

Liverpool Film Seminar

2018 – 2019 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Karen Boyle (Strathclyde University)

Weinstein and the (cultural) value of abuse

This paper is part of a larger project on #MeToo, Weinstein and Feminist Theory, and presents my initial thinking on the institutional character of the Weinstein allegations, raising questions around complicity, responsibility and organisational culture. Starting from the repeated claim that allegations against Weinstein (and others) had been an 'open secret' for many years, it uses Liz Kelly's work (1988, 2005), to explore the continuum of women's experiences of men's violence within the film industry and the extent to which the industry provides/provided a 'conductive context' for men's abusive behaviour. I argue that this is linked not only to production practices but - crucially - to how those practices are popularly and critically understood relative to ideas about the cultural value of perpetrators and their work. More than providing a 'conductive context', then, I want to explore how notions of relative cultural value have both insulated perpetrators against critique and damaged victim/survivors' credibility. Sexual double standards are part of this narrative. However, this leads into a broader argument about the cultural value not simply of the victim/survivors and perpetrators themselves, but of abuse narratives to the stories the film industry tells about itself. This builds on my prior work on how the pornography industry 'produces abuse' (Boyle, 2011), and makes the case for an analysis of how both popular and more scholarly writing about the film industry had - prior to October 2017 - presented the abusive behaviour of Weinstein and other Hollywood figures as an essential part of the (successful) business of making movies.

Biography:

Karen Boyle is Professor of Feminist Media Studies at the University of Strathclyde. She is currently working on a monograph for the Palgrave Pivot series entitled #MeToo, Weinstein and Feminist Theory. Her research has long focused on questions of violence, gender and representation and she has published widely in this area, including in the monograph *Media & Violence: Gendering the Debate* (Sage 2005) and as editor of *Everyday Pornography* (Routledge 2010). She has additional research interests in film authorship, cinema audiences and gender and news.

