

The “Me Too Movement”, Sexual Politics and Unnatural Justice

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Theme: [Women's Rights](#)

The overthrow of iniquitous power relations is a point many would celebrate. But such overthrows are themselves marked by the contradiction of their origins. Any revolution must, by its very nature, suffer inconsistency, defeats and weaknesses.

In the United States, a different sort of sexual revolution is taking place. It is not linked to liberation in the way sex was linked to the emancipation of the body in previous decades. There is something distinctly sombre, calculating, and determinedly forceful about the movement to wrest control from men who generally have had it good in the power stakes. Cloaks and covers are being blown.

Those being placed on the pyre for burning are now so numerous as to warrant a multitude of scrapbooks and scribbles. From across the political spectrum, the casualties are accumulating in the media, political and publicity circuit. Figures considered creature of good repute have been cast to the wolves. A total inversion seems to be taking place, from the newspaper cycle to the White House.

The problem with such matters is that the allegation has started to assume a substitute force of conviction. It has become sufficient for individuals to lose their positions because allegations, untested by the wearing rigour of cross-examination and investigation, have assumed the force of de facto law.

Even within this accelerating movement, there are disagreements about how far one should go in dismembering the order and its attributes. Are some of the figures being scalped in this business receiving unjust attention?

Take last month's disagreement shown by Lena Dunham and Jenni Konner behind the series *Girls*, both taking to the barricades defending a friend and writer on the show, Murray Miller, against the accusations of Aurora Perrineau.

To be fair to Perrineau, she has not left it at a mere accusation, hoping to get away with easy gain. According to Deputy [Charles Moore](#) of the LA County Sheriff's Department, she has gone so far as to file a police report against Miller citing sexual assault.

Miller, through his lawyer, rubbished the claims, deeming them “outrageous”. But the point of interest here, at least from the heady consequences arising from [Me Too](#) righteousness, is the disagreement it has caused those who would otherwise have taken the torches to the bundles.

Dunham and Konner are careful to pay appropriate tribute. “During the windfall of deeply

necessary accusations over the last few months in Hollywood, we have been thrilled to see so many women's voices heard and dark experiences in this industry justified."

As with every feminist, claimed the co-showrunners, the occasion was of celebration. But there came a danger with too much conviction as with "every time of change there are also incidences of the culture, in its enthusiasm and zeal, taking down the wrong targets."

The risks from moving from a selective, judicious targeting of deserving targets - those men who have been resting on crumpled laurels for decades, drawing benefits from a system that has, within it, its own apologetics - to a totalitarian presumption: that all in the various industries must, by virtue of being there, necessarily assault or abuse, are considerable. To that end, they trigger a sense of power dynamics that should require testing and investigation rather than unquestioned, dogmatic acceptance.

For Dunham and Konner, the case against Miller was full proof. (The point here is interesting, in so far as it presumes a certainty untested in the courts.) "While our first instinct is to listen to every woman's story, our insider knowledge of Murray's situation makes us confident that sadly this accusation is one of the 3 percent of assault cases that are misreported every year." The figure is itself suggestive, extracted from a realm of unreliability.

Dunham, after being subjected to a predictable salvo of baying critics, subsequently issued a [statement](#) claiming how she "naively believed it was important to share my perspective on my friend's situation as it transpired behind the scenes over the last few months."

That she had even assumed such a position of scepticism immediately catapulted her into the circles of fire. Gilliam B. White, writing for [The Atlantic](#), simply assumed a robotically programmed position in favour of Miller's accuser, using a predictable cocktail of identity politics to undermine a defence. "Intentionally or not, Dunham's initial call to scrutinize Perrineau, a biracial actress, but not Miller, fed into an implicit message that believability, sympathy, and public rage are reserved only for certain women."

Rather daftly, such a stance repudiates evidence of conduct in favour of identity as truth, a point that is equally flawed from whichever racial perspective one punts for. Perrineau should hardly deserve exceptional treatment in the stakes of proving claims because she is biracial, a sort of exotic assumption of credibility. But the [culture of complaint](#), as Robert Hughes termed it, has no limits the hyperventilating circles of US identity politics.

Instances of such overtaxing zeal are starting to grow. Proportion and evidence were certainly left wanting regarding an accusation (note the singular) against the Australian actor, Geoffrey Rush. The Australian paper, *The Daily Telegraph*, sniffed a story that the [Sydney Theatre Company](#) had received a complaint "alleging that Mr. Geoffrey Rush had engaged in inappropriate behaviour."

Not being a paper known for its attention to detail, it ran a headline claiming Rush to be "KING LEER". This was a howler other papers, notably the companion [Herald Sun](#), refused to run with. "The Tele are running with a yarn," went a text message to the paper's staff, "which is highly libellous."

Rush responded in kind, launching a defamation suit. "It is an action I am taking in order to redress the slurs, innuendo and hyperbole they have created around my standing in the

entertainment industry and greater community.”

Detached from probative fields of inquiry, the sexual accusation becomes dynamite and dirt. It destroys the public image, fracturing the brand. Many a figure would no doubt deserve it, but equally, such a figure would surely be entitled to that concept that lacks currency so often in public debate: natural justice.

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