

Sara Butler

[00:00:00] **Sara Butler:** *Pleading is your way of giving permission to be tried. Without your permission, they can't try you.*

[00:00:06] **David Staley:** *Hmm.*

[00:00:06] **Sara Butler:** *So what do they do? They send you back to court and try to encourage you to change your mind and plead, and one of the ways of doing that was to starve you and then put heavy rocks on your chest.*

[00:00:17] **David Staley:** I'm so pleased to be joined today in the ASE Tech Studios by my colleague, Sara Butler, professor and King George III chair in British History, and Director of the Center for Historical Research at the Ohio State University College of the Arts and Sciences, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, her areas of expertise include medieval history, women's gender and sexuality, history and religion in history, Dr. Butler. Welcome to Voices.

[00:00:45] **Sara Butler:** Thank you very much for having me here today.

[00:00:47] **David Staley:** Well so you describe yourself as a social historian of the law. I'd like you to begin by telling us what does that mean?

[00:00:55] **Sara Butler:** I'm interested in regular people. Regular people. Yes. [00:01:00] People very much like myself. And when we are trying to find people like me in the Middle Ages, well, people like me did not write religious treatises. We did not write, you know, chivalric romances. But we did often appear in court. The medieval world was a far more litigious society than the one that we live in today.

[00:01:19] **David Staley:** More litigious?

[00:01:20] **Sara Butler:** Far more, because when you end up with a problem and you have discussed it, and discussed it and discussed it and can't get anywhere, what do you do? You go to court and they had more courts available to them that were easier to get into. So the average person frequently showed up in court, and I'm looking for their voices.

[00:01:42] **Sara Butler:** I want to know about people like me, particularly women. I'm really interested in women. I grew up very much in the eighties and

nineties and when I went to school, the history textbooks did not include women.

[00:01:55] David Staley: Mm-hmm.

[00:01:56] Sara Butler: The only time women ever popped up in those is when they were the bad women [00:02:00] for Medievalists --

[00:02:00] David Staley: Sure.

[00:02:00] Sara Butler: -- that's people like, you know Empress Theodora, who was prostitute. Empress Irene, who usurped her son's position and gouged out his eyes. You know, I always suspected there were other women in history, too.

[00:02:13] David Staley: Well, so you said their society is more litigious than ours?

[00:02:16] Sara Butler: Mm-hmm.

[00:02:16] David Staley: I'd have to hear more about that because I think of ours as pretty litigious.

[00:02:20] Sara Butler: Our society is pretty litigious, but at the same time there's actually a lot more regulation of basic daily life than you would imagine for the Middle Ages. So you are here appearing in clothing that you chose without having to think at all I'm sure about what you put on this morning. Me too.

[00:02:40] Sara Butler: Well, not so if you're in the Middle Ages.

[00:02:43] David Staley: Hmm.

[00:02:43] Sara Butler: Your clothing was all regulated by law. If you were a peasant, for example, it was regulated what kind of material you had to wear if you're in England, wool, because we need to sell English wool.

[00:02:53] David Staley: Mm-hmm.

[00:02:54] Sara Butler: It was regulated how many colors you were allowed to wear, what colors, what patterns you were allowed to have. If [00:03:00] you were wearing one of those fancy coned hats as a noble woman, the height of

your cone had to be related to the amount of property that your family owned per year. All of this is very much regulated. We don't have curfews today. They did in the Middle Ages.

[00:03:18] **Sara Butler:** There were times when regular people were not allowed to go to ale houses because they were worried that too many peasants in one place might actually lead to a rebellion. So let's cut down on that. But the wealthier people can do whatever they want. So it actually ended up being a society with, at the very least on the books, a lot more regulation than we could expect.

[00:03:41] **David Staley:** So, are you interested in studying the law or are you interested in studying what the law tells us about ordinary people?

[00:03:50] **Sara Butler:** In general, I am interested in the second part of what you have said, but also in how ordinary people use the law to their best advantage. One of [00:04:00] the things that I love about the Middle Ages is that jurisdictions are really fuzzy in general, so there's often a lot of overlapping jurisdictions.

[00:04:07] **Sara Butler:** And what I mean by that is if you have a problem with your neighbor, for example: he was supposed to keep his animals out of your yard. They've destroyed your yard. Well, you have a variety of courts that you could take your problem to. So you go to one court, if you don't get the answer you're looking for, fine, you go to a different court, and I find it really exciting to see how average people realized that they could use the law to get what they needed. Even though this is a group of generally uneducated, illiterate people, they knew the law. And they knew how to work it to get what they wanted.

[00:04:44] **David Staley:** Hmm. And so these are people with agency. When I think of medieval peasants, I mm-hmm. I guess I think of people that are acted upon, don't have agency themselves.

