social injustices is not the responsibility of young people alone. He

firmly believes in the significance of partnerships with adult allies. His reasoning is that "The mechanics that perpetuate injustices were already in place when young people inherited them, and they should not be expected to solve problems that are not of their making alone" (Checkoway 98). It is in this sense that the portrayal of Lisa as an empowering figure is significant to provide alternatives to adultist parenting styles and perpetrators of children's rights violations. While Lisa's supportive attitude of Starr might result from maternal love and care, her helping attitude extends to other characters as well.

Lisa and Maverick are also supportive of Seven, Maverick's son and Lisa's stepson. The two adults seek to remedy the adultification of this character at the hand of his birth mother and her husband King, the neighbourhood gang leader. A prominent example is shown when Seven is about to decline his chance to go away to college and opts for a nearby Central Community College to take care of his two sisters, and Maverick objects: "'Look, you not responsible for your sisters, but I'm responsible for you. And I ain't letting you pass up opportunities so you can do what two grown-[obscenity] people supposed to do'" (Thomas 307). This claim openly denounces the parentification of Seven at the hands of his mother and stepfather through the reminder that Kenya and Lyric should be cared for by their own parents. Moreover, Maverick points out that similar to his half-sisters, Seven also needs to be looked after. The father's assertive tone further deconstructs Seven's parentification by switching the latter's role from the *little parent* to his father's son who himself is in need for guidance. By making sure that his son does not waste the chance to go to a good college, Maverick's role is that of the "rights-affirming parent" (Todres and Higinbotham 176). Todres and Higinbotham explain that adult characters of this type "not only protect children but actively build supportive communities within which children can thrive and realize their rights" (170). It is in this spirit that the father attempts to deconstruct King and Iesha's

adultification of Seven to ensure that the latter fulfils his right to receive an education. This depiction reveals the positive impact that adults can have on young people's lives by creating an environment devoid of adultism, where they can exercise their liberties and develop to their full potential.

Another character in *The Hate U Give* to whom Maverick plays the role of the adult ally is DeVante. When the latter attempts to escape the neighbourhood gang, he turns to Starr's father who willingly provides him with assistance declaring: "I'll help you" (Thomas 175). Maverick here plays the part that DeVante's parents failed to accomplish being his principal caregivers. Accordingly, he welcomes DeVante to stay in their home to shelter him from the gang of the King Lords (Thomas 177). By doing this, Starr's father puts himself and his family at risk to protect DeVante. Todres and Higinbotham recognise this type of behaviour to be a characteristic of *defenders of children's rights* who typically act in children's favour "at great personal cost" (175). In addition to protecting the young boy, Maverick also offers him work in his store along with Starr (Thomas 176). Maverick also shows support towards DeVante by insisting on his educational right as he does also with his son Seven. For this reason, he asserts: "We gon' make sure you stay in school too" (Thomas 175). DeVante finds protection, encouragement and care in this adult ally. This hopeful new beginning for this young character attests to Joosen's observation that at the same time as children's literature presents adultist characters, it also portrays other adult characters positively along with the constructive impact their presence brings to the young protagonists ("The Adult as Foe or Friend?" 214). Indeed, Maverick here provides a good example of the supporting character who assists both relative and non-relative young characters throughout their journeys against adultism.

The character who plays the role of the adult ally to Jay in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* is Sita Anandhati, the matron of the protagonist's old school. As Jay runs away from her aunt's house after having been raped by her cousin, she stumbles upon Sita who is instantly introduced by the omniscient narrator as the "nice lady" with a "tender touch," the "kindness" of which stirred the protagonist's emotions (Kalhan 156). This first impression is effective because the positive choice of words emphasises the goodness of the newly introduced character, particularly when it comes from the all-knowing standpoint of the third person narrative voice. Indeed, in contrast with the other adults of Kalhan's narrative, Sita is presented as an "antidote to the villains" (Todres and Higinbotham 169) of the protagonist's environment. Whereas Kalhan's narrative denounces Neela's adultist neglect and silencing of her daughter (see chapter four of this thesis) and Vimala's as well as Deven's discriminatory emotional and physical maltreatment (see chapter one and two), "other adult characters" in the words of Todres and Higinbotham, "go to great lengths to protect children and their rights" (169). Accordingly, the novel challenges abusive and discriminatory practices through the character of Sita. The latter shelters Jay (Kalhan 170), attempts to appease her trauma by sharing the story of her daughter-in-law's gang-rape (Kalhan 272), attempts to reconcile her with her mother (Kalhan 185-304), and prevents her from committing suicide (Kalhan 268). Her promise that reads "'I will stay with you every minute of every day if that is what it takes'" (Kalhan 273) reveals Sita's relentless devotion to help Jay. Accordingly, Sita is a symbolic character representing adult allies who as Moore puts it: "send important messages through story about how they might play a role in development, and in some cases, healing processes" (163) of young people. This type of supporting character has the potential to inspire collaborations between young people and adults for positive change.

Kalhan's portrayal of Neela, however, is not as straightforward as that of Sita because it does not yield to the binary construction of good versus bad characters. Throughout the plot, Neela is presented not as a villain per se, but her interactions with her daughter at the beginning are rather problematic. Because of her silencing of Jay due to the adultist outlook on the latter's desperation as a teen's "stubborn" (Kalhan 30) tantrum, the failure to acknowledge Jay's right to be heard contributes in a way to the facilitation of her rape. However, the mother-daughter conflict is resolved by the end of the narrative as the two reconcile and accept Sita's offer for the three of them to cohabitate together (Kalhan 318). Neela's recognition of the role she had in the perpetuation of Jay's misfortune prompts the reconsideration of the character from a different light when she admits: "'I was wrong to stop you from seeing him [her friend Matt], wrong to force so many changes upon you when we moved to number forty-two'" (Kalhan 312). The powerful choice of verbs *to stop* and *to force* reveal at once the mother's awareness and regret about the misuse of her adult power which somehow paved the way for the violation of Jay's rights thereafter. The apologetic tone is also significant because it offers insight into Neela's state of mind as a rounded character who makes mistakes and learns from them, thus becoming a better mother. Therefore, the insightful journey of Neela, particularly in conjunction with the positive atmosphere of the happy ending to the conflict with her daughter has the potential to show that it is never too late for wrongdoers and perpetrators of child rights' violations to change for the better as did Neela throughout the plot by eventually becoming an ally.

In *Still Life with Tornado*, King's depiction of the mother is similar to that of Neela in providing different perspectives of the mother figure. Indeed, Helen is seen as a perpetrator of adultism on the one hand, and as a victim of Chet's sexism on the other. Therefore, while she can be perceived at times as a villain because of her entrenched adultism, the chapters

narrated by this mother gradually uncovers her vulnerable stance. Throughout the story, Helen develops an awareness about the role she plays in the maltreatment of her children. In the case of her son, she blatantly admits: “we wrecked Bruce. I didn’t want to wreck Sarah, too” (King 51). As for her daughter, Helen thought she was protecting Sarah by complying with the parenting deal along with Chet (King 252). However, she admits as she recognises her participation in the emotional and psychological abuse of Sarah that “People pleasers make the best victims” (King 110) referring to herself as the object of her husband’s manipulation. These closely linked confessions of guilt and victimisation identify the character’s journey of growth and self-understanding. Hence, between remorseful culpability and reports of physical as well as emotional assault, Helen’s elaborate psychological characterisation is a compelling element to further emphasise Chet’s sexist control of his wife. It is in this sense that Nikolajeva insists, with regard to literary interpretations of guilt that “sharing extreme sensation of guilt is one of those vicarious experiences that literature can offer” (“Guilt” 13). Indeed, King’s portrayal of Helen’s torment with guilt through her internal monologue such as her interrogation: “Why would she ever trust us? Chet and I have been lying to her since she was born” (King 156) demonstrates her accountability. In addition, by implicating Chet through reporting how “he makes excuses, manipulates, gaslights” (King 110), the mother exposes the deeper problem of Chet’s sexist abuse of his wife which downplays the role she plays in the maltreatment of Bruce and Sarah.

The elaborate stylistic tools of the novel acknowledge Helen’s victimisation at the hands of Chet despite the negative part she performed against her children with regards to the parenting deal. A useful strategy softening the image of Helen consists of the informative retrospect on her past presented through a series of mixed analepses reporting instances of

physical and psychological abuse which started years ago such as the first time Chet physically abused her when she was only nineteen years old, and he not only broke her rib but proceeded to slap her head fist-closed several times (King 153). Helen affirms the continuity of his abusive behaviour from that time onto the extent of the novel's plot as she brings up that disheartening incident "It never changes. Not since I was nineteen and the roast beef fell on the floor. I never know what to do" (King 167). The mixed analepses are hereby recognised as a strategic technique to signal Chet's persistent violence over the years as well as to denote Helen's liberation from this abuse by the end of the plot. Because this type of flashback presents occurrences which started before the plotline, but end within the extent of the latter (Genette 61; Keen 101), mixed analepses offer the ideal vehicle to provide evidence for the current change in Helen's life after her long-dated submission to her husband. Indeed, these recollections help the mother gain insight into all she has endured alongside her children, preparing her to take action to put an end to Chet's abuse in the present time. In her recounting of the mentioned incident of abuse, Helen foregrounds her emotions (feelings of guilt, putting the blame on herself, repressing her feelings, hiding her bruises). Emotional characterisation has the potential to depict Helen as either a villain or an ally because as Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer points out: "characters are classified by means of their emotional state of mind" (132). This brings up the novel's multiplicity of perspective which allows Helen to speak from her viewpoint by alternating the narration of the novel with her daughter. This is a useful strategy not only because it reinforces Sarah's story (whose mental health could raise questions about her reliability as a narrator), but also because it offers the immediacy of the mother's internal monologues indicating her deep struggles and emotions. Multiperspectivity is significant to the plot because it allows the author to trace the progress achieved by the mother with regards to the gradual gained

awareness throughout the narrative by having direct access to her thoughts and memories. Accordingly, the complex portrayal of Helen makes her difficult to be categorised with certainty as either a bad or a good character. However, as she defies Chet: “I want you out by tomorrow morning” (King 256) and further insists when he begs and objects: “Out by tomorrow morning” (King 257), Helen’s development towards the ultimate confrontation of her husband with her children by her side makes her an ally by the end of the narrative.

Through characters like Maverick and Lisa from *The Hate U Give*, Neela and Sita from *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*, as well as the mother Helen in *Still Life with Tornado*, these YA narratives could potentially offer insights into positive adult attitudes towards children such as the provision of protection, support, and care. Even though the characters of Neela and Helen initially play a part in the maltreatment of Jay and Sarah respectively, their eventual redemption shows that adulthood is also a learning stage where parents can still develop towards awareness. Besides the significant role of all these adult protectors of children’s rights, it should be acknowledged that “young people”, in the words of Checkoway, “are instrumental in the creation of adult allies” (99). Accordingly, these collaborations between youth and adulthood depend upon the willingness and consent of both parties such as DeVante’s turning to Maverick for help (Thomas 172). Therefore, while adults’ assistance is important, it is the agency and determination of young people as is discussed in the subsequent chapter which makes the difference.

Conclusion

The examination of adulthood in *The Sun Is also a Star*, *Still Life with Tornado*, *The Hate U Give*, and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* is significant because it reveals systematic literary approaches contesting age inequality. Initially, this chapter identifies a recurrent portrayal of

young characters who are *burdened with adult responsibilities* all the while being *denied their children's rights*–like Jay and DeVante in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* and *The Hate U Give* respectively. Youth adultification is therefore construed as a counterargument against the social construction of childhood viewing young people as "human becomings" instead of "human beings" (Qvortrup 631) which then justifies youth subordination as well as adult supremacy. It is observed that role reversals between parents and their children form a recurrent pattern in the narratives under discussion. Accordingly, it is argued that in contrast with the negative role performed by antagonistic adults, parentified young characters represent a literary device that contributes to deconstruct adultism. The reasoning behind this interpretation is that this symbolic conception of youth adultification challenges discriminatory outlooks on youth which rationalise their maltreatment. This literary construction points out to the irony that young people's age is used strategically by perpetrators of children's rights violations to deny young people basic freedoms like participation on the one hand, but it does not protect them from being exploited into performing adult roles.

