

“I wish I didn’t have a body”:
Tracing Shame in Young Adult Rape Narratives

“Sometimes,” Romy muses in Courtney Summer’s *All the Rage*, “I wish I didn’t have a body” (40). As one of the many raped protagonists in dozens of recently published YA novels to express this wish, Romy brings to the forefront the ongoing shame of most survivors of sexual assault. Rape’s affect includes myriad emotions, most of them viscerally embodied; shame seems particularly attached to the body, often translating to the equation “something bad has been done to me, done to my body; therefore, I am bad, my body is bad.” If the logic of shame is flawed, it nonetheless remains that shame is still a primary affect in relation to sexual violence. Paying attention to the ways in which expressions of shame might work to construct a political response to rape culture, this paper will trace shame in recently published YA rape narratives by American women writers. It will pay particular attention to the ways in which these survivor/protagonists work to acknowledge, grapple with, and then express shame, and to trace the potential for that difficult emotion to become the impetus to fight back, to seek justice, to reform rape culture. Using Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak* as a point of reference, I will draw from the work of Elspeth Probyn, Eve Sedgwick, and Sara Ahmed to analyze the workings of shame in recent novels, including *All the Rage* and Louise O’Neil’s *Asking For It*.