

# The Heroic Rapist in Context: Rape Culture Examined Through Western Classics

Nicole Ross, advised by June Saraceno

Sierra Nevada College, Humanities Department

DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.15629/6.7.8.7.5\\_5-1\\_S-2019\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.15629/6.7.8.7.5_5-1_S-2019_1)

**Abstract:** Rape in contemporary western culture does not exist in a vacuum. In myth, many rapes that occur are presented heroically; that is, the rapist is empowered through Western societal mores to violate the victim. Using Susan Brownmiller's theory of the heroic rapist, this paper will explore how the myth of the heroic rapist functions alongside other rape myths in the present-day climate of rape myth acceptance and the systematic silencing of victims. The purpose of this research is to study a narrow selection of historical origins of rape and break down resulting stereotypes – rape myths such as most women secretly want to be raped, men cannot be raped, and no woman can be raped against her will – that obfuscate the true patriarchal nature of rape.

## Background

While it is difficult to determine the exact figures due to lack of reporting, it is clear that a considerable number of women have been sexually assaulted in the United States. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), an estimated 17.7 million women have been raped or have been victims of attempted rape since 1998. Of these survivors, women between the ages of 18 and 24 are four times more likely than other women to be sexually assaulted (RAINN). Though these statistics are harrowing, they are not indicative of a recent outbreak of sexual assault; it is generally accepted in feminist thinking that sexual assault is not rare. Rather, it is a common experience in the lives of many women (Whisnant). Further, the current prevalence of sexual assault, especially when combined with stories from ancient literature and examples from history, supports the idea that the issue of violence against women is a longstanding one. Public perceptions about rape (or rape myths) are overwhelmingly damaging and usually have a silencing effect on victims, reinforcing the common misconception that rape is rare. In order to see a shift in the way that survivors of sexual assault are treated in courts of law and in public opinion, rape myths must be addressed.

There are several stories in ancient literature where rapes occur, particularly in Greek myth and Arthurian legend. If it is understood that literature has some bearing on culture, then it is presumable that rapes occurring in classic myth reveal much about our own culture of rape. Stated differently, the origins of some rape myths are contained in classic myth. My contention is that ideas about masculinity combined with the subjugation of women in Greek myth and Arthurian legend have been graphically magnified to affect today's culture of rape.

## Language

Before progressing, it is necessary to define precisely what rape is (interchangeable with sexual assault) and what is meant by a culture of rape. The word *rape* is derived from the Latin *rapere* meaning "quick seizure" (Miller 68). Susan Brownmiller defines rape in her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* as such: "If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape" (18). Brownmiller's definition of rape, however, fails to encompass survivors of rape who are not female – men, transgender people, gender non-conforming people, and any other individuals who are not cisgender, heterosexual

women are frequently and unfortunately raped; further, Angela Davis, in *Women, Race, and Class*, notes that Brownmiller's history of rape is unsympathetic to women who are not white (198-9). This definition additionally frames the problem as if males are the only perpetrators of rape. Though this research will focus specifically on male perpetrators, it is necessary to state that females do, in fact, rape, but it is a lesser-researched topic (Russell and Hand 154).

Historically, legislation regarding sanctions for rape perpetrators has relied on a similarly incomplete definition – in 1998, the U.S. Department of Justice defined forcible rape as sexual relations with a female forcibly and against her will (Miller 68). A definition of rape that is sensitive to the varying intersections of people who are survivors of sexual assault is as follows: the forcible penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth by a body part or foreign object without explicit consent of the person receiving the penetration (Miller 68). Defining as such allows for *all* victims of rape to qualify for legal recourse and social services.

*Rape culture* is a term referring to the complex pervasiveness of rape in society—not simply the act, but also rape imagery occurring in humor, music, advertising, laws, entertainment, media, etc.—leading to a normalizing effect (Whisnant). On rape culture, Brownmiller writes, “The popularity of quite ordinary books, movies, and songs that depict violence to women and glorify the man who perpetrates the violence is so entrenched in our culture that an entire book could be devoted to the subject” (293). Emilie Buchwald argues that a dangerous consequence of a rape culture is that it leads to the overwhelming belief by many that rape or sexual violence is inevitable (qtd. in WAVAW). Stated differently, rape culture ideology may lead people to *accept* the fact that women will probably experience sexual violence. On the same vein, those living in a rape culture may attempt to justify the act by resorting to commonly held social perceptions such as that the survivor did not fight back during the attack, or that the survivor was being too seductive and, therefore, had subliminally wanted the attack to happen (Russell and Hand, 154). These ideas that attempt to justify the act of rape are called *rape myths*, and they often cause particular stress to survivors of rape, as they more often than not blame the survivor for their own