The second part of the chapter shifts the focus on the second part of role reversals, i.e., the construction of adulthood which constitutes the point of reference against which conceptions of youth are made. In this respect, the chapter sheds light on depictions of adult irresponsibility as a powerful narrative structure to revoke adult supremacy. This analysis effectively integrates nuanced views on parental immaturity from *The Hate U Give*, *The Sun Is also a Star*, and *Still Life with Tornado*. In doing so, it establishes a common trend within these novels whereby young characters critically examine and question the behaviour of the adults in their lives such as demonstrated through Seven's reproachful outburst against Iesha, or Daniel's deprecations of Dae Hyun's obstinacy. On other occasions, the refutation

of adult control is even more pronounced as reveals Natasha's assertive confrontation of her father and the submission of the latter. King's narrative adds to the above, the static characterisation of Chet who is uncapable of change thus portraying adulthood as a stage of idleness and passivity. These critical reflections on adulthood from the standpoint of young characters are interpreted as incisive narrative strategies and acts of defiance against social hierarchies based on age.

The examination of adult allies makes the distinction between two types of these characters. Those who fall in the first type are supportive characters whose role is essential in the protagonist's journey towards the end-goal. Examples of these adult allies are Maverick and Lisa from *The Hate U Give*, and Sita from *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*. For the second type, the literary construction is more complex because it integrates opposing–malevolent and helpful–traits within the same character as is the case for Neela and Helen. This bilateral characterisation of the two mothers foregrounds their growth into awareness following their participation in the subjugation of Jay and Sarah respectively. A similarity is therefore pinpointed in the journey of the two mothers that is congruent with that of their daughters. The likeness between the parallel development of the girls and their mothers is construed as a recognition that adults are also *subject to maturation and growth*, which negates the adultist outlook on young people as inferiors for exactly *that*.

Overall, the examination of adulthood in this chapter contributes to the study of constructions of adulthood in children's literature and YAL criticism because the figure of the young person is closely related to that of the adult. Therefore, they should both be granted attention to develop a complementary and nuanced interpretation. In this respect, it should be noted that besides the significance of the role of adults in building alliances between youth and adults, the subsequent chapter uncovers how this process would not be possible

if it were not for the courage, strength, and determination of young characters such as Sarah's cooperation with her mother, or Jay's acceptance of Sita's care. Therefore, chapter six explores the empowering role played by these young characters to defy adultism to exercise their rights, or to heal from violations of the latter.

CHAPTER SIX

Youth Subordination, Epiphany, and Empowerment

"I am a human being. I am sixteen years old.

She is a human being. She is forty-seven years old.

This should be enough"

(A. S. King, *Still Life with Tornado* 234).

Introduction

The above quotation from A. S. King's *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) offers a compelling preview of the following interpretations of the primary texts. The similarity established between King's adolescent protagonist and her mother despite the age difference defies binary oppositions between young people and adults. On the same note, this chapter seeks to reveal how the four novels work to challenge this binary system. Because the latter is heavily influenced by adultist beliefs and practices, the objective here is to pinpoint instances that discredit these discriminations against young people. For this reason, this chapter argues that these stories' rendition of the subjugation of young people is a significant thematic component emphasising the challenges and obstacles facing them. The struggle of the young characters with youth subordination is hereby recognised as a necessary tool to emphasise the final triumph of youth empowerment. It is the contrast between the initial submissive attitude of the protagonists and the eventual awakening to claim back their rights which facilitates the communication of youth empowerment. The following readings of *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), *The Hate U Give* (2017), and *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018) acknowledge the challenging power of

adults simultaneously with a recognition of young characters' capabilities to make their way past oppressive circumstances. For that purpose, this chapter identifies three common themes, namely youth subordination, epiphany, and empowerment, in the four texts that acknowledge at once adult power and youth empowerment.

Youth Subordination

The predominant theme in the four novels in question is that of youth subordination. The following readings show that it is an inevitable occurrence conveying the challenging imbalance of power dynamics between adults and young characters. Portraying youth subordination, the five protagonists start off their narrative journey by grappling with power struggles, adult norms, and adultist practices. More than half of each narrative plot is concerned with the idea of subordination, but each text interprets it from a different angle. In the case of Starr and Sarah in *The Hate U Give* and *Still Life with Tornado* respectively, subordination follows the traumatic experiences endured by the two girls. In *The Sun is also a Star*, Natasha represses her feelings towards her father while Daniel is denied his right to speech and participation in taking decisions concerning his education and future career. Jay's subordination, on the other hand, is communicated through her escape and suicide attempt in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror.* Youth subordination in the mentioned novels is inextricably linked to the protagonists' experiences with adultism and the violations of their rights, thus marking the inevitable repercussions of intergenerational conflicts. This is a significant theme in view of its delineation of events before and after it, i.e., outlining the oppressive circumstances that caused it, as well as the eventual triumph and the empowerment of the characters. Through this delineation, youth subordination facilitates the depiction of young

people's fight against social hierarchies by pinpointing first the challenge and then the outcome.

In *The Hate U Give*, subordination effectively communicates Starr's traumatic experience all the while building up anticipation for her ultimate empowerment. From the beginning of the narrative, Young Starr explicitly admits, after witnessing the murder of her childhood friend Khalil Harris: "Now I am that person and I'm too afraid to speak" (Thomas 38), thus making it known that just like her friend, she is also suffering the consequences of the officer's hate crime. Indeed, she later refers to the silence regarding the crime as a form of subordination explaining: "Khalil may have lost his life, but I lost something too, and it pisses me off" (Thomas 164). This frustration over the inability to speak marks the traumatic experience and reveals that Starr's journey is a quest to finding her voice to revolt against social injustice (racism and adultism – see chapter one and two). It is in this sense that for the first 200 pages (out of 438 pages), the protagonist experiences an inner turmoil between wanting to bring justice to her victim-friend and her fear to speak up to achieve that objective. Starr's silence regarding the case of Khalil suggests her submission to the two systems of inequality. This depiction of youth subordination is likely to bring awareness into the importance of using one's voice to challenge institutional racism and adultism. Blanka Grzegorczyk and Farah Mendlesohn pinpoint the positive impact of the increase in the number of children's literature dealing with similar topics (2). Indeed, stories such as Starr's, marked by an initial fear and submission juxtaposed with her eventual revolt, recognise the vulnerability of young people as well as their potential. The protagonist's struggle to break her silence effectively communicates her intersectional struggles with racism and adultism.

The interpretation of youth subordination in *The Sun Is also a Star* is particularly expressed through *silencing* rather than silence. Vanessa Joosen suggests that the former

has a distinct motive because: “Silencing is intrinsically related to imbalanced power relationships, whereas silence can be a sign of both empowerment and disempowerment; it can be passive as well as active” (“Just Listen?” 111-112). While the practice of silencing is repressive and indicative of unequal power dynamics, it creates space for an eventual resistance against oppressive circumstances. As Elina Druker and others maintain: “texts that challenge the silent child ideal are also key to unpacking the theme” (VII). Daniel’s story effectively challenges this silencing paradigm through the characterisation of this courageous young protagonist who would eventually reject this silent child ideal to follow his own ambitions. The depiction of Dae Hyun’s silencing of his son attests to the power of the adult father all the while paving the way for the young character to demonstrate his ability to turn the situation to his advantage. This interpretation identifies what Marah Gubar knows as: “the canny resourcefulness of child characters without claiming that they enjoy unlimited power or autonomy” (*Artful Dodgers* 5). Thus, Nicola Yoon’s novel essentially denounces acts of silencing and youth subordination by interrogating parental authority regarding decision-making in matters affecting the life of Daniel (see chapter four). Therefore, silencing in this narrative dominates the plotline to set the stage for the protagonist’s defiance. Covering the first 300 pages (out of 350 pages approximatively), this theme is depicted in Daniel’s initial compliance to his father’s expectations such as accepting to go to his Yale interview.

On his way to his Yale admission interview, Daniel refers to the present moment as the: “final day of childhood” (Yoon 49), and to the train he is taking to get to his destination as “a Magic [obscenity] Train speeding me from childhood (joy, spontaneity, fun) to adulthood (misery, predictability, absolutely no fun will be had by anyone)” (Yoon 43). The protagonist’s forced submission to his father’s plans marks his silencing. The metaphors used

help to indicate Daniel's disinterest in the life laid out for him by his father. Daniel's interpretations of childhood and adulthood reveal his wish to remain youthful. In this passage, there is an evident celebration of childhood as a thriving stage of life, a rewarding time of fulfilment, contentment, and inventiveness. Simultaneously, adulthood is portrayed rather negatively and seems to be associated with boredom, repetition, and unoriginality. It is hereby argued that the protagonist's ideas about adulthood are heavily influenced by his perception of his father. Daniel's viewpoint subverts adultism by looking at childhood as the prime of life. On a similar note, Jessica Seymour acknowledges in her PhD thesis that: "contemporary young adult (YA) fiction works against this assumed power hierarchy [adultism] by analysing power relations through the subversive, antagonistic strategies employed by youth" (2). Similar to the young characters in the novels examined by Seymour, Daniel places a cogent counterargument against adult supremacy. Still, despite this interrogation of adulthood, Daniel adheres to his father's plans as seen through his narration as well as by going to his Yale interview. The protagonist's subordination is marked by his taking of the train to his interview. However, his view of adulthood as read above signal a resentment against this imposed path. Indeed, it is true that this enforced compliance to Dae Hyun's expectation emphasises parental power, but it also demonstrates Daniel's defying stance and forward thinking. Hence, silencing in this example presents the point of departure leading to the protagonist's resistance and empowerment against the controlling father all the while recognising the vulnerable position of the young character.

The novel's other protagonist, Natasha Kingsley, too reflects the theme of youth subordination. We see that she is critical of her father's behaviour as reveals her stream of consciousness, but she avoids a confrontation. Expressing her disapproval of her father's endeavours when he presents them with tickets to see him in a play, Natasha recounts:

“None of us knew what to say. […] I just looked at the space where she’d [her mother] been. My father’s eyes disappeared behind his dreaming veil. In his typical denial-of-reality way” (Yoon 216). Natasha’s stare designates her non-confrontational stance which is hereby interpreted as youth subordination. Her attempt at avoiding an eye-contact with Samuel Kingsley further emphasises her submissive abstinence from speech because the eye contact invites increased interaction. Accordingly, this protagonist’s silence is associated with the act of hiding feelings. This secretiveness extends even through her disappointment when the father causes their deportation from the US back to Jamaica. Even though she still avoids conflict with her parents, she reaches out to a lawyer to remedy the situation. Still, the secretiveness regarding her feelings towards her father is revealed in her narration. Repressing her anguish, Natasha specifies: “BUT I DON’T TELL ATTORNEY Fitzgerald that part–about how my father’s wife and children are his greatest regret because we got in the way of the life he dreamed for himself” (Yoon 230). The precision in *I don’t tell* emphasises the protagonist’s intentional restraint from disclosing this confession. The blunt tone used to reveal this saddening detail reflects her efforts to repress her emotions. Explicitly showing that she is under a severe mental strain, Natasha comments on her silence: “I close my mouth. For the second time today I’m letting go of the details. Maybe I don’t need them. It would be so nice to let someone else take over this burden for a little while” (Yoon 233). This passage shows that the protagonist is enduring a lot of stress and is yearning for the weight to be lifted off her shoulders. Silence in this example communicates the protagonist’s struggle with being subject to adultification such as seen in the previous chapter. However, Natasha does not yield to her oppressive circumstances as she demonstrates problem-solving skills by reaching out to the lawyer. This is very revealing of what Gubar knows as: “the capacity to exploit and capitalize on the resources of adult culture (rather than being

simply subjugated and oppressed)" (*Artful Dodgers* 5). Accordingly, even throughout her silence vis-à-vis her father, the young character is looking for a solution to stop the family's deportation by herself which shows courage and self-reliance.

