

When Naomi cried Wolf, Katie said baaah

A decade ago Katie Roiphe, then a 25-year-old Princeton graduate, proclaimed the epidemic of 'date-rape' a hoax; most instances being nothing more than 'bad sexual experiences'. (This led to several sacks of hate mail, campus petitions, threats or expressions of hope that she'd be killed or raped.) Writing in *The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism On Campus*:

We have to learn to separate bad sexual experiences from rape. We have to be able to say there are experiences when you feel bad or regret something, or something happened which you feel miserable about, but that's not rape. [Rape is] the use of physical force, the serious threat of physical force, or sex with somebody who is incapacitated, such as a passed-out drunk. What I object to is an expanding definition of rape to include things like verbal coercion by the man. I also object to the notion that if a woman is drunk that is enough to constitute rape. I am not saying that some men don't go out, give women ten vodkas and then rape them. But does it happen with the frequency we are being led to believe? I really don't believe it does.

Roiphe compares the rape pamphlets given out on US campuses with the Victorian circulars admonishing the women of that era about virtue. She believes that what the 'rape-crisis' feminists are saying, implicitly, is that women can't take control of their own sexuality. In a London debate with 'anti-cutie beauty' Naomi Wolf (author of *The Beauty Myth*), Roiphe insisted that, drunk or sober, 'when you are conscious you are responsible for your actions'. Then she dropped a cluster bomb: 'I do not believe all men are potential rapists'. Wolf challenged with a study revealing that one in nine men said that they would commit rape if they thought they could get away with it. 'I just don't believe that', Roiphe retorted, 'I don't believe that about men'.

(Perhaps both sides miss the point here. There is a chasm of infinite size between an action and the mere idea of doing it. It is the very nature of such fantasies, especially when they are more serious and personal, that they serve to relieve whatever produces them. The man who has had to suppress his rage or lust is almost invariably a better man than one who has never had to seriously deal with such emotions, and is a man who is more able to show compassion to others.)

'I was reacting to a political climate that really was not allowing for free conversation', said Roiphe. She then takes her logic right into the courtroom and agrees that the anonymity of rape victims needs to be reconsidered:

We don't protect other types of victims, why should we protect rape victims? The real reason is because rape is considered so shameful. Rape should not be considered shameful to the victim. It should be considered shameful for the rapist.