assault, and in turn, protect the perpetrators (Russell and Hand 154). Other myths include, but are not limited to, the following: Men cannot be raped, most women secretly desire to be raped, stating *no* in certain situations actually means yes, rape does not exist between married couples or in dating relationships, the victim was asking for it, no woman can be raped against her will, etc. (Miller 69; Russell and Hand; Brownmiller 311). In fact, male perpetrators have reported that they felt entitled to the sex because of the expense of the date or that the woman had “led him on” (Miller 68). In this instance, the perpetrators' statements curiously match the societal rape myths, which is a startling example of rape culture's many hazards. Such ideas serve to preserve the status quo—directly maintaining the domineering idea that rape is an inevitable, commonplace crime.

### The Heroic Rapist

One of the most salient examples of rape culture is Brownmiller's idea of the heroic rapist. The heroic rapist sexually assaults women in order to prove his manliness to other men; women are merely booty to be exchanged freely after a man defeats his enemies, achieves something noble, or is trying to exact something noble out of the assault (Brownmiller 289-290). The rapist usually holds a position of power over their victim; by assaulting her, the rapist may or may not be held in a higher esteem by his peers and wears the conquest on his sleeve like a trophy. So, in committing an act of rape, the rapist is exalted into a higher social echelon and the woman is merely a means of achieving this. The myth of the heroic rapist is articulated well in this statement of man's purpose from Genghis Khan, “A man's highest job in life is to break his enemies, to drive them before him, to take from them all the things that have been theirs, to hear the weeping of those who cherished them, to take their horses between his knees, and to press in his arms the most desirable of their women” (qtd. in Brownmiller 290). Though it is not expressly stated that men should aspire to be rapists, the juxtaposition of pressing women into one's arms and stealing horses implies that the enemies' women will indeed be taken by force, detonating sexual assault. The heroic rapist relates directly to rape culture in that many of the contemporary examples of heroic rape are accepted as inevitable truths of living in a society—rape myths

of epic proportions. Take, for example, the 2017 indictment of influential movie producer Harvey Weinstein (BBC). After countless women came forward and publicly alleged that Weinstein had raped, attempted to rape, or otherwise harassed them, it became clear that his behavior had been allowed to persist, for decades, with impunity. Throughout the accounts of violence, one thing is consistent: Weinstein was regarded as untouchable, and his victims were his trophies.

Harris notes that ancient authors' definitions of rape differed from the modern definition of rape (offered above), as modern definitions center on the victim's inability or refusal to give consent, saying "Ancient authors, on the other hand, had very different notions from ours about women's power and ability to grant consent and were more interested in questions of honor when it came to judging acts of sexual violence." Indeed, the definition of rape has become more inclusive over time and is wholly different than, say, the definition of rape in the medieval era; however, this does not mean that rapes did not occur when the definition of rape only applied to virgins, non-consenting women were frequently raped and their stories memorialized in tales that have been passed down and structured our society in graphic ways.

When juxtaposing famed early literature with contemporary examples of rape culture, including the Weinstein case, a startling commonality between the two is the myth of the heroic rapist. Though the subjects in this paper are all fictional subjects in pieces of art, there is overwhelming evidence based on contemporary rape culture that men are continuing to act the mythology out (Brownmiller 308). The myth of the heroic rapist is a valuable analytic principle demonstrating a strong tradition of patriarchal dominance over women, both mentally and physically. If it is accepted as a truism that a culture's early literature has a tendency to reflect its values and beliefs of the period, then the litany of stories in early Greek and British literature—cultures that heavily influence American thinking—that demonstrate rape myth acceptance undoubtedly structure and enforce modern America's rape culture.