The theme of youth subordination in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* is conveyed through symbolism. In fact, both silencing and silence are significant thematic components of Savita Kalhan's novel considering that the protagonist is at first forced into submission despite her attempts at resistance, but then she chooses herself to yield to her oppressive circumstances by refusing to open up about her abuse. All in all, silence and silencing are predominant concerns in the novels being covered in 260 pages out of 322. Silencing occurs prior to the rape incident because Jay's voice was continually dismissed by her mother (see chapter four), but following the traumatic sexual assault, the practice of silence is carried out deliberately by Jay. The morning after her sexual abuse, it is narrated that Jay: "approached the top of the basement [where she was raped] stairs with her heart in her mouth, her greatest fear that someone might see her" (Kalhan 12). The quote shows that Jay neither wants to speak nor to be seen which led her to run away from her aunt's house right away. The active physical act of leaving might thus be interpreted as a submissive stance and an intentional state of muteness. Another prominent symbol contributing to the identification of Jay's surrender is her suicide attempt (Kalhan 259-266). In line with Kimberley Reynolds' definition of suicide – the taking out of strong negative emotions such as anger and sadness on oneself (101) –, Jay seeks *to bury the memory* of her rape (Kalhan 266) through this form of self-harm. This metaphor conveys the idea of the protagonist's silencing her brain, her existence. In this instance, the theme of silence is reminiscent of anguish and despair emphasising the young adult's state of helplessness prior to her empowerment. Eugen Bacon argues in favour of unpacking topics such as rape and suicide in YAL considering the

pertinence of these social issues (35). In dealing with these sensitive issues, the novel does not overlook the horrendous consequences of rape. Accordingly, it is hereby suggested that Jay's silence as seen through the runaway and suicide attempt following her sexual abuse is a compelling rendition of the aftermath of the trauma. It is a fundamental thematic element tightly linked to the other themes in conveying the overarching story.

Youth subordination performs a crucial role in *Still Life with Tornado* as well. In addition to the parental efforts to repress Sarah's emotions which also suggests the idea of silencing, the novel also addresses silence through the protagonist's withdrawal from school. Filled with pressure both at home and in school, Sarah recounts the reason behind dropping out of school despite her parents' objections:

> I stopped going to school because I was missing. I was either in the past or in the future everyone always talked about. I stopped going to school so I could focus on the *now*. But the *now* is my mother telling me she doesn't love my father. The *now* was always feeling like something was wrong, only I didn't know that. The *now* is one of Carmen's tornadoes (King 232).

The emphasis on the present moment indicates a yearning for youth empowerment through the protagonist's agitation to focus on her current situation rather than past ruminations or future worries. This instinct of self-preservation is inspiring because it displays self-care. *The future everyone always talked about* particularly suggests resisting the outlook on young people as investments through the glorification of the future. Paradoxically, Sarah's dropping out of school is a conscious decision to be *present* here and now through *withdrawal*–hereby interpreted as a symbol of silence. Chris P. Miller identifies this

contradictory aspect in silence pinpointing that it: “both maintains a presence and refers to the physicality of absence” (Miller n.p.). In this sense, Sarah’s withdrawal expresses an exasperation with her current situation and represents an active rather than reactive act of pulling back to find an explanation to her problems. The mention of o*nly I didn’t know that* particularly hints at the upcoming epiphanic stage. Furthermore, the description of the present moment as a tornado denotes a symbol of chaos and uncertainty. Still, because tornadoes do not last very long, this symbol signals to a time of change and transition.

Another form of silence is emphasised in this novel throughout Sarah’s wish to be unseen as she narrates: “I hear people walking in the park and talking to each other. I hope they don’t see me, so I become invisible. I blend into the park bench. Very quiet. Blend. Disappear” (King 129). Words like *invisible*, *blend*, *quiet* and *disappear* are all evocative of muteness. The protagonist specifically states: “I’d talk to my imaginary therapist about a bunch of things, Really. But I’d never tell the therapist about the Sarahs” (King 159). This declaration indicates that the girl is not willing to communicate her mental health problems, which she also mentions she is ashamed of having (King 175). Therefore, Sarah attempts to keep a distance from the unwanted feelings of shame in this example by not revealing it to her entourage, from the bullying in her school by dropping out, and from the abuse at home by wandering aimlessly in the city. These forms of silence regarding her suffering could be interpreted as a defence mechanism which is prompted due to the continual repression she endured since her early childhood. Hamida Bosmajian acknowledges the relevance of the correlations between psychological criticism and children’s literature even more than literature in general in accordance with the significance placed on childhood in psychoanalytical theories (103). King’s narrative engages deeply with the complexity of psychology through the impacts of parental control on young Sarah. As Druker et al

recognise: “If silence is an ambiguous quality and condition – sometimes positive, sometimes negative – silencing is almost unequivocally associated with repressive disciplinarian ideas of childhood or with censorship and repression” (VI). Accordingly, Sarah’s silence is hereby interpreted as a negative state of muteness which effectively reveals the detrimental repercussions of adultism and parental manipulation. Joosen acknowledges the severe effects provoked by silencing by precising that: “Whereas silences can […] be a vital part of a communication and healing process, they can also result from silencing and bear the harmful consequences of power imbalances” (“Just Listen?” 115). King’s protagonist provides a thorough example for this power inequity. Although Sarah’s continuous repression and withdrawal keep her at a distance from places of abuse in the short run, her interactions with younger and older versions of herself reveal the deeper damaging impacts that cannot be overlooked. The intersection of the themes of silence and silencing in *Still Life with Tornado* essentially exposes the pervasive power of adults through the protagonist’s mental health issues.

Epiphany

Another governing theme in the primary texts under study relates to epiphanies. Rachel Falconer recognises that epiphany is a typical prominent feature in young adult–classic and contemporary–fiction (90). Following Bakhtin’s theories of chronotopes–a correlation of time and space relevant to all literary works, Falconer associates YAL particularly with the chronotope of the threshold. Her reasoning is that “these time spaces of crisis and transition readily produce fictional characters on the border between childhood and maturity” (Falconer 90). Falconer’s viewpoint recalls Catherine Sheldrick Ross’ claim that the focus of YAL is “the passage from the child self to the adult self” (182). While I concede to the

pertinent interconnectedness between YAL and the motif of the threshold, I hereby argue that the epiphanic transitions in the texts under study emphasise the empowerment of young people as such along with a recognition of their potential, and contributions at that *specific age*. This theme presents eye-opening experiences which celebrate youthfulness rather than the passage into adulthood–the phase that is most associated with maturity. As demonstrated in the following readings, the protagonists are empowered as young people to claim and exercise their rights. Whether it is protection against discriminatory acts of abuse or claiming participatory rights such as the examples of Starr and Daniel respectively, these characters as well as Natasha, Jay, and Sarah acquire the awareness and confidence needed through this chronotope of the threshold to deconstruct the adultist outlooks behind their maltreatments. Their epiphanic experiences thus liberate them from the constraints of adultism and enable them to rise above the confronted challenges as empowered entities with their full rights.

In the case of Starr, the direct link between the theme of epiphany and that of silence becomes clear in her narration when she learns the significance of using one's voice: "A lump forms in my throat as the truth hits me. Hard. 'That's why people are speaking out, huh? Because it won't change if we don't say something'" (Thomas 169). The use of metaphors (*lump in throat* and *truth hits*) in this quotation pinpoints the effect of a sudden revelation regarding the importance of speaking up. The emphasis on the personal pronoun in "So *I* can't be silent" (Thomas 170) also shows her recognition of the need to overcome her fear to break the silence. Therefore, the theme of epiphany in Thomas' novel presents a pivotal turning point whereby the protagonist enters a state of awareness. Starr elucidates: "This is bigger than me and Khalil though. This is about Us, with capital U; everybody who looks like us, feels like us, and is experiencing this pain with us despite not knowing me or

Khalil. My silence isn't helping Us" (Thomas 170). This epiphanic stage allows the young protagonist to become cognizant of her potential as a young African American girl to contribute to the fight against racism and adultism. Accordingly, the chronotope of the threshold here does not necessarily imply Starr's transition from childhood into adulthood, but from silence into eloquence, from victimisation into resilience, and from fear into youth empowerment. As Gubar explains throughout her kinship model: "There is no one moment when we suddenly flip over from being a child to being an adult. Our younger and older selves are multiple and interlinked, akin to one another rather than wholly distinct" ("Risky Business" 454). Following Gubar's theoretical framework, Starr's train of thought acknowledges "the gradual, erratic, and variable nature of the developmental process" for children and adults alike. This view brings the two together thus resisting discriminatory classification of the two as distinct categories of people (Gubar, "Risky Business" 454). Hence, Starr's epiphany is a relevant counterargument against adultism because it shows that young people are capable of learning from their experiences, and of developing a strong mindset to face the confronted challenges.

Because Yoon's novel is concerned with silencing, epiphanies here correlate with the idea of resistance. While Daniel initially demonstrates a submission to Dae Hyun's imposed plan–interpreted above as silencing, his epiphanic moment makes him aware of his wish to go against his parents' expectations. The sudden realisation is expressed in his observation: "It occurs to me that maybe that's what I want. Maybe all the things I'm feeling for Natasha are just excuses to make it [his train of life] derail" (Yoon 107). The expression *it occurs to me* and the repetition of *maybe* are indicative of the chronotope of the threshold. They suggest a meditative tone which leads Daniel to understand the hidden motif behind his actions. Accordingly, he concludes that falling in love with Natasha and wanting to spend the day

with her–although they have only just met–instead of going to his Yale admission interview could be revelatory of an underlying act of defiance. This epiphany allows Daniel to understand his need to confront his parents in order to pursue a career of his choosing. Therefore, the chronotope of the threshold in this book opens the protagonist's eyes to his need to stand up for his right to participate in making decisions directly affecting his future. Daniel's development is thus communicated through this pivotal moment presented in this one-day adventure rather than a gradual autobiographical process.

It should be noted that this development characterises a crucial element of youth empowerment against parental control. Therefore, Daniel's case recalls Alison Waller's assertion that: "In contrast to Nikolajeva's child, the adolescent no longer has the option to return home to the safety of comforting familiarity" (*Constructing Adolescence* 29) due to the father-son disagreement and the former's threat to cut him off should he opt for a different path than medicine. However, Daniel's story does not reflect Waller's idea that: "Discourses of development state that they must move on: to their own home, to the next stage, away from childhood and towards adulthood" (*Constructing Adolescence* 29). The moving on part is true to the example of this protagonist; however, the objective of this development is not to become an adult per se. For him, the next stage following the epiphanic revelations is the celebration of his youth as a resilient individual reacquiring his participatory rights. It is hereby argued that this pivotal moment in Daniel's life constitutes the vehicle communicating his liberation from the constraints of adult supremacy and leading him to the next stage of empowerment. In response to his epiphany, Daniel presents a different image of the same young adult character because it is not a matter of becoming an adult. In accordance with the gained insights, this is a time for him to take action as is

shown later on in his empowerment. Thus, this chronotope of the threshold paves the way for Daniel to break free from youth subordination.

