

Abstract

The Me Too movement is a contemporary feminist movement led by African-American activist Tarana Burke. While it was popularized in 2017 by American actress Alyssa Milano and remains mainly known under its social media form, #MeToo, the movement's rise in popularity in light of the accusations made against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein led to a global wave of anti-sexual misconduct sentiments. As such, it represents a turning point, not only in American history but also in the global historical meta-narrative surrounding the sexual assault, harassment, and exploitation of women in the workplace. Due to its historical and cultural significance, the movement and the stories associated with it have inspired a variety of contemporary written and audio-visual works ranging from books, graphic novels, and journalistic articles to films, documentaries, and TV shows. This doctoral thesis focuses on the filmic depiction of Me Too narratives and attempts to determine the extent of the medium's usefulness as historical evidence for the study of the movement. In order to do so, it takes a gender and microhistorical approach to four movies selected based on their relation to the Me Too movement. Jay Roach's *Bombshell* (2019), Kitty Green's *The Assistant* (2019), Todd Field's *Tár* (2022), and Maria Schrader's *She Said* (2022) are all examined for their representation, or lack thereof, of perpetrators and survivors in Me Too narratives. The study draws from feminist and cultural theorists' conceptualization of power as gendered and unequally distributed to form an understanding of the power dynamics involved in the interactions portrayed on screen. Power is mainly referred to under the following two forms: Dahl and Foucault's power over and domination as well as Pitkin and Lukes' power to or ability to. Silence is then recognized as a byproduct of the (mis)use of power over survivors, while power to takes the form of speaking out and denouncing one's perpetrator. The thesis also applies and adapts Peter Burke's theory of eyewitnessing through images to film, coining the term recreational eyewitness to refer to the fictional recreation of historical narratives in movies. Recreational eyewitnessing, therefore, refers to the use of film or other audio-visual media as historical evidence for the study of the past. Weaving these theories together enables the dissertation to provide a detailed and nuanced analysis of the filmic depictions of Me Too narratives that embraces both historicity and fictionality.

Keywords: Me Too Movement, Film, Recreational Eyewitnessing, Power, Silence, Speaking Out, Gender Studies, Microhistory.