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From a Non-Consensual Incestuous Relationship to a Promotion to Priestess: The Way That a Father Controls Their Daughter Determines the Status Level That a Woman Can Hold in *Apollonius of Tyre*

Sarah Haggerty

ENGL 415: Medieval Sex & Gender; Dr. Michelle M. Sauer

Introduction

Family relationships within quite a few Medieval texts are often viewed as relationships of ownership. This idea of ownership often shaped the way that women were viewed. Rather than being viewed as people, they were more often seen as property. A woman is to be owned by first their father, and then the duty is passed over to the husband.

Because of ownership of women, men controlled what level women could rise their station to in life along with how and who they could speak to. Men had the ability to control every aspect of women's lives.



Apollonius returns to Tarsis
(from a 15th c. manuscript, ÖNB 2886, f. 9^r)

Questions

Is a woman only considered a woman when she is owned by a man? How does the relationship between father and daughter shape the way a woman is seen or treated in medieval society? Are there still aspects of this today?

Findings

Apollonius of Tyre shows three different types of familial relationships within the text that each show a different value of ownership that is taken from father over daughter.

King Archestrates & Daughter

- No name, daughter was treated as a person, and given rights, however she was still owned by her father as people asked for the father's permission for her hand in marriage. Became a priestess on her own.

Apollonius & Tarsia

- The only relationship with a name given for the daughter. Treated as property as she was given away to a foster family and married off to a man of Apollonius's choosing. Was able to save chastity without her father present to protect her.

King Antiochus & Daughter

- No name, Incestuous relationship of ownership, daughter was treated as property of the king.

Conclusions

The conclusion of this story brings to light the idea of just how being owned by a man can influence their status in life as a woman. Archestrates daughter, after being believed dead ended up being found by another and was appointed as a priestess.

Apollonius had little to do in his daughter's life, so she ended up being traded to a brothel. But because she had no father controlling her every move growing up, she was able to help herself, and managed to preserve her chastity in the Brothel.

The women who were treated more as property to be owned and traded by their fathers ended up on darker paths, paths that were chosen by their fathers. Whereas the woman who was owned by her father but was treated with respect ended up being able to speak for herself to gain the respect of others and was appointed a place of honor.

A woman does not need a man to control her in order to be considered a woman.



King Antiochus attacking his daughter in her chamber, with a full border containing a space left for a shield of arms, at the beginning of the 'Historia Apollonii regis Tyri', Netherlands, S., last quarter of the 15th century, Royal MS 20 C II, f. 210r

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