Epiphany is a crucial theme for Natasha, the other protagonist as well. Through this segment, she acquires the knowledge necessary to untie the knots of the plot. This epiphanic stage captures a decisive moment in the life of Natasha which determines her following course of action. Her epiphanic moment leads her to decide that it is time for her to break her silence around Samuel's attitude. Realising that the moment came for her to confront her father, she explains:

> I would've let it go if my father weren't using his thick and forced Jamaican accent again. It's just another act. To hear him you would think he'd never left Jamaica, that the past nine years never happened. He really does think that our lives are make-believe. I'm sick of him pretending (Yoon 326).

This extract marks her transition from silence into empowerment (see chapter five–Natasha challenging her father) because in it she does not only point out her usual tendency to escape confrontation, but she also recognises that she can no longer avoid this discussion. The expression *I would've let it go if* specifically proves that what follows determines the pivotal point in this father-daughter relationship. Moreover, *he really does think* signals the epiphany by suggesting Natasha's confirmation of Samuel's obliviousness to their situation. In addition, the last sentence highlights the protagonist's culmination and crucial need to address this subject of contention. She also adds to her realisations: "I know what disappointment is now. I can understand how it could last a lifetime" (Yoon 327). *I know now* and *I understand* best characterise the entrance into a state of awareness. Accordingly,

through this chronotope of the threshold, Natasha's story reaches its climax. After all that silence and forbearance, the protagonist realises that for things to change, she needs to open her father's eyes to their family's situation. Yoon's interpretation of this father-daughter relationship is aligned with the premise of the kinship model relating the two age groups of youth and adulthood to one another by revealing the influences they have on each other's lives. Gubar explains that young people and adults are interrelated and interdependent beings continually impacting one another ("Risky Business" 454). Indeed, the protagonist's epiphany acknowledges the mutual influences as they become specifically evident at the family level. Natasha's discourse is built on her disappointment towards her father, and the latter later abides by his daughter's confrontation (see chapter five). This again proves that: "we [young people and adults] are akin to one another in that from the moment we are born (and even before then) we are immersed in multiple discourses not of our own making that influence who we are, how we think, what we do and say—and we never grow out of this compromised state" (Gubar, "Risky Business" 454). Accordingly, Natasha is influenced by her father and vice versa. The young protagonist's impact on her father attests to the similarity associating the two age groups by depicting the intervention of the daughter and the acquiescence of the parent, a situation that is usually reversed into the intervening adult and yielding child.

Epiphanies in *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* are also explicitly seen through the choice of language. They mark the protagonist's exit from the state of despair shown above in her escape and suicide attempt. Hence, the following extract marks Jay's transition from submission to awakening:

> Today, the problems seemed no less insurmountable, no less overwhelming – yet, somehow, the noose [of the rope she used in the suicide attempt] wasn't as tempting.
>
> Maybe it was because of Sita's offer [to accommodate Jay and her mother]. Or maybe it was because Jay had finally realized that losing one parent had been bad enough. (Kalhan 306)

The time reference *today* brings to mind the chronotope of the threshold delineating the change in the protagonist's state of mind. More so, *finally realised* emphasises Jay's epiphanic moment and her transition from silence and surrender into hope and resilience. The narrator adds that: "With a terrible ache in her heart, she *suddenly realized* [added emphasis] how much she missed her, how much she loved her, and how she couldn't bear it if her mum never spoke to her again" (Kalhan 306). This is a useful quotation because it reveals a change of heart in the protagonist's relationship with her mother. Along with other pertinent expressions such as "Now she knew better" (Kalhan 306), "The roller coaster was beginning to slow down" (Kalhan 306), and "And Jay realized she must have finally turned a corner" (Kalhan 310-311), the narrative tone provides ample evidence of Jay's *readiness* to forgive her mother, move past her silence to put the escape and suicide behind her. These key moments of realisations invite Jay to see her life from a different perspective, thus enabling her to overcome the maltreatment she endured and to enjoy her right to life. Jay's revelations fall in line with those literary epiphanies which Waller knows to: "occur at the end of a story and in fact act to accelerate events towards closure" ("Youth Paused" 100). Indeed, Jay's sudden change of heart allows for a precipitation of events towards her empowerment such as will be seen in the following section. Her epiphanies are important

components of the story because they allow for a conclusion on a positive note attesting to Jay's resilience as will be demonstrated in the following section. Accordingly, they depict the protagonist's reasoning and challenge assumptions about young people's frailty and victimhood. The chronotope of the threshold therefore picks up the pace of the story to convey hope and empowerment, as well as prove that a runaway, or a suicide attempt are not the answer. Jay's change of perspective makes the biggest difference.

Sarah's journey in *Still Life with Tornado* is filled with moments of realisations because a lot of her repressed memories keep coming back to her. As she discovers the truth after years of living in denial, Sarah narrates:

> All the things ruined in my life, I want to draw. It's like Carmen's tornadoes. I suddenly understand her more than I ever have before. I get this feeling bigger than just anger–I think it's rage. I think after so many years numb and quiet and smiling and faking, I am finally feeling something uncontrollable. (King 259)

This abrupt surge of emotions captures the protagonist's pivotal moment as she passes the threshold. This is a defining moment because Sarah openly points out to moving past the stage of silence and withdrawal seen above in her dropping out of school and lack of understanding. The elaborate and precise language in *after so many years numb and quiet and smiling and faking* is incisive because it signals the protagonist's awakening. Like the other primary characters, Sarah *suddenly understands* and is *finally* seeing things from a different perspective. Moreover, *anger*, *rage,* and *uncontrollable feelings,* in addition to the comparatives *bigger*, *more than ever before* and the *tornado* comparison suggest a cathartic release. Sarah's moment of emergence out of silence is thus revealed primarily through an

immersive experience of emotional discharge. In fact, a study in 2003 uses the terms epiphany and cathartic experience synonymously (Yorston 77), and it also suggests that the concepts reflect a powerful, life-altering experience (78). Similarly, Sarah's chronotopic transition is portrayed through her rejuvenation ensuing the epiphany. Thus, it is revealed that her previous alienation and psychological displacement is an empowering experience of learning and acquiring the necessary knowledge so that she can ultimately take action. As a result, a new Sarah that is liberated from all her repressed memories emerges. She is ready to move past to the next stage of action as an informed member of the family, not the manipulated daughter.

In keeping with this concept of revelation, Sarah gains new insights which guide her away from the previous stage of silence and subordination into action and empowerment. She thus reports:

> It didn't make sense to me then.
>
> It was the beginning of what I would eventually end.
>
> The answers were never on the airplane. The answers were right there in Dad's fist.
>
> In Bruce's jaw. In Mom's eyes. The answer was there (King 264).

In this extract, the chronotope of the threshold is identified through the demarcation of time with words such as *then*, *beginning*, and *end*. The time frame of Sarah's epiphanies is highly dependent upon a complex series of analepses following her interactions with her other selves, most particularly ten-year-old Sarah. Nikolajeva recognises that contemporary YAL tends to increasingly integrate: "repeated and intricate flashbacks, interplay of different temporal levels, and other complex temporal patterns" ("Beyond the Grammar of Story" 12).

This non-linear plot is particularly significant to this story because it recognises the complexity of the human mind. Indeed, these interruptions of the chronological order of events are not merely informative segments to introduce the backstory. The flashbacks in King's novel represent the vehicle through which Sarah's epiphanies are expressed. They allow this main character to better understand herself and her family. By *finding the answers in these recollections* as is suggested in the quote above, Sarah identifies the source of her mental health issues. It is this gained knowledge that fuels her to take action. The assertion *what I would eventually end* attests to this protagonist's resilience and self-confidence. Despite the oppressive living conditions at home, the bullying at school, and the ensuing existential crisis, this multi-dimensional character rises above these challenges and defies her obstacles.

Empowerment

The four primary texts share a common third and conclusive theme following that of silence and epiphanies. In line with Rowlands interpretation of empowerment pointing out that "it involves moving from insight to action" (15), the main characters also take full advantage of the knowledge they acquired through epiphanies to initiate change in their own lives and resolve their issues. Indeed, the dénouement in all these stories is tightly linked to youth empowerment, however different of a process it might be for each protagonist. Nanette Page and Cheryl E. Czuba's understanding of empowerment is associated with three significant elements, thus describing it as: multi-dimensional, social, and as a process. Their reasoning for its multi-dimensionality is that it operates on various dimensions including the psychological and the economic, as well as various levels like the personal and community levels. Second, the insistence on the social aspect of empowerment is simply because it

operates vis-à-vis others. Third, Page and Czuba associate this concept with a journey to explain its depiction as a process. They emphasise that while other elements involved in the understanding of this *multi-dimensional social process* might differ from one experience to another, these are three constant elements in any conceptualisation of empowerment (Page and Czuba 1999 n.p.). The critical readings in this section consolidate this threefold perception through the textual analysis of experiences of the main characters all the while revealing where each one differs from the other.

The application of Michelle Superle's child-centred approach on these YA stories shows how the latter deconstruct adultism by building strong characters defying abuse and prejudice against young people. In the scholar's words, this model of the empowered child: "grants children the possibility of helping to shape themselves and their surroundings through their input, values, decisions, and actions" (Superle, "The UNCRC: CCA" 145). The readings of the texts under study following Superle's lens and the children's rights discourse identifies empowered protagonists agitating for their liberties despite the maltreatment they endure. Starr, Daniel, Natasha, Jay, and Sarah eventually come out of their traumatic experiences as assertive and active agents who are no longer afraid to mark their presence, use their voices, and make their cases. Empowerment in the selected novels entails that the adultist stereotypes which paved the way for the violation of the protagonists' rights to protection and participation are thus undermined. Indeed, fighting for their rights, Starr speaks up against discrimination, Daniel makes his own decision on his future career, Natasha breaks free from her adultification, Jay is empowered to overcome her sexual assault, and Sarah confronts her abusive father. Accordingly, the theme of youth empowerment offers at once a structural closure and a psychological one, which according to Nikolajeva is often the case for children's narratives ("Beyond the Grammar of Story" 7).

Therefore, the interconnectedness between YAL and children's rights offers great potential to denounce adultism through these empowering narrative and thematic conclusions.

Empowerment in the case of Starr is primarily seen in her characterisation as she gradually regains confidence to come out of her state of muteness. As an initial step to break her silence, Starr starts an anonymous blog entitled "*the Khalil I know,*" on which she posts pictures of her murdered friend (Thomas 202). The purpose is to contest the racist and adultist stereotypes propagated by the media as a desperate attempt to tarnish the victim's image all the while saving that of the culprit. Conscious about the limited resonance of her posts compared to the wide reach of the televised news portraying Khalil as a drug dealer, Starr admits: "I know it's not the same as getting on the news like Kenya said, but I hope it helps. It's helping me at least" (Thomas 203). This confession shows that this is a liberating endeavour which is allowing the protagonist to slowly build the confidence needed to speak up despite the limited impact it might have on a wider scale. Since racism is a central theme of the novel, Starr's empowerment cannot be disassociated from her racial identity. Starr's confrontation with Khalil's hate crime presents an eye-opening experience to discrimination and social injustice. Referring to intersecting inequalities, Don Latham recognises the additional challenge faced by young people from disadvantaged groups in acquiring social power (Latham 61). This complex challenge is thoroughly portrayed in Thomas' novel through the interconnectedness between adultist and racial discriminations at the heart of the protagonist's challenges. However, she makes efforts to navigate the confronted issues despite the double oppression that further complicates her experience. This depiction of Starr's gradual confrontation of her fears consolidates Rowlands argument that empowerment is a progressive process (14) rather than an overnight achievement. Rowlands precises that empowerment involves the journey into self-confidence whereby

people start to trust their abilities, skills, and judgement to make change (14). Indeed, Starr's gradual journey from silence to empowerment effectively portrays the ups and downs, the fear and courage, the barriers and the determination that she confronts on her way to empowerment. As a multi-dimensional character, this protagonist conveys an important message of resilience by refusing to bow down before social inequities despite all the obstacles on her way.