<sup>1</sup> It can be argued that in cutting her tongue out after assaulting her, Tereus has raped Philomela twice. Recall that

### Greek Mythology and Antiquity

The examination of mythology allows for a deepened understanding of the ancient attitudes toward women (Trzaskoma et al. xxix). There are many instances of rape in Greek myth that elucidate profound ideas about gender roles and rape myths of antiquity, though this section will focus specifically on Leda and Philomela. In each, there is an observable gallantry consistent in the acts of the perpetrator, which reinforces the heroism of the rapist.

The story of Philomela and Procne is a particularly barbaric example of rape in Greek antiquity. As the story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Philomela is the sister of Procne, who is married to Tereus, a king. Tereus drags Philomela into the woods and rapes her, and then cuts out her tongue.<sup>1</sup> Now mute, Philomela weaves the story into a tapestry and presents it to her sister; thereafter, Procne serves their son Itys to Tereus as dinner, exacting revenge for her and her sister. In a final flurry of chaos, Philomela is transposed into a nightingale, Procne a swallow, and Tereus a hoopoe.

Tereus certainly embodies the heroic rapist, as his crime is fueled by a sense of violent masculinity (Saunders 261). That he cuts out Philomela's tongue is another type of rape in and of itself—forcefully driving her into silence and simultaneously protecting himself, a rapist, from retribution. Thus, Tereus might have been able to live out his days as a good king; yet, he is stopped in his tracks by the retaliation of Philomela and Procne, which is a refreshing reclamation of power. The transformation of the sisters from women to birds illustrate a subsequent reclamation of a different type of power—their voices; now distinctly feminine songbirds. In a different interpretation, Procne laments the female condition in Sophocles' play *Tereus*, saying:

the root word of *rape*—the Latin *rapere*—denotes a seizure (Miller 68).

But I have often seen the nature of woman in  
this way,  
I mean, that we are nothing.  
We are kicked out [of parents' homes] and  
sold to different buyers,  
away from our ancestral gods and parents,  
some to strange men, some to barbarians,  
some to joyless houses, some to abusive  
ones.  
And after a single night binds us,  
we have to praise it and believe that it is fine  
(qtd. in Trzaskoma et al. 352).

Robson states that Greek myths involving rape often demonstrate a graphic representation of male power within the ancient Greek world view (76); Procne's lamentation, here, is a perfect example. It is implied that there is a certain feeling of misery involved with womanhood. Procne likens the female condition to that of slavery, being bought and sold without control over their whereabouts, and men are the ones doing the buying and selling. Moreover, this statement indicates a sense of helplessness implicit in the female condition, caused entirely by the actions of abusive men. It is this sort of helplessness that is important to bolstering the myth of the heroic rapist, especially in contemporary examples; the abuser *must* maintain power over the victim in order to continue their pattern of abuse.

Before several of the rapes that occur in Greek myth, either the woman or the god-rapist (or both) is transformed into an animal (Robson 74). In these tales, there is a strong sense of dramatic irony; the readers made aware of the true identity of these animals while the characters of the story are not; nonetheless, a rape still occurs. In any of these cases, the rape is especially degrading for the woman, who is now both unchaste *and* bearing illegitimate offspring. These children often grow to be heroic figures in subsequent myths, which either elevates the raped mothers' social statuses, or prevents them from ever successfully integrating back into society (Robson 78). By and large, these rapes are construed as gallant, rather than harrowing—creating a powerful example of the myth of the heroic rapist.

Perhaps the most well-known example of a bestial rape in Greek myth is Leda and the Swan, which appears many times over in art. As the story goes, Leda was approached by Zeus—in the form of a swan—and took her by force, producing Helen of

Troy. While on his journey back to Ithaca, Odysseus sees Leda in the underworld, observing that Zeus allowed Leda and her husband Tyndarus to share one immortality between them in the underworld, each dying and coming to life every other day (Hom. Od. 11.327-334). Such a phenomenon is not uncommon in Greek bestial myths, part of the burden that the woman must suffer is that she is not necessarily able to rejoin the civilization she was once a part of (Robson 76). Post-assault, Leda is not elevated to godlike status, but her immortality is an elevated estate above the average layperson. In spite of this, she is not able to be at rest with her husband; this connotes that her reward is more of a punishment. Zeus, however, maintains status as the king of the Olympian gods, icon of manliness, protector of the city, and well-known philanderer.

