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I am a knife

Jacqueline Rose

B L : R S , P , C C
 by Vanessa Grigoriadis
 Houghton Mifflin, 332pp., £20, September 2017, 9780544702554

U A : S P C C
 by Laura Kipnis
 HarperCollins, 245pp., £20, April 2017, 9780062657862

L F L
 by Sara Ahmed.
 Duke, 312pp., £20.99, February 2017, 9780822363194

H : A M (M) B
 by Roxane Gay.
 Corsair, 288pp., £13.99, July 2017, 9781472151117

D W
 by Roxane Gay.
 Corsair, 272pp., £13.99, January 2017, 9781472152770

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we need to ask why it took the fall of Harvey Weinstein to turn the

and a desire for redress, it might also be feeding vicariously o the forms of perversion that fuel
the violenc

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Title IX was a breakthrough, but it is flawed. Legal critics have claimed it abuses 'due process' by acting as a court of

Who, we might ask, is violent

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This doesn't exempt harassers in any way but it does allow (some) men a glimpse of their own imperfection. It opens up a gap between men who won't tolerate any challenge to their authority and those ie

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describe the 'w

empowerment', Grigoriadis writes, ' fierce, ruthless, determined' anti-harassment activists have 'cast o the old language of victimhood'. They want a world in which rape will no longer be what historically it has been: 'a property crime, the women's fault, or a man's privilege'. They want to be listened to and believed, they want an end to sexual harassment.

T a a a a it occupies the same territory, Laura Kipnis's A S P feels as if it has arrived from another planet. It too was published in 2017. Grigoriadis refers to it just once, in parenthesis, y lished, sreed, s

towards the plaintiff. But as I see it, she makes the fatal error of confusing her critique of injustices under Title IX with tearing the complainants' evidence to shreds. Even allowing that she is driven by the wish that women claim back their sexual agency the feminist aspect of this way of proceeding escapes me. Challenged on Facebook, Kipnis responded that

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official capacity and is herself involved in sexual harassment initiatives across the UK). According to a survey published by the [IRB](#) in December, 63 per cent of universities have no harassment advisers or sexual violence liaison officers; 23 per cent have no designated point of contact for anyone wanting to bring a complaint; 39 per cent do not train staff in any aspect of sexual misconduct. All this despite a recommen

Evidence is always key, especially in a disputed case. But it isn't neutral. 'The evidence we have of racism and sexism,' Ahmed writes, 'is deemed insufficient of racism and sexism.' Evidence

going to a dark place. At times, I nauseated myself in the writing and by what I am capable of writing and imagining, my ability to .!

At the same time as telling this gruesome story, Gay explores the furthest limits of a woman's imagination, the lengths to which she can be driven, or choose to go, in the domain of love and intimacy. This is especially true of her second collection of short stories, which also appeared last year but received less attention than – critics seem to have greeted it either with disappointment or false cheer. Gay has been accused of exploitation. She hapomama

exceptional energy and determination. Gay is here to remind us that fiction, rather than being suspect or fraudulent ('She made the whole thing up'), is an imaginative tool that belongs at the centre of these debates. It can depict damage as well as freedom, seized from a wretched past. In her hands, telling stories – her own story, the stories she invents – is the place where impossible paths meet.

Footnotes

* [a, & li #Bdl @s](#) S F b R K by Redi Tihabi (Jonathan Ball, 2019)

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