Demonstrating further character growth, Starr affirms: "I can do it" (Thomas 207) trusting herself to talk to the DA. She also asserts the power of her voice through the emphasis on her significant part as the witness of Khalil's murder. Accordingly, she rationalises: "One-Fifteen's father is his voice, but I'm Khalil's. The only way people will know his side of the story is if I speak out" (Thomas 215). The protagonist's reasoning conveys strength, self-reliance, and willpower. The precision *only way* shows that bringing justice to Khalil depends on Starr. This development of events gives credit to the role of the young protagonist. It is aligned with Astraea Augsberger and others' depiction of the intrapersonal element of psychological empowerment which comprises young people's view of their potential contributions to their surroundings as self-assured and active citizens (463). The interpretation of this narrative from a rights-based perspective identifies the adolescent character as an important member of society. On this note, Superle recognises that: "The empowered model of childhood promotes children's contributions to their own lives, families, and communities—not as an investment in the future but during childhood" ("The UNCRC: CCA" 145). Indeed, applying her child-centred approach allows the interpretation of the narrative to pinpoint the active participation of Starr as a key contributor to her environment. This character's journey to empowerment is not limited to her individual prowess but is also focused on her dynamic role as an ethnic group member striving for

racial equality and a recognition of young people's capabilities. Watching the murderer's father trying to shift the blame away from his son on national TV, Starr declares: "Tonight, they shot me too, more than once, and killed a part of me. Unfortunately for them, it's the part that felt any hesitation about speaking out" (Thomas 244). This assertion attests to the protagonist's empowering stance through a celebration of racial pride, self-assurance, and a determination to speak up against injustice. Thomas' YA novel is also relevant in this sense because it encourages positive social change and improvement, the reduction of inequalities, the creation of new opportunities and safer environments. In addition, by overcoming her fear of breaking the silence, Starr's perseverance to strive for a better life could help in developing positive attitudes towards not only African Americans, but also youth.

This discussion of *The Hate U Give* recognises another empowering element in Starr's activism following the grand jury's decision not to indict the officer who killed Khalil. Indeed, the protagonist's protestation stimulated by her anger and disappointment led her to declare: "I don't wanna be seen tonight. Just heard" (Thomas 387). This statement is a clearcut subversion of the adultist saying "children should be seen, but not heard." Starr demonstrates here an agitation for her participatory rights. It is argued that Starr is moving past her fear to speak up, now she is claiming her right *to be heard*–in accordance with article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was previously mentioned that breaking her silence helped her on a personal level, now she wants her voice to have an impact on decision-making. In line with Nigel Thomas' differentiation between personal and collective matters in decision-making (199), it is important to note Starr's motivation to implement change in society. Therefore, by joining the protest, grabbing the bullhorn and speaking up against the unjust murder of Khalil, in addition to throwing back

the can of tear gas at the police, Starr inspires youth participation. Much like postcolonial writing which is set to "underline the way in which the other has been constructed in occidental discourse and, ultimately, to stress the constructedness of cultural discourse itself" (Grzegorczyk 97), *The Hate U Give* refutes the constructed adultist views on young people such as dependency and passivity through Starr's activism. Starr's actions have the potential to prove that the negative perception of young people is but a social construct because this novel places an effective counterargument against belittling children to futuristic investments who are unable to contribute to their societies before reaching adulthood. Indeed, despite the backlash the novel received, it is hereby suggested that the protagonist's rebellion depicts young people in a positive light. Starr's engagement is likely to inspire favourable attitudes towards younger generations as well as their inclusion as "citizens with public identities" (Honeyman 185) ready to actively participate in their communities.

The novel's interpretation of Starr's big moment has been put into question. Linking the can incident with Edward Crawford's throwing of the can while protesting Michael Brown's murder, Vincent Haddad considers Thomas' reproduction of the occurrence to be problematic (44). Haddad's reasoning is provoked by Starr's narration that "All hell breaks loose" (Thomas 407) right after the can explodes. Accordingly, he claims that:

> By positioning Starr's action as the cause of 'hell [breaking] loose,' rather than an effect of the aggressive actions of an occupying militarized police force, the novel aims to demonstrate that her reaction, although deserving of empathy, is ultimately impetuous, dangerous, and in need of moderation (Haddad 46).

This viewpoint is questionable because it overlooks the rest of the novel's positive interpretation of Starr's act. Indeed, the narrative is filled with references looking back at that moment as a heroic celebration such as the father's nickname for Starr as he proudly points out the newspaper with her photograph on the front page "Check it out Li'l Black Panther" (Thomas 429). In addition to Maverick's gratifying tone, the black panther metaphor effectively portrays his pride towards his daughter's powerful stance. Indeed, this literary device carries a symbol of courage and power. Furthermore, the headline "'The Witness Fights Back'" (Thomas 429) in addition to the multiple TV reports calling her brave, the grandmother's phone-calls and her mother's support (Thomas 429) contradict Haddad's viewpoint. The latter's assumption that the novel's: "figuration of empathy that suggests the limits of how the novel can imagine justice" (Haddad 46) downplays the portrayal of that action as a celebrated heroic moment not only by her family members, but also the media. Considering that the media previously sought to tarnish Khalil's image (see chapter one and two), this turn of events pinpoints Starr's victorious moment. Not to mention that when Starr tries to justify her reaction, her father interrupts her: "I know, baby. Don't even stress it. That whole network [the one complaining about putting the police in danger] can kiss my–" (Thomas 429). Maverick's reply directly clashes with Haddad's suggestion that the novel aims to show that Starr's reaction *needs moderation.* The father's answer shows the protagonist unquestionable support and validation.

Also, Haddad's association between Starr's activism and "the negative breakdown of law and order following Starr's moment of retaliation" (Haddad 46) assumes that she is responsible for the actions of the police. The police threw the can first and what she meant by *hell breaking loose* is explained by "The police stampede over Khalil's shrine, and the crowd runs" (Thomas 407). Haddad's reasoning in the quote above blames Starr for the

actions of the police by linking the negative breakdown of law and order directly to the protagonist's big moment. This association brings to mind the view that Khalil's sudden movements justify his murder by Brian. Far from these allegations, the novel explicitly endorses Starr's reaction through Ms. Ofrah's, the protagonist's attorney, encouragements as she admits her pride and tells her that she has a future in activism (Thomas 425). Accordingly, it is hereby acknowledged that Starr's story encourages youth activism rather than condemns it.

Daniel's empowerment is clearly noted in his opposition to his father's plans. Proving his determination to take matters into his own hands, Daniel recounts: "This time next year, I'll be someplace else. I don't know where, but not here. I'm not sure college is for me. At least not Yale. At least not yet. Am I making a mistake? Maybe. But it's mine to make" (Yoon 336). This passage is incisive because in it, Daniel recognises his participatory rights. More so, he emphasises the legitimacy of his right despite the uncertainty of the future and the possibility of making the wrong decision. Daniel's willpower regardless of his lack of clarity is an empowering element because it shows resilience. Superle recognises that the type of narrative which does not offer a single way of being is "neither prescriptive nor didactic, as works of traditional children's literature often are" ("The UNCRC: CCA" 156). *The Sun Is Also a Star* falls in this category of works because the protagonist does not pretend to know it all. This novel does not attempt to teach one way of being or behaving, or to show the right thing to do. Daniel is not perfect, he has his own reservations, but he demonstrates a strong determination to exercise his full rights, nonetheless. Accordingly, the novel proceeds to provide a glimpse on the characters' future in the last few pages to demarcate the major shift between the initial theme of silence and that of youth empowerment. Nikolajeva notes that: "By studying duration we notice some overall changes in the aesthetics of children's

literature. It is apparently more important for today's authors to catch a turning point in a young person's life than to follow him or her during many years" ("Beyond the Grammar of Story" 13). This is also relevant for Yoon's YA novel as the plot depicts only one day in the lives of the two protagonists for the first three hundred pages. This day represents a crucial point whereby Daniel defies his parents and alters the course of his life. Even Natasha identifies his determination to be indifferent to what society dictates as: "a revolutionary act" (Yoon 319). The last fifty pages attest to this fundamental change through a flashforward reporting that he would eventually decline Yale, and major in English (Yoon 337). This development of events displays the protagonist's courage, accountability, and self-reliance.

This day characterises a key moment in the life of Natasha as well. It indicates a drastic shift of attitude hereafter linked to the theme of youth empowerment. The following conversation between Daniel and herself depicts her initial penchant towards practicality rather than passion: "'Don't you want to do something you love?' [Daniel's questions] | 'Why?' she asks, like she genuinely doesn't understand the appeal of loving something" (Yoon 99). Natasha's stance in this example recalls Dae Hyun's viewpoint instructing Daniel to follow rationality rather than aspirations. Similarly, Natasha takes a sceptic, at times cynical, tone when Daniel tells her about love and poetry (Yoon 90-91). However, by the end of the day Daniel asks her one more time: "'Are you still going to be a data scientist?'" This time, her answer reveals a change of heart: "'I don't know. Maybe not. It'd be nice to be passionate about something'" (Yoon 330). Similar to Daniel's alteration of his career path, there is also a display of resilience in Natasha by the end of the day shown through her openness to different career options as opposed to her initial closedmindedness. Moreover, the triumph of passion over practicality emphasises youth empowerment rather than

succumbing to adults' norms. Indeed, Todres and Higinbotham relate imagination, passion, and creativity to youthfulness, whereas adults are believed to be rather pragmatic (186). Following the reasoning of the two scholars, Natasha's drastic change from being a cynic who can only trust science and facts, to being open to change suggests a resistance to adult values. In a sense, Natasha's confrontation of her father (see chapter five) is interpreted as an empowering element which lifts the weight off her shoulders and allows her to embrace youthful characteristics. Before the talk with Samuel, the protagonist might have felt the need to be pragmatic to compensate for her father's absentmindedness, hence her adultification (see chapter five). In the end, Natasha's renouncement of practicality and Daniel's rejection of his father's plans and expectations evocate youth empowerment. Through this triumph of ambitions and dreams, the ending of this story rejects adult practices and celebrates youthful ways of being instead. This novel is empowering because it promotes determination in young people to pursue their life's calling. Daniel and Natasha's one day story is about commitment, motivations, and achievements. Despite all the disappointment and difficulties, the protagonists show a strong willpower to achieve their goals.

In addition to combatting adultist prejudices, *The Sun Is also a Star* also challenges sexist assumptions about girls and boys particularly regarding academic pursuits. The protagonists' academic interests defy the prevailing sexist social expectancies which Leaper and Brown know to assign fields like engineering and computer sciences to boys (11). Indeed, in Yoon's novel, it is the female character Natasha who is initially interested in data science, whereas Daniel prefers poetry, thus resisting what Campbell Leaper and Christia Spears Brown categorise as "gender-stereotyped beliefs [which] may lead some boys to avoid subjects viewed as feminine, such as reading or the arts" (12). This is a useful

characterisation because the nonconformist academic pursuits of Daniel and Natasha have the potential to break stereotypes about young girls and boys. The two characters' resistance of stereotypical gender roles is a significant empowering element of the narrative. Kenneth B. Kidd recognises that the adolescent character's search for identity and selfhood is often set in accordance with gender roles or against them (158) such as appears to be the case of Daniel and Natasha. These protagonists' fields of interest are likely to prove that there is no clear logic behind gender roles in this respect. Moreover, Leaper and Brown affirm that: "Gender biases in academic achievement […] constrain opportunities for individuals and reduce their likelihood of realizing their potential in life" (12). For this reason, Yoon's interpretation is incisive as it shows that gender biases have no sound justification, but they hinder the potential and development of young people. Therefore, the characterisation of the two protagonists in this story provides a powerful rejection of gender expectations through their nonconformist aspirations.