Zeus, transfigured as an animal, rapes a great deal of women, including Europa and Persephone. Europa, who was abducted by Zeus in the form of a bull and carried over the sea from Phoenicia to Crete where she was made to bear three of his children, Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon (Trzaskoma et al. 5). In Aeschylus' play of her namesake, Europa tells her story, briefly, "I, a woman, united with a god, and in return for the purity / of virginity I was yoked to him, my partner in children" (qtd. in Trzaskoma et al. 5). Such a complacent proclamation of acceptance indicates a strong trend of rape myth acceptance, that her rape is inevitable; because of Zeus' unyielding power, it is likely that Europa had no choice but to submit to him.

Persephone's story is well known because of her abduction, but not necessarily because Zeus raped her. Apollodorus in his opus *The Library*, details the abduction of Persephone. Zeus assisted Pluto, god of the underworld, in kidnapping Persephone and taking her to Hades; when her mother finds her in the underworld, she has eaten pomegranate seeds (the fruit of the underworld), which forces her to return to the underworld for a third of the year, each year (qtd. in Trzaskoma 20-21). In another story, Zeus approaches Persephone in the form of a snake, rapes her, and she becomes pregnant with a son (Robson 87). Different authors pen these stories, but there is a consistent theme of helplessness when it comes to tales about Persephone. It is likely that Persephone was forced to be submissive in both of these circumstances – which were degrading and ostracizing – because

she had no other choice. Robson contends that a woman who attempts to flee from or appear ungrateful to an unwanted suitor in a bestial context might be transfigured permanently, as in the case of Asterie or Philyra (76). In the former, Asterie is turned into the island of Delos, and in the latter, Zeus transposes Philyra into a linden tree (Robson 76). Similarly, Io was transformed by Zeus into a cow after resisting his advances (Trzaskoma et al. 30). Thus, it is clear that this type of violence is obligatory for women to accept. The resulting conclusion can be drawn that because there is no escaping sexual assault, a mythical woman of the era might as well submit to her god-rapist, lest she lose her body permanently, be forced to spend half of eternity in the underworld, or some other punishment that excludes the survivor from society (Robson 77).

Though the days of Greek antiquity are long gone, the social ostracization that rape victims face has unfortunately not been left behind. Brownmiller asserts that women are trained to be victims of rape, that, “rape seeps into [female] childhood consciousness by imperceptible degrees” (309). Indeed, some examples from mythology eerily match contemporary truths. For example, in her 2014 collection of essays entitled *Bad Feminist*, Roxane Gay writes of her assault by a group of boys when she was in middle school. The story is harrowing, but the aftermath of the assault echoes a terrifying culture similar to that of myth. The day after the assault, Gay was required to attend class. She writes:

Just as class was about to begin, the boy behind me grabbed my shoulder and I felt a surge of adrenaline, then terror. He stood and leaned into me. He said, ‘You’re a slut,’ and everyone heard and they snickered. Everyone started calling me a slut... I was mortified and trapped. I sat perfectly still and tried to concentrate, but all I could hear was the hiss of the word ‘slut.’ That shame was one of the worst things I have ever known. ‘Slut’ was my name for the rest of the school year because those boys went and told a very different story about what happened in the woods (144).

It is obvious that the context here differs from, say, Asterie’s plight, but the exclusion from community remains the same. This is clear evidence that survivors of rape have always caused somewhat of

an issue for the patriarchy, as the measures taken to ensure that survivors remain powerless and the perpetrators remain powerful have revolved around the same theme: silence. Be it literally cutting out her tongue, turning her into a tree or degrading the victim until she becomes mute, silence is the best tool a rapist can employ to empower himself to rape again.

### Arthurian Legend and the Medieval Era

The chivalric code employed by medieval knights in England emphasized the importance of courtly love, which broadly encompasses honor, piety, and duty as core tenets. Schatz and Schatz argue that the broad set of chivalric cultural norms can be deduced to honor as the highest virtue, a duty to protect women and a strict adherence to class structures (67). As much as the chivalric code emphasized the protection of women, especially from sexual assault, there is ample evidence that this was not necessarily the case. Women were not necessarily respected as equals to men under the code of chivalry, rather, they were placed on a pedestal as objects to be coveted and shielded, specifically due to the fact that a woman’s virginity was expected to remain intact until she was married (Heckel). Virgin women could be married with higher dowries; additionally, virgin brides assured husbands that their children would be of the husband’s blood (Heckel). So, the duty to protect women can be interpreted as a way to ensure that women’s virginities remained available for commodification.

