

BOOK REVIEW

On Monday, March 24 a sixty-seven-year-old man was processed in his native New York when eighty women came forward with their anecdotes of sexual harassment and rape, he now faces twenty-nine years in prison —and still awaits for a Los Angeles trial. His name is Harvey Weinstein and for decades had the power of making or breaking everyone in Hollywood. A couple of years ago one would think of Zeus with Weinstein, but today his empire has fallen down more like Icarus.

But the story behind the story is what builds the backbone of *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story that Helped Ignite a Movement* (Penguin Press) by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, two *New York Times* journalists who for six months investigated the numerous allegations against Weinstein, resulting in the article that changed it all in the fall of 2017.

Not a memoir, but a chronicle —and an essential one in these times when "the very notion on truth [seems] to be fracturing" — it is a book about investigative journalism as an agent of social change, conducted by the voices of brave women who, in the illusion of professional success, felt to dismay at expense of Weinstein's retorsions. It is the portrait of a corporate culture of silence and a judicial system that continues to promote oppression and suppression of survivors' truths.

Written in the third person ("to avoid confusion"), the book details over three years of memos, notes, e-mails, legal documents, and audio recordings, becoming in itself a piece of journalism —although gotta warn you, if you are Trump-intolerant, the guy makes one or two cameos during his *Hollywood Reporter*-tape era, right at the beginning of the book.

"She Said" takes the reader from "the first uncertain days of reporting, when very little was known and almost no one would speak," to the rapidness of online publishing, "The old way of publishing newspaper stories was to send them to presses with giant rolls of paper [...], the new way is to push a button."

It dives into the nitty-gritty lives of reporters, editors, and publishers, their meetings and processes, it opens windows into the Times investigation department, ventilating their "unwritten rules of journalist-subject interactions," their visions on the "prime missions of journalism," and dares to go as far as describing with pulse-raising excitement the conversations and negotiations with Weinstein and his pack of sad, broken men —"presenting findings was standard journalistic practice, the right way to treat any story subject, even a completely untrustworthy one."

This book is also about organized injustice. Multiple layers of complicity are peeled as pages turn, a painted-picture of "how the legal system and corporate culture has served to silence victims and inhibit change;" it points fingers at "advocates for women [who] profit from settlements that cover misdeeds" —one exceptionally exciting passage presents one of lawyer Lisa Bloom's [Gloria Allred's daughter. *I know, I couldn't believe it either*] memos to Weinstein: "I feel equipped to help you against the Roses [McGowan] of the world because I have represented so many of them. They start out as impressive, bold women, but the more one presses for evidence, the weaknesses and lies are revealed," as readers jaws drop.

The book also touches on bravery. The majority of the women who shared their experiences did it against the legal restrictions of heavy-duty non-disclosure agreements in force up until today, making these women sort of feminist kamikazes whose courage not only aims to alleviate their pain and trauma but also to eliminate sexual harassment, reform the criminal justice system and "smash the patriarchy." Unexpectedly, it is not up until the last three chapters that the book finally hesitates —too good to be true people— when the Ford-Kavanaugh case is introduced, diluting an already powerful narrative that can only be understood as a forced transition to an even less-interesting epilogue in which the journalists reunite all the women they interviewed in a sunny afternoon at Gwyneth Paltrow's villa to "help answer lingering questions," the perfect opportunity to end the book on a more human and intimate note is missed as Kantor and Twohey stay still like *New York Times* reporters and do not participate in the conversation.

Truth is, if you are looking for feminist theories, de Beauvoir will please your needs. If your taste is leaning more on a Page-Six adventure about the demise of the rich-and-famous, then maybe, and just maybe, Page-Six is really what you need. But if a story about journalistic truth coming to life and therefore changing the world for the better, then this book is your new obsession, I said.