For Kalhan's narrative, Jay's empowerment is marked by her mother's recognition of her right to speech and participation. Contrary to the silencing she previously endured (see chapter four), at the end of the narrative, Jay's voice is duly taken into consideration. Accordingly, Neela consults her daughter by asking her: "Do you want to stay here? Or should we try on our own again?" (Kalhan 317). This inclusion in decision making effectively proves that the mother realises the significance of Jay's input. Empowerment here is portrayed through what Rowlands identifies as the extension of the decision-making process to people who were formerly deprived of this right (13). It is in this sense that Neela's consultation of her daughter's opinions is hereby interpreted as a movement towards empowerment. Besides, as Honeyman puts it: "Protections are required to keep children safe, but the right to participate and be heard on issues that affect their safety is necessary

for applying protections justly" (Honeyman 185). Jay's story endorses Honeyman's idea by revealing the detrimental consequences to the daughter's safety following her silencing. In this sense, Neela learned from her mistakes that the protection of young persons also requires the implementation of their rights to participation. Hence, this conclusion of the novel celebrates youth empowerment by emphasising young people's participatory rights as necessary for their protection, thus refuting the conflicting tension assumed between protection and participation (see chapter four).

The ending of the novel moves away from the binary opposites of the adult mother and her young daughter as well as from the recurrent oversimplified and idealistic closure. This is pertinent in this conversation between Neela and Jay:

> 'It would be very different to Primrose Avenue, Jaya. And we will be paying rent here, but it will be manageable, for both of us.' | 'As long as you don't intend to skive off your teaching training course any more.' | 'And as long as you decide to go back to school!' (Kalhan 317)

The indication that the protagonist and her mother will not be living with Sita rent-free is important because it underpins a recognition of the continual challenges of life without promising an easy way out through the miraculous apparition of the helper, here Sita, who solves the main characters' financial problems for them by offering them free accommodation. Accordingly, this interpretation does not attempt to create an overly optimistic view of life as do the Indian novels – which Superle identifies as children's novels about Indian childhood for readers of eight to eighteen years old. These books – analysed by Superle – are written in English by Indian authors based either in India, the United States, or

the United Kingdom, between 1988 and 2008 (*Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* 10). Moreover, Kalhan's novel does not limit itself to depicting the empowerment of *the middle-class Indian girl character*, a recurrent tendency in the texts examined by Superle. The latter finds this tendency problematic because whereas these representations of middle-class girl protagonists resist sexism, they often overlook the issues of class (Superle, *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* 41). Thus, the scholar discusses the lack of representation of impoverished yet empowered female protagonists along with their social struggles related to child labour for example (Superle, *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* 41). Jay's characterisation is more inclusive because the narrative directly addresses the issues of the low-class including financial hardship, difficulties to afford a home, and exploitation (doing extensive work for Vimala's family–see chapter one). In addition, the ending of the story attempts to break hegemonic class hierarchies by bringing together well-to-do Sita with Neela and Jay not as her maids as Vimala previously imposed, but as equal housemates (Kalhan 302-303, 317-320). Furthermore, the extract above breaks hierarchies based on age too as the mother and daughter both advise each other to persevere in their respective endeavours. This is particularly empowering for Jay because it shows a collaborative partnership with Neela, mutual respect, and encouragement.

In *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*, there is also a psychological closure in line with the theme of youth empowerment. This is demonstrated through symbolism as the narrator concludes the story referring to Jay's reflection in the pink-heart mirror:

> There was no crack in the glass. […] She put her hand up to it. Her fingers were trembling. […] The girl she had last seen in the broken mirror looked different. She

had been a stranger, beaten and broken, with shame stamped across her face. | This girl smiled back at her" (Kalhan 322).

As the title of the novel reveals, the mirror reflection of the protagonist is a significant symbol communicating her state of mind. Following the rape incident, the mirror split in two and sent back an image of a girl with whom Jay could not identify herself. That version of Jay fell victim to rape myth acceptance (see chapter one), escaped, and attempted to kill herself. Words carrying pejorative undertones such as *crack*, *trembling*, *broken*, and *beaten* all emphasise the protagonist's initial state of despair. However, the dénouement of the narrative presents a different mirror reflection. The latter is hopeful and confident. As the narrator declares: "Jay didn't think of herself as a survivor, but she was surviving, for now. The rest was up to her, wasn't it?" (Kalhan 314). The tag question is useful in this instance because it emphasises that Jay is in control of her choices, and she is not letting the sexual assault define her or ruin her relationship with her mother. On the contrary, Jay's story is inspiring because it shows that a young person has the potential to face her challenges and triumph. Kalhan's novel depicts an interesting roundabout character. As Gubar notes: "children's stories frequently suggest that young people have enough resourcefulness or recalcitrance to deal with (and even profit from) worldly influences" (*Artful Dodgers* 6). Indeed, Jay is a young adult whose life is not perfect, she suffers, and she makes mistakes, but eventually she is empowered to forgive her mother and overcome her fears and traumatic experiences. Her survival conveys an important message of patience and acceptance as she gradually comes to terms with her misfortunes. By the end of the narrative, Jay finally stops defining her life in accordance with her rape. She begins to see

her self-worth and trusts herself to move forward and to feel the love of Neela and Sita as well as to rekindle her friendship with Matt.

Matt being not only her best friend but also a love interest for Jay, this character plays a key role in assisting the protagonist towards her empowerment. By means of intertextuality, Matt's characterisation is crucial to the narrative because it is aimed at denouncing the sexist rejection of Tess from *Tess of the D'Ubervilles* (1891) by her lover Angel following her confession about rape. It is in this sense that the narrator recounts:

> He hadn't been shocked. Instead, he'd said, 'Well, I'm no Angel!' | Jay knew he was referring to her obsession with *Tess*. | 'And unlike him, I will always be there for you, Jay. Just one thing.' | 'What?' | 'Promise me you won't read *Tess* again – at least not for a few years?' | 'A smile tweaked the corner of her mouth. 'I promise.' (Kalhan 321)

Unlike Angel who turns his back on Tess after learning about her rape, Matt's reaction to his friend's traumatic incident undermines the former character's sexist beliefs. As two victims of sexual abuse, Jay's story offers a retelling of *Tess of the D'Ubervilles* by condemning Angel's sexism which led Tess to further misfortunes. Whitehead recognises that writers are likely to use intertextuality to: "revise canonical works, however, reading them against the grain and providing a new perspective on familiar texts" (85). This is what Kalhan endeavours to achieve by revising the story of Tess. Matt's understanding of his friend's experience subverts the plot of Hardy's novel by breaking free from the sexist rejection of rape victims. This is a compelling use of intertextuality to denote that sexual abuse does not lead to the inevitable end of one's life such as suggest the events following the rape of Tess including

the latter's death. Instead, this retelling offers a message of hope amidst chaos as an alternative to the gloomy ending of the story of Tess.

Perhaps the theme of youth empowerment in A. S. King's novel is the most prominent out of all four novels in view of the characters' explicit and straightforward denunciation of adultist outlooks on young people throughout the plot. For instance, Helen in the following example points out children's intelligence maintaining that:

> Kids are smart. I've said that my whole life. In the ER when we have to give bad news to the parents before we give it to the kid, I say to my nurses, 'You can't bullshit a kid. You have to tell the parents first, but the kid knows.' And there I was bullshitting a kid when I know you can't bullshit a kid. (King 156)

Sarah's mother here strongly refutes stigmatisations about young people such as silliness and naivety by drawing on her frequent interactions with people from different age groups as part of her job being an ER nurse. In doing so, she presents a positive outlook on children through the emphasis on their intuitive nature and powerful instincts. Helen calls in question the widespread adultist assumptions around children's gullibility by speaking against the adults' tendency to deceive children. This passage evocates youth empowerment because in it, Helen admits her failed attempt to trick her daughter into overlooking the family's dysfunction. Moreover, her unintentional adherence to the discriminatory view of Sarah as a credulous child despite her awareness about the cleverness of younger generations proves the prevalence of the belief system of adultism. Helen recognises that the parenting deal she made with her husband is but a deceitful plan based on what Honeyman knows as "The hegemonic ideal of the nuclearized family" (184). Indeed, Honeyman argues that the "so-

called protective measures […] ironically, become oppressive rather than nurturing" (14) and Sarah's mental health issues are proof that the parents' misleading plot did not protect her from suffering the consequences of abuse. In this sense, the confession from the perspective of the adult mother has the potential to inspire positive outlooks on young people and acknowledge their quick-wittedness. In her analysis of contemporary YA fiction, Seymour reveals that narratives of that genre tend to depict power relations between young and old characters by positioning empowered young characters against controlling adults (2). I hereby suggest that the same can be said of this realist novel as this interpretation shows. Sarah's strong sense of perception prevents her from being tricked into ignoring her father's abusive behaviour. This eventually leads her to an existential crisis due to the parents' persisting efforts to manipulate her into overlooking their issues. This plot development is particularly empowering because the mother's redemption refutes adultist assumptions and inspires promoting transparency as well as honesty in parents' relationships with their children.

Youth empowerment in King's narrative is also identified in the daughter's rescue of not only herself, but her mother as well from that abusive family environment. This can be seen in Sarah's reassuring words as she addresses Helen:

> 'Dad can move out. We can stay here. Everything will be fine. Plus, he won't ever hurt you again.' | At this, she cries a little because it must be hard living a lie for so long and having the person you were trying to save, save you instead. Not like I can take credit. I'm pretty sure it was ten-year-old Sarah who saved us both (King 277).

This extract reveals the young protagonist's problem-solving capacities and attempts to comfort her mother. Sarah's caring initiative here is aligned with Gubar's kinship model because it shows that children are not always on the receiving end of the parents' protection. Sarah's example pinpoints that young people have the capacity to be there for their caregivers as well by offering consolation as shown above for instance. The last part of this quote is particularly incisive as it points out to Sarah's taking of matters into her own hand after years of being subjected to emotional abuse. Sarah's empowerment attests to Rahman's identification of this process as a movement involving life-changing action that is at once personal and collective (11) considering that Sarah brings change not only to her life, but also to her mother's. This turn of events has the potential to send a powerful message about resilience. Sarah turns the situation to her advantage and exposes the "familial fallacies" (Honeyman 3) to which the adult mother herself fell victim. As Honeyman points out: "Divorce doesn't break genuine parent-filial bonds, but violence, abuse, neglect, […] can" (184) and Helen and Chet's marriage proves exactly that. King's story shows that the protagonist's resourcefulness managed to put an end to her father's long history of physical and emotional abuse of her mother, brother, and herself.

Another element of empowerment in the novel is identified in sixteen-year-old Sarah's celebratory perspective on youth compared to her younger self's impatience to grow up (see chapter five). The following interior monologue demonstrates the protagonist's positive outlook on young people:

> Here's what I think. I think we're smart when we're young. Ten-year-old Sarah is smarter than I am because I'm six years older. Twenty-three-year-old Sarah is

> dumber than me because I'm sixteen. Someone somewhere was way older and richer and dumber than all of us (King 33).