It is accepted that stories from the age of chivalry represent the social mores of the period, if not serving as a creative reimagining of historical events (Briffault 408). Indeed, women were judged in terms of whether or not they brought honor to knights or not—they might inspire greatness, or they might cause a great distraction to men through their wantonness (Schatz and Schatz 68). The importance of honor makes its way throughout the discussion of rape in the medieval era, especially when it comes to preserving the dignity and title of the accused.

Prior to the Norman Conquest of 1066, the penalty for rape was execution, but this only applied to a man who raped an aristocratic woman, and the crime was only reprehensible if the woman was a virgin; married women, widows, or other non-virgins were not considered (Brownmiller 24). However,

these acts of punitive justice were replaced by Henry II with formalized appeal procedures for raped virgins<sup>2</sup> to seek justice from the court of the king (Brownmiller 25-26). Henry de Bracton, a cleric of King Henry III, recorded the reporting process for the victim. The victim was required to make her appeal to the highest court possible when the deed was “newly done,” wearing “her clothing stained with blood, and her torn garments”; her testimony would then be recorded by a clerk and she would be made to recount it at trial exactly as she had said it before (Brownmiller 26). In addition, Bracton recorded a list of possible defenses for the accused, which make up a stunning body of rape myths by today’s standards. Brownmiller quotes Bracton’s list as the following:

[A short list of plausible defenses are that] he had her as his concubine and before the day and the year mentioned in the appeal...or that he had her and defiled her with her consent and not against her will, and that if she now appeals him it is in hatred of another woman whom he has as his concubine, or whom he has married, or that it is at the instigation of one of her kinsmen (26).

It is important to note that the reporting process stated above – one where the victim must appear to be freshly traumatized and recount the event perfectly – combined with this list of defenses, is not entirely different from the current standards of reporting that sexual assault victims are subjected to today. Clearly, these ideas have been passed down as the gold standard through the years.

Arthurian legend blends with history in such a way that illuminates social mores and probes the limits that define social order (Baswell and Howland Schotter 1A: 182). Tales of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table are told and often re-told in the modern world. Some characters from stories in the Arthurian canon defy the tenets of chivalry, illustrating that perhaps the doctrines of courtly love were not so rigidly enforced. Chrétien de Troyes writes in *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*:

If a knight found a damsel or wench alone, he would, if he wished to preserve his good name, sooner think of cutting his own throat

than of offering her dishonour; if he forced her against her will, he would have been scorned in every court. But, on the other hand, if the damsel were accompanied by another knight, and if it pleased him to give combat to that knight and win the lady by arms, then he might do his will with her just as he pleased, and no shame of blame whatsoever would be held to attach to him (qtd. in Briffault 412-13).

This principle—an Arthurian ethic—directly echoes the myth of the heroic rapist, as the rape of the woman is a prize won by battling a fellow knight, as the wishes of the woman are insignificant to the game. Additionally, rape in this context is deemed permissible because of its attribution to knightly honor. As stated, a knight will do himself dishonor to take the “damsel or wench” by force, but if he fights her chaperone, he will have effectively and lawfully preserved his title. Gravdal argues that rape in this context is a “chivalric test,” where the knight is able to demonstrate his fortitude (44). Such an act of violence against a woman, no matter the severity of consequences it may cause *her*, is deemed to be honorable for the offending knight.

Indeed, knights storied about in Arthurian legend often bend the rules of chivalry to suit their own means. For instance, the central conflict of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is inherently contradictory to chivalry – the mysterious Green Knight storms Arthur’s castle during the Christmas celebration and proposes a duel, and fighting is supposed to cease according to the liturgical calendar (Martin 313). Further, both champions are to be on an equal playing field and the Green Knight failed to disclose that he is protected by magic – rendering him immune from blows – when he urges someone to take a swing at him; this is a discourteous act (Martin 313). Conversely, by accepting the magic, immunity-granting girdle from a lady just before it is time for the Green Knight to offer his blow, Sir Gawain has defied the chivalric code (Martin 319). In other stories involving Sir Gawain, who is traditionally regarded as a figure of courtly excellence, his defiance of the chivalric code becomes more violent towards women in particular.

