

## Editorial

1 Alyssa Milano's #MeToo twitter appeal (October 15, 2017) to women, to publicly speak out about experiences of sexual harassment and assault, powerfully foregrounded the persistence of patriarchal structures, particularly in the workplace, and its misogynist implications on a global scale. Initially connected to the entertainment industry, the movement spread to disclose harassment and assault in religious and educational institutions, as well as in the financial industry and in politics, exposing the pervasive impact/use of sexualized violence; misuse of positions of power in all social sectors against those in (financial) dependency (in work situations) and against all those who threaten to disturb the heteronormative order, including women, men, and LGBTQ\*.

2 In the afterword of her manifesto *Women and Power*, Mary Beard expresses the hope that the fall of 2017 will be recognized as the moment that "kick-started a sexual and social revolution", but also acknowledges the fear that it might only be "the glorious herald of a change that never happened" (99). The current backlash against what is termed "gender ideology" in politics and media in different parts of the world signals the anxieties about, but also the potential for change causing this reaction. Recognizing the importance of the current moment, *gender forum* invited authors to critically engage with the movement initiated and popularized by #MeToo #TimesUp #MuteRKelly and with the questions it raises about 21<sup>st</sup> century sexual politics.

3 The articles in this issue address these concerns, focusing on television shows and varsity sport clubs, offering insight into current gendered and sexualized power relations. Both areas, media and sports, are characterized by a specific focus on the body, and figure prominently within the entertainment and education sectors. Serialized formats on television and in the web, predominantly produced in the USA, gain high visibility and have an important impact on public debates as well as on individual viewers. Sports play a particularly important role in higher education in the USA and Canada on an individual as well as a communal and national level. All articles in this issue explore the nexus between individual sexualized violence, rape in particular, and structural violence upon which it is based.

4 Two articles focus on highly popular current tv/web series, exposing sexualised violence in politics and the legal professions (*House of Cards*, *Good Wife*) within a realist frame, and on a wider scope within a dystopian system (*The Handmaid's Tale*). In juxtaposition the articles foreground the links between the worlds/societies depicted. In "Power, Consent, and the Body: #MeToo and *The Handmaid's Tale*" Samantha Solomon and Zarah Moeggenberg discuss the ways in which *The Handmaid's Tale*, one of the most acclaimed

television series of 2017, provides a powerful dystopian articulation of rape culture in the United States. The adaptation of Margaret Atwood's novel focuses on ritualized rape to challenge the normalization of sexual assault and sexism in American politics, law, education, and family life. Foregrounding connections between the #MeToo movement and the series, Solomon and Moeggenberg dissect the rhetoric of ritual and drawing attention to the relation between power, consent, and the body.

5 In her article “Marching Forward in Gowns and Stilettos: The representations of Women in American Political Television Series” Yuwei Ge focuses on representations of powerful women in the popular US American television shows, *House of Cards* (2013-2018) and *The Good Wife* (2009-2016), centering on incidents of rape in both shows. In her discussion of *House of Cards*, a series which has gained additional visibility in the context of the #MeToo debate, the author focuses on Claire Underwood and Megan Hennessey, analysing the women’s struggle to be heard in the aftermath of sexualised violence whilst maintaining a position of power. In *The Good Wife*, Ge is concerned with the impact of sex scandals on women in the legal profession focusing on Alicia Florrick and Diane Lockhart, foregrounding the nexus between unequal power distributions and the persistent gendered split between the private and the public spheres.

6 Sexualised violence in the world of sports has recently been addressed by Kirby Dick’s acclaimed documentary film *The Hunting Ground* (2015) about sexual assault on college campuses in the United States and Canada, foregrounding a flawed system privileging male athletes. (Ironically the Oscar nominated documentary was distributed by the Weinstein Company). The article by Hayley Finn, Rita Gardiner and Leona Bruijns on “Winning at Any Cost? Gender, Sport and Violence” offers two case studies of sexualised violence in colleges in Canada, revealing an above-average percentage of cases in college sports (see Quinlan). The authors discuss the implications of these findings, their structural foundations and institutional responses.

7 Stephanie Selvick's review of *The War on Sex*, edited by David Halperin and Trevor Hoppe (Duke UP, 2017) complements this issue of *genderforum*. The book takes up questions of sexualised violence from a radically different, yet related angle, looking into the imprisonment of sex offenders, and into the ways in which the construction and incarceration of the “monstrous outsider” have not led to a decrease of crime, but to “the illusion of prison and punishment as protection” (301) of an otherwise ‘safe’ society, effectively preventing the surfacing and public acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of sexualised violence, which the Me Too movement has finally taken issue with.x

### **Works Cited**

Beard, Mary. *Women & Power: A Manifesto*. Profile Books, 2017.

Quinlan, Elizabeth, et al., eds. *Sexual Violence at Canadian Universities: Activism, Institutional Responses, and Strategies for Change*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2017.