Sarah's optimistic outlook on young people's potential defies discriminatory ideas doubting the capacities of children. The protagonist's observation is aligned with Gubar's kinship model which holds the belief that adults might excel in some areas, but in others young people might surpass them ("Risky Business" 454). This protagonist's narrative voice is a crucial literary device because it allows her to break the silence around her internal struggles. On this note, Farnia identifies storytelling in YAL: "as a [sic] instrumental technique in psychological empowerment" (Farnia 46). Indeed, Sarah develops a sense of control over her life through the narration of her story as she begins to understand how events escalated to her brother's departure and her existential crisis. She becomes aware of all the family's issues her parents tried so hard to repress. The conclusions she draws regarding young people's cleverness reveal how narration can help her achieve what Farnia knows as *psychological empowerment*. Sarah further endorses youth empowerment adding: "I think this kind of smart isn't something they can measure with tests. I think it's like being psychic or being holy. If I could be anyone for the rest of my life, I would be a little kid" (King 33). This quote proves that the protagonist no longer feels pressure to grow up as she did at ten years old under her mother's influence (see chapter five). On the contrary, Sarah seems to resist adults' norms such as test evaluations, a quality that Nikolajeva attributes to the best of children's literature (17). Indeed, Sarah's story is not subject to "adult normativity" (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 18) because it resists the tendency to look at adult practices as standard rules and those of young people as abnormalities. The protagonist's wish to remain youthful celebrates childhood and youth as a time to be cherished. King's

narrative falls in line with Jens Qvortrup's attempt to: "rescue children from being reduced to a futuristic project and to reclaim them as here-and-now beings vis-à-vis reifying investment discourses" (631). Sarah effectively characterises what Gubar knows as the "artful dodger" (*Artful Dodgers* 3), in view of her self-determination despite the adultist emotional abuse, and her resilience regardless of her mental health issues.

Lastly, the narrative, as well as psychological closures, constitute another empowering element because we see the protagonist triumph over her obstacles. Standing next to her mother and brother at a museum, Sarah recounts: "We are consumed by all before it we don't see the others leave us. We are suddenly three. Three relaxed people. They didn't even say goodbye" (King 293). The others here refer to younger and older versions of Sarah and the realisation of their departure suggests the alleviation of her mental health issues. Accordingly, the novel concludes on a positive note as we see the protagonist takes initiatives to resolve their familial issues. Rethinking her priorities, reaching out to her long-lost brother, and together confronting their father with their mother on their side attests to Sarah's courage and problem-solving motivation. This plot denies adultist representations of young people as passive recipients of adults' care and protection. King's novel effectively challenges the discriminatory idea–refuted by Qvortrup–that: "children are typically portrayed and valued, by both the lay and the learned, for what they may deliver once in the future" (631). Instead, Sarah demonstrates a dynamic energy agitating not only for her wellbeing, but also for that of her family. Sarah is able to put an end to a long history of conflicts and manages to reunite the family. Further emphasising Sarah's triumph, King resorts to symbolism to emphasise her protagonist's liberation from her internal struggle. With reference to the Lichtenstein, Sarah interprets the absence of the painting from its usual spot optimistically. Her positive attitude as she reflects: "Sleeping girl. On the move.

Maybe she woke up. Maybe she's happier now" (King 292) reveals her empowerment. Indeed, the personification of the Sleeping Girl, her awakening and the suggestion of her happiness are hereby interpreted as an evocation of Sarah's own contentment and optimism. Similarly, the comparison of herself to the empty museum room as a canvas for art (King 294) is a symbol of a fresh start. By surmounting her existential crisis, Sarah inspires strength of character and a defiance of parental control.

Conclusion

This chapter identified a pattern of three thematic components shaping the psychological development of the protagonists in *The Hate U Give*, *The Sun Is also a Star*, *The Girl in the Broken Mirror*, in addition to *Still Life with Tornado*. It suggested that the shared themes created meaning for resistance against adultism and the ensuing violations of children's rights examined in the previous chapters. The findings of this critical analysis revealed three distinctive stages around which the storylines of these primary texts are built, namely: youth subordination, epiphanies, and empowerment. First, my examination of youth subordination demonstrated that it characterised a prevalent theme dominating more than half of each narrative. The reason behind this predominance lies in the significant role it performed in delineating the events that preceded it as well as those that followed. In other words, silence communicated the aftermath of the traumatic experiences of each protagonist, all the while setting the stage for the upcoming empowerment. Seymour recognised this tendency in today's YA fiction as a necessary phase of *disempowerment* which serves as the stimulus leading to the protagonists' agitation for their rights (2). Whereas this theme is omnipresent in the four books, each one dealt with it from a different perspective.

The narrative analysis of the books pointed out epiphanies as a second common theme. This part of the stories resonated with Bakhtin's chronotope of the threshold. A problematic tendency to associate this threshold with the young characters' growth into adulthood was rejected. Indeed, it was emphasised that this stage marked the transition of the five protagonists away from a state of stillness into that of awareness allowing them to acquire the necessary insight to achieve youth empowerment rather than to become adults. It was only through this identification of the sources of their issues that the five protagonists were prepared to move past their obstacles. After silence and epiphanies, youth empowerment was identified as the final theme shared in the four novels. This reading proved that the epiphanic moments gave the main characters cognizance, courage and strength to face their challenges. Accordingly, whether it was an issue of a hate crime, parental control or neglect, sexual assault, emotional or physical abuse, the five young characters from various backgrounds were able to surmount their difficulties. They painted pictures of youth resonating with success, competence, strength, development, and inspiration. Their stories are important because they convey cogent messages about the need to honour youth voice, to include young people in decision making, to validate and implement their ideas, and to trust them as contributors and active members of society. By refuting adultist beliefs and practices, these YA texts inspire intergenerational social-connectedness and inspire adults to share power and privilege with young people.

Conclusion

The title *From Adultism to Youth Empowerment: Children's Rights in Contemporary Realist Young Adult Fiction* established the outline of this thesis starting with adultism and developing gradually into youth empowerment. The objective behind this framework was to problematise children's rights discourse in contemporary realist YAL by comparing representations of young adulthood at the start of YA stories to representations at the end of the same stories. Four primary contemporary realist texts were selected for this endeavour: Nicola Yoon's *The Sun Is also a Star* (2016), A. S. King's *Still Life with Tornado* (2016), Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017, and Savita Kalhan's *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* (2018). Accordingly, this thesis produced critical readings of these narratives relying on the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the reference point for the analysis. The integration of children's rights within the analysis of YAL is particularly important considering that young adults are caught between perceptions of childhood and those of adulthood which creates a conflict of interest thus challenging the implementation of their rights. This thesis extended its focus to representations of adulthood along with those of young adulthood in aiming to determine the ways in which the chosen primary texts transcend the adult-child binary opposition. Considering the social aspect and the human interest of this topic, such engagement with children's rights in different disciplines could help bring more awareness about the adultist threats to young people's well-being and thus lead to a better implementation of their rights.

A significant research interest in this thesis consisted of uncovering the textual strategies and narrative techniques relative to the realist literary mode that perform key roles in challenging adultism. In doing so, the analysis aimed at extending the exploration of

negotiations of youth power in YAL to contemporary realist fiction considering the great emphasis previously placed on fantasy novels. The objective was to uncover the potential of the realist literary mode in denouncing adultist beliefs and practices within realist contexts such as at home or at school. The chapters foregrounded striking narrative techniques strongly challenging infringements of children's rights. Temporality, focalization, intertextual references, psychological characterizations, and multiperspectivity revealed to be compelling subversive strategies directly contributing to denouncing youth subordination and adultcentrism. Another incisive tool further reinforcing these themes consisted of the integration of magical elements to the otherwise realist stories. The overall analysis throughout the six chapters attested to the resourcefulness of these realist YA narratives in combining form and content to place cogent counterarguments against age hierarchies and the coercive power of adults.

This thesis was divided into two parts pinpointing the two major concerns of analysis: adultism and youth empowerment. The initial part uncovered a variety of conflicting tensions throughout the narratives between different rights hindering thus their implementation in various contexts. It specifically revealed the complementary asset of the rights under the convention by proving that the violation of one right such as denying young characters participation while claiming that this is for their best interest results in the violation of both rights – participation and best interest. This is clearly acknowledged in the detrimental impacts provoked by these violations on the young characters' wellbeing. It was identified that the adultist beliefs about young characters, portraying them as rebels, immature, or incapable human beings for instance, play a significant role in facilitating violations of children's rights. Indeed, the analysis of the primary texts indicated that those discriminatory outlooks justified respectively the abuse of adult power and control, the

manipulation or complete disregard of the best interest principle, silencing of young people, as well as denying them the right to participate. By the same token, the readings in this thesis recognised that adult relatives or non-relatives can be adultist even if their actions are grounded in good intentions. The close attention to the textual techniques and realist narrative strategies pinpointed the significance of the settings, the realist portrayal of the quotidian, the daily and mundane interactions, and the explicit as well as implicit characterization as revelatory tools strongly contributing to the denunciation of adultism. The resourcefulness of contemporary YAL was also identified in the use of intertextuality by borrowing from the literary canon to emphasise the climax of *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* and borrowing from the narrative structures of fairy tales' acts of villainy which were established by Vladimir Propp.

The second part of the thesis determined that these narratives do not only focus on interpreting adultist beliefs, attitudes, and practices, but they also attempt to deconstruct them. In doing so, this part identified the subversive strategy of role reversals between young people and adults. This analysis pinpointed responsible and cognisant young adult characters while showing that adults can be unreliable parents, abusive teachers, and violent police officers for instance. The irresponsibility and immaturity of these adult characters deconstructs both adultism and adult supremacy by proving that learning, development, and maturation are not exclusive to young people. Static and round characterizations of adulthood were established as striking components in the subversion of adultcentrism since the former pinpointed examples of adult characters unable to learn from their mistakes and to move forward while the latter recognised the continuity of learning and development throughout adulthood. Other textual strategies such as multiperspectivity, anachronies, and name giving contributed greatly to the denunciation of adultism. The objective was to prove

that the growth and development of young characters should not be regarded as an excuse to deny them participation or silence them. It is hereby established that these depictions of adulthood are significant in transcending binary oppositions between the two groups of young people and adults through the emphasis on their similarities. Therefore, while recognising the power of adults, this thesis emphasises humbling representations of adulthood all the while revealing empowering depictions of young characters. Youth empowerment is acknowledged through examples of the protagonists fighting to exercise their rights.

More in depth, part one of this thesis was divided in accordance with the four principles of the convention: non-discrimination, survival and development, the child's best interests, voice and participation. The purpose was to determine how adultism operates in conjunction with different violations of the mentioned principles. A chapter was devoted to the examination of each principle within the novels to provide depth of focus. Concerning the first principle, an intersectional framework of investigation was useful in signalling the multi-oppression of young people from disadvantaged groups. The reading of *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* established intertextuality as a compelling tool in foregrounding the detrimental impacts of adultism and intersectional discrimination against the young protagonist. The textual analysis of the realist techniques in the primary texts revealed that systems of inequality represent decisive factors in forming specific adultist prejudices against the different young characters. However, only three systems of power were considered: racism, classism, and sexism. For instance, the adultist perception of African American Khalil in *The Hate U Give* (2017) as a criminal, in the eyes of the police officer – who killed him – as well as the media, was recognised to be heavily influenced by racism. Intersections of adultism with other discriminatory systems uncovered various derogatory outlooks on young

characters like burdensomeness, rebellion, immaturity, and dangerousness. Chapter one demonstrated the negative impacts carried out on young characters because of these interwoven discriminations. It was proven; however, that the interlocking of the same factors of race, class, gender and age does not necessarily result in the same lived experience for everyone. I emphasised *The Sun Is also a Star*'s case of the two Korean American brothers living in the United States to pinpoint the different constraints they endured. The strict and controlling upbringing of Daniel and Charles led the latter to entirely reject his Korean origins including the language, the food, the customs and to fully embrace the American lifestyle. Daniel on the other hand developed an identity crisis as he failed to find acceptance both among his family and within the American society. I concluded that an analysis of the same intersecting patterns in YAL is as necessary as an exploration of different ones in uncovering various prejudices and the many adverse impacts they might entail. Because the analysis was restricted to the three main identity markers of race, class, and gender due to limitations of time, further research in the field of children's literary criticism could bring into play the integration of adultism with the other systems of power and privilege such as ableism and religious discrimination in addition to the ones explored here. The purpose is to identify the maximum of negative stigmas targeting young people and the threats they pose as a first move to refute them.