<sup>2</sup> Recall the importance of virginity in the medieval era; a woman’s virginity was an important factor in her ability to be married.

In fact, general violence and sexual violence are motifs in Arthurian romance. Gravdal argues in her book *Ravishing Maidens* that sexual assault is deeply ingrained into Arthurian legend, and that it is conflated with major points of conflict in romance plots (43). An act of rape in a romance often provides some sort of moral education, and in cases where the knight is faced with saving a maiden from an assault, the rape serves as a graphic representation of male honor at the victim's expense (Gravdal 48). Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale," from his opus *The Canterbury Tales*, is an example of an Arthurian romance featuring rape that serves as a moral education. Rather than facing a beheading, the perpetrating knight is made by Queen Guinevere to embark on a quest to discover what women truly want. The answer, as he discovers from a crone, is that women want control over their husbands. This is a curious insight not only because it is a vast generalization, but it also parallels the nature of the crime. During the rape, the Knight controlled the maiden by force, but the opposite of this principle is the one that saves his life. In furnishing this answer, the crone requires that the Knight marry her—paralleling the loss of bodily control implicit in a rape. Perhaps this is why Queen Guinevere insisted on taking control of the trial in the first place; beheading the perpetrator may serve as a deterrent for other potential offenders, but it accomplishes nothing in terms of education for the perpetrator. The Knight—unwillingly married to an ugly woman—is now most likely able to empathize with the victim of his crime, and it is only in submitting to his wife that the Knight is able to find some peace; he lends himself to her dominion and she physically transforms from to beauty (Chaucer 176). Though it is not in the text, historically, raped maidens were no longer eligible for marriage, as their virginity was the source of their worth. So, while it can be inferred that the victim of this crime was thrust into a category of economic uncertainty and shame, the offender lives out his days with a beautiful wife who submissively "obeyed him in everything which might give him happiness or pleasure" (Chaucer 176). This end echoes the that of the heroic rapist from the previous story, as the knight faces no demotion of social stature, but is rewarded with a submissive wife.

It is explicitly stated in the chivalric code that men are to protect women; yet, in these stories men who are protected under the guise of honor directly

harm women. Martin argues that honor, in the context of chivalry, is an empty term, "Whatever its specific form, origin, and aim, chivalry was whatever its enthusiasts wanted it to be, accommodating and ennobling all sorts of martial action, no matter how objectless, imprudent, or predatory" (323). Expanding upon this, the oath of chivalry failed to protect women from inappropriate and futile behavior by knights, without legal recourse—rendering victims as economically defenseless against predators who had been sworn to protect them.

### Discussion and Conclusion

In the examples presented above, the instances of rape share the common denominator of the heroic rapist. Otherwise stated, the victim in each of these stories is not nearly as significant as her rapist is. In Greek myth, the rapist may be a god, thus granting the offender immunity from punishment, and in Arthurian legend, the rapist is shielded from punishment by an empty chivalric code. One's social estate ought not to have any bearing on their punishment, especially for such a barbarous crime; yet, this principle is one that has, unfortunately, continued throughout history.

For instance, the 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground* detailed the rape of Erica Kinsman by now-professional football player Jameis Winston while they were students at Florida State (Tracy B14). Winston was not prosecuted or meaningfully investigated in any way for this crime in particular, despite the involvement of regional law enforcement and campus disciplinary committees; though the university had previously disciplined him for stealing \$32 of crab legs, the campus disciplinary hearing regarding the sexual assault determined that Winston had not violated the student code of conduct (Tracy B14). After filing a federal lawsuit against him in 2015 for the assault, Winston countersued Kinsman, "accusing her of greed" (Tracy B14).

*The Hunting Ground* featured interviews with Florida State students, who referred to Winston's accuser (Kinsman) by lewd epithets, overwhelmingly stating that she *must* be lying about the attack, largely due to Winston's stellar performance as a football player. These are rape myths contributing clearly to the preservation of Winston's status as a good football player, as if playing football well is

inherently virtuous and deserving of legal immunity. Empirically, Winston is hardly a figure of as much cultural significance as Zeus or a medieval British knight and yet, he is protected from legal action because of his status as a heroic rapist. While Winston enjoys a \$23 million National Football League contract, (Tracy B14), Kinsman settled her case and has a lasting reputation as the Woman Who Accused Jameis Winston of Rape, immortalized in Tracy's article for *The New York Times* entitled, "Jameis Winston and Woman Who Accused Him of Rape Settle Lawsuits."

