Modern vs. Medieval Rape Culture: The Unfortunate Lack of Change

BY: RAEGAN WHITESIDE

It’s obvious we have made countless advancements since the Middle Ages. We have better technology, working conditions, innovations, medical advancements, women’s rights and limitless more. So, why can’t we advance in our way of thinking about and approaching rape?

Lack of Voice for the Victim

Then vs. Now

Lady of Carrouges was raped by knight, Jaques Le Gris who had “not come from a very good family.”

So, “the culprit had not really been a true member of nobility... which could easily explain his abominable actions”

Brock Turner Case: The probation officer stated...

“The defendant is youthful and has no prior convictions”

“Brock has a lot at stake so [Brock is] having a really hard time right now.”

Brett Kavanaugh Case: “Everything else you see about Judge Kavanaugh’s life, in his church, in his community; this is a guy that spends a lot of time feeding the homeless... he was a great guy, a person of great character and great integrity”

Wife of Bath: The maiden disappears from the story after she is raped. In the poem, she appears in the first few lines and then is omitted entirely.

The Life of Christina of Markyate: She verbally says no to sexual advancements by telling her parents and Beorhtrith that she “wishes to remain chaste, for so [she has] vowed.” Instead of respecting her choice, she is “mocked,” “cajoled,” “threatened” and her parents try to get her husband to rape her to consummate the marriage.

Cork, Ireland:

17 year old girl raped: The accused man’s senior counsel stated in court, “does the evidence out-rule the possibility that she was attracted to the defendant and was open to meeting someone and being with someone? You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a thong with a lace front.”

Not wash until after they have had a medical and forensic examination because important forensic evidence might be washed away” (Rape Crisis Help)

“Courts demanded that the victim show torn clothes and disheveled hair”

“Any woman found in dissolute attire or with a dissolute bearing has no right to make a judicial complaint if she is a victim of violence”

A Victim’s Appearance Affects the way Rape is Received

Brock Turner Case: In a letter written by the victim, Chanel Miller, she states...

“I had to sit through silently, taking it, while he shaped the evening.”

“I told the probation officer I do not want Brock to rot away in prison. I did not say he does not deserve to be behind bars.”

The rape cases used as examples for this project are only a few of the most known cases today though they don’t represent every rape experience or victim.

There are many aspects of rape culture unaccounted for in my paper, though when putting medieval rape culture and modern rape culture in contrast to each other, I infer, unfortunately and disturbingly, more similarities than differences will arise.