Still on the topic of adultism and children's rights, chapter two changes the focus from the UNCRC's principle protecting young people's rights to non-discrimination to the one ensuring *survival and development*. The concept of trauma was particularly important in the analysis of two of the primary texts, in addition to narrative techniques such as analepses and focalization. I started by analysing intersections of adultism with the right to survival. Adultist motivations were identified at the roots of the racist crime of Khalil in *The*

Hate U Give. This reading of the narrative considered oppressions of young people at a national scale as it pinpointed depictions of the precariousness of the lives of African American youth, the criminalisation of this target group, in addition to blame shifting and the media's posthumous demonisation of victims. The following section of this second chapter focused on domestic abuse and the right to development. The selected novels were rich with examples of emotional and physical abuse portrayed at the family level. This section exposed the adultist beliefs leading parents to violate their children's rights to develop to their full potential. It was recognised in this reading that domestic abuse is a complex issue compared to broader forms of violence and prejudice like the national case of Khalil's hate crime. The reason is that abuse at the family level is carried out by the child's caregivers, that it can happen on purpose and unconsciously, and that it can go undetected because the setting is private. *Still Life with Tornado* offered an insightful juxtaposition of the respective intentional and unintentional abusive treatments of brother and sister Bruce and Sarah. Bruce was a victim of physical violence and Sarah of psychological abuse and protectionism. Regardless of the bad or good intents behind their parents' decisions, Bruce's broken bones and escape from the family home and Sarah's mental health issues prove that both characters were severely hurt in consequence. The reading of *The Sun Is also a Star* also pinpointed parental violations of the protagonist's right to develop to his full potential. This instance revealed how adultist prejudice can lead to the parent's abusive control of young people's hobbies and life aspirations. The family environment was acknowledged to hold a significant impact, positive or negative, on the child's growth and development. For *The Girl in the Broken Mirror,* the violations of the young protagonist' right to development was identified as a result of her sexual abuse by a family member. The severity of this brutal rape and negative impact on Jay's development was shown in her escape from the family home,

her dropping out of school, as well as in her failed suicide attempt. Because domestic violence and psychological abuse happen in the intimacy of the family, it is important that further readings of other YA narratives expose more of these examples. A critical engagement with parental violations of their children's rights is crucial in bringing awareness to this intricate vice.

The focus of the thesis on the third chapter consisted of identifying intersections of adultism with infringements of the young characters' best interests. The chapter was divided into two parts according to the impact of adultism on the implementation of this right. The first section of the chapter pointed out instances whereby the protagonists' best interests were either misinterpreted due to adultist prejudice or manipulated to serve the adult's needs. The realist rendition of the narratives acknowledged the detrimental impacts of such cases regardless of the good or bad intentions behind the violations of this right. The second part revealed examples of complete disregard of the best interests' principle. Using symbolism, direct speech, detailed descriptions of the settings, psychological characterisations, flashbacks, and descriptive language, the realist literary mode contributed to the critique of adultism by denouncing the threats to the safety and wellbeing of the young characters provoked by the infringements of their best interests. The chapter also established how entrenched adultist beliefs lead parents to overlook one or many facets of their children's best interests such as the psychological state or the mental state thus failing to properly implement this principle. Furthermore, there was a recognition of the need to consult young people in the determination of their own best interests.

Violations of the UNCRC principle that ensures children's rights to participate and to be heard represented the issue of concern in the fourth chapter. The analysis of internal monologues, ulterior narration, spatiality, movement, and the attention to duration

pinpointed the potential of the realist literary mode in uncovering the impact of adultism on the protagonists' participatory rights. First, I identified how adultist beliefs and perceptions prevent young people from participating in decision making at the family level. The analysis signalled conflictual intergenerational relationships between young and adult relatives that are particularly rooted in cultural differences. Two prominent examples of disagreements were foregrounded. Both exhibited parental control whether in educational prospective and career goals or in housing decisions as important matter directly affecting the lives of the young characters. The examined examples focused on conflicts between a mother and her daughter conflict in addition to a father and his son. Then, the second section of the chapter emphasised participation rights at school as well as teachers' abusive treatments and neglect. Addressing issues such as bullying and teacher's sexual abuse of pupils, this reading showed the significance of the teacher's role and the harm it can cause to young people when it is misused. The last section of this chapter pinpointed children's rights to be heard and the importance of the consideration of their views. This part identified young characters' agitation to make their opinions heard with examples from *The Girl in the Broken Mirror* and *The Sun Is also a Star* and *Still Life with Tornado*. The extracts from the primary texts revealed that the rights under the convention such as participation, protection, and best interest are all complementary and that the violation of one right leads to the violation of the others causing bigger threats to the wellbeing of young people. Further readings of YAL with regard to participatory rights could encourage the implementation of participatory rights in different contexts allowing the younger generations more space to explore their potential.

Part two encompassed the two remaining chapters, five and six, as it shifted the focus of the research to youth empowerment. Chapter five was specifically concerned with

the analysis of power dynamics between young and adult characters. It started by identifying instances of youth adultification in the primary texts denoting how several young characters, such Seven, Khalil, and Devante from *The Hate U Give,* are forced to perform adult roles prematurely. The case of role reversals pinpointed between these three characters and their parents was explained as parentification. Whereas Seven had to ensure his half-sisters' protection from their abusive father, Khalil had to pay his mother's debts, and DeVante provided for his family. It was argued that these portrayed role reversals are useful for the deconstruction of adultist beliefs claiming that young people are immature, burdensome, or dangerous for example. This characterisation was significant also in reporting the impacts of the intersecting oppressive systems of classism, racism, and adultism, as well as presenting Khalil and DeVante as the products of social inequality. I also addressed how the age-inappropriate roles performed by these young adults can be counterproductive for their development and wellbeing. This section revealed another form of youth adultification known as precocious knowledge. The latter was noted in Starr's exposition to hate crimes which negatively impacted her and burdened her with knowledge of morbid cruelties. The subsequent section analysed depictions of the irresponsible adults behind the adultification and maltreatments of young characters. The flawed behaviours of parents such as Iesha and King in *The Hate U Give* prompted an interrogation of adult supremacy and the misuse of the power that adults have over young people. The examination of adulthood in the last part of this chapter identified in addition to adult allies, other adult characters who played a negative as well as a positive role in the protagonists' journey from adultism to empowerment like Sarah's mother in *Still Life with Tornado*. It is argued that the portrayal of adult defenders of children's rights could potentially encourage building positive relationships and constructive collaborations between the two generations. The chapter's

conclusion encouraged an exploration of more examples from YA novels endorsing productive exchanges between young people and adults on the one hand and condemning antagonistic parenting and hostile adult attitudes.

The sixth and last chapter of this thesis distinguished three parts determining the development of the protagonists of the four novels from targets of adultism to empowered young adults: youth subordination, epiphany, and youth empowerment. This pattern facilitated the depiction of youth resistance against adultism and the violations of the characters' rights. Accordingly, I divided this chapter into three sections to analyse each phase distinctly. First, the examination of youth subordination revealed that this theme dominated more than half of each narrative considering its usefulness in pinpointing the troubling adultist experiences endured by the lead characters. It also served as a reference point to compare the eventual state of empowerment reached at the end of the stories to their initial victimisation. Starr's subordination was discerned in her resentment to speak up against the media and the police officer's false testimony tarnishing the image of Khalil. For Daniel, subordination was observed in his compliance to his father's decisions regarding his future, and for Natasha in her non-confrontational stance towards her father despite her strong disapproval and discontent. Jay's escape without a word to her mother in addition to her failed suicide attempt communicated her subordination. As for Sarah, it was evocated in her continual repression of bad memories. Then, the protagonists' epiphanies were identified in sudden moments of realisation which conveyed their awakening and an understanding of their situations as well as their potential to overcome the barriers they were facing. This was mostly pinpointed through their stream of consciousness and repetitive use of words such as *to realise* and *to understand*. This section insisted that these epiphanies portrayed these young characters' transition from subordination into awareness

to emphasise their subsequent stage of empowerment and not a passage from youth into adulthood. After having gained courage and understanding, the lead characters were able to achieve their empowerment and to overcome their challenges. Starr's empowerment was evident in her revolt against racism and inequality. Daniel also showed empowerment by following his ambitions and taking his own decision concerning his future career. Natasha's embrace of youthful ways of being also pinpointed her empowerment. In the case of Jay, this is revealed in her overcoming of physical and emotional abuse as she proceeds towards a fresh start full of hope. Sarah's empowerment was acknowledged in her quest for self-understanding despite her mental health issues. She not only saved herself, but her mother and brother as well from a long history of domestic abuse. The chapter concluded that these stories have the potential to inspire youth empowerment through the protagonists' triumphs over all sorts of hardships and violations of their rights. Still, this empowerment does not claim that the young protagonists have unlimited potential in all situations. On the contrary, the readings in this chapter prove that each young character is empowered in a specific way according to one's particular needs and circumstances. Such narratives could be particularly useful because they pinpoint the need to respect young people, to protect their rights, and to allow them to play active roles in their environments and to contribute meaningfully at the level of the family as well as the structural, and national levels.

As with the majority of research projects, this thesis is subject to limitations which could be addressed in future research. First, the thesis delineated the scope of its analysis of the four main principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in four primary texts. There is a need for further engagements with intersections of adultism in conjunction with the mentioned principles of non-discrimination, survival and development, the child's best interests, and participation as well as with specific rights such as the right to

education (*UNCRC* 8-9; article 28), the right to privacy (*UNCRC* 4-5; article 16), and the right to access information (*UNCRC* 5; article 17) for instance in more contemporary realist YA novels. This endeavour could potentially uncover more challenges and conflicting tensions encountered throughout the transmission of the different fifty-four rights under the convention from law into practice in various settings. Additionally, critical reading of more young adult novels illustrating different settings, cultural backgrounds, and challenges is likely to bring more nuance into the analysis. Second, the examination of young adulthood with regard to empowerment at the end of the narratives focused primarily on the protagonists and did not fully consider the representation of secondary young adult characters. This thesis acknowledged that secondary young characters, such as DeVante and Seven in *The Hate U Give*, are also targets of adultism at the beginning of the stories similar to the protagonists. However, the analysis did not cover the possibility of their eventual empowerment due to time limitations. An important question to consider, therefore, in future research would be to reveal whether secondary young adult characters are also empowered at the end of the narratives like their fellow protagonists or not. Depictions of secondary young adult characters with regard to empowerment is a relevant concern that should not be overlooked because they are essential elements in the narratives who communicate important messages alongside the protagonists. Therefore, a question that should be discussed is whether representations of young adult secondary characters clash with the message conveyed through the triumph of the protagonists? Do they recognise the vulnerability of youth and attest to limitations to youth empowerment? Or do they reinforce the latter theme? It is my intention, therefore, to consider in future research more convolutions concerning the implementation of different rights under the convention in these primary texts as well as others from the global North and the global South while

bringing attention to minor young characters. One way to do it is by conducting a comparative study on the development and empowerment of protagonists and secondary characters.

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