The issue of heroic rape has persisted with impunity for millennia, but the assertion that there is no solution to ending sexual violence in this manner is a dangerous one. As aforementioned, one of the effects of rape culture is that it normalizes the act of sexual violence, leading to the perception that rape is an inevitable fact of womanhood (Whisnant). So, while it may be exceedingly difficult because of cultural mores, one must try to reject feelings of hopelessness, as they only perpetuate the cycle of violence. On steps to take to quell the frequency of rape, Mary Gaitskill, in her essay "On Not Being a Victim," writes, "...I think we could make the struggle less difficult by changing the way we teach responsibility and social conduct. To teach a boy that rape is 'bad' is not as effective as making him see that rape is a violation of his own masculine dignity as well as a violation of the raped woman" (374). Indeed, this may be a good place to begin. Grandiose notions of ego combined with a litany of rape myths bolster the myth of the heroic rapist, and systematically eradicating both may serve to put a stop to rape culture at large.

### Works Cited

- "Arthurian Myth in the History of Britain." *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Baswell, Christopher and Howland Schotter, Anne, editors. Longman, 4th ed., vol. 1A, pp. 182-183.
- Briffault, Robert. *The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins*. Howard Fertig, New York, 1993.
- Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. Random House, New York, 1975.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Translated by R. M. Lumiansky, Washington Square Press, 1971.
- Davis, Angela. *Women, Race, and Class*. Random House, 1981.
- Gaitskill, Mary. "On Not Being a Victim." *Beyond Borders: A Cultural Reader*. Randall Bass and Joy Young, editors. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2nd ed., pp. 364-374.
- Gay, Roxane. "What We Hunger For." *Bad Feminist*. Harper Perennial, 2014, pp. 137-146.
- Gravdal, Kathryn. *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1991.
- Harris, Edward M. Review of Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds, edited by Susan Deacy and Karen Pierce. *Diotima*.
- "Harvey Weinstein Timeline: How the Scandal Unfolded." BBC, 12 February 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-41594672>. Accessed 20 February 2018.
- Heckel, N.M. "Sex, Society and Medieval Women." River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, [www.library.rochester.edu/robbins/sex-society#virginity](http://www.library.rochester.edu/robbins/sex-society#virginity).
- Malory, Thomas. *Le Morte D'Arthur*. The Modern Library, New York, 1994.
- Martin, Carl Grey. "The Cipher of Chivalry: Violence as Courtly Play in the World of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.'" *Chaucer Review*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2009, pp. 239-329.
- Miller, Laurence. "Rape: Sex Crime, Act of Violence, or Naturalistic Adaptation?" *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 19, 2014, pp. 67-81.
- Robson, J.E. "Bestiality and Bestial Rape in Greek Myth." *Rape in Antiquity*, edited by Susan Blood and Karen F. Pierce, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2002, pp. 65-96.
- Russell, Kirsten J. and Hand, Christopher J. "Rape Myth Acceptance, Victim Blame Attribution and Just World Beliefs: A Rapid Evidence Assessment." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 37, 2017, pp. 153-160.
- Saunders, Corinne. "Classical Paradigms of Rape in the Middle Ages." *Rape in Antiquity*, edited by Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2002, pp. 243-266.

Schatz, Steven F., and Schatz, Naomi R. "Chivalry Is Not Dead: Murder, Gender, and the Death Penalty." *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 64-112.

*The Hunting Ground*. Directed by Kirby Dick, The Weinstein Company, 2015.

Tracy, Marc. "Jameis Winston and Woman Who Accused Him of Rape Settle Lawsuits." *The New York Times*, 15 Dec. 2016: B14. Print.

Trzaskoma, Stephen M., et al., editors. *Anthology of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation*. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2016.

"Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics." RAINN, n.d., <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>. Accessed 2 February 2018.

"What is Rape Culture?" WAVAW, n.d., <http://www.wavaw.ca/what-is-rape-culture/>. Accessed 2 February 2018.

Whisnant, Rebecca. "Feminist Perspectives on Rape." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/feminism-rape/>