[00:04:53] **Sara Butler:** Oh, and I am very excited about agency. Very excited about agency. My first couple of books in particular are very [00:05:00] women oriented and in general what I was looking for was women's agency in marriage.

[00:05:06] **Sara Butler:** My first book's on domestic violence, my second one on divorce. A lot of that actually came out of questions from other people that I would talk to, including students who would say that medieval marriage sounded pretty awful. It was such a shame that women got stuck in that. And I realized that in looking through a lot of my records, women actually didn't

necessarily get stuck in marriages that were terrible. They found ways out and they found ways if they wanted to stay in a marriage, to get their husband's behavior in line. It helps that the medieval attitude towards marriage is that it was a very public institution.

[00:05:41] **David Staley:** What do you mean by that? By public.

[00:05:42] **Sara Butler:** So, you didn't just marry whoever you wanted to, right? You had to marry someone who everybody in your circle thought was the right person. And this is, you know, a form of arranged marriage, but one in which you had a say in, you could say yes or no, but [00:06:00] everybody else had decided that this was an appropriate marriage for you, and because everybody helped you to get into a marriage, they believed they were equally responsible for supervising that marriage and making sure it was successful.

[00:06:11] **David Staley:** Supervise.

[00:06:12] **Sara Butler:** Yeah. So if you,

[00:06:13] **David Staley:** I don't like the sound of that.

[00:06:15] **Sara Butler:** So you may not like the sound of that, but I think a lot of women out there listening might, because that means if you're having an argument with your husband in your home and he starts getting violent, oh, it's the responsibility of your neighbors to get in there and stop him from being violent. Maybe that means extracting him from the situation, walking him around and talking him through it, but nobody is going to just sit there and listen to a fight and ignore it because it's a private matter between husband and spouse. It's not private, it's public.

[00:06:45] **David Staley:** Hmm. So let's talk a bit more about divorce.

[00:06:49] **Sara Butler:** Mm-hmm.

[00:06:49] **David Staley:** I wanted to

[00:06:49] **Sara Butler:** mm-hmm.

[00:06:50] **David Staley:** Talk about some of your other research. It sounds that maybe women could get some advantage maybe to going through a divorce proceeding or something like that. [00:07:00]

[00:07:00] **Sara Butler:** So I do think that it is very helpful for women in this period that everybody felt that they were so invested in a marriage because when a marriage had reached a point where it, it was beyond help, there was no way that marriage was ever going to be fixed.

[00:07:15] **Sara Butler:** There were certainly a lot of people that a woman could call upon as witnesses in court when she asked for a divorce, and I should clarify here, the word divorce is used in the medieval scenario. It's *divortium* in Latin. However, today I think we would best understand it as an annulment. I. e., You go to the Catholic church and basically you present material to say this should never have been a valid marriage in the first place.

[00:07:45] **Sara Butler:** Or you can also say, I don't want to live with my spouse anymore, which is also called a divorce, but it is not a divorce in which you can remarry afterwards. It's more of a judicial separation. You couldn't just stop living with your [00:08:00] spouse 'cause you didn't like him. You actually needed permission. But you could say he's so cruel, or he's been so adulterous that he's basically forfeited all of the marital rights and I should not be forced to live with him anymore.

[00:08:13] **Sara Butler:** So there were options. And particularly with an annulment, I wanna highlight, yes, there were limitations on what you could ask for an annulment for, but you could also manipulate the scenario. So, for example, incest is a major concern in the period. Mm-hmm. But incest is not just being related through the bloodline.

[00:08:33] **Sara Butler:** It can also be related through sponsorship in church, Godparentage, for example. So if you are a woman and you desperately want out of marriage: go and be the godparent to one of your children. And now you and your husband are too closely related and you can no longer be married.

[00:08:52] **David Staley:** That's, that's fascinating.

[00:08:54] **Sara Butler:** It's kind of brilliant.

[00:08:55] **David Staley:** Well, and as you said, these folks seem to, even though they weren't trained as lawyers, they seem to [00:09:00] understand the law. Where did that understanding come from?

[00:09:02] **Sara Butler:** So that's a difficult one to tell because obviously that's all happening under the radar. I will say one thing that's very helpful in

medieval society is there were a lot of law school dropouts hanging around in society.

[00:09:14] **Sara Butler:** Law school is hard. A lot of people didn't make it through, but many people realized that one year of law school, and you can become a really important consultant in your county and people will come from all over. But on top of that, a lot of courts, I mean, they were held in the public, many of them were held in open air settings, which means you can go and watch courts.

[00:09:35] **Sara Butler:** So you can learn in pretty much the same way that a lot of lawyers were also learning in this way. By being there and watching what worked for other litigants. And I think that helps. Granted, in most scenarios, I think people learned the area of the law that they needed. They didn't really worry about a lot of it.

[00:09:54] **Sara Butler:** Land law, we'll save that for people who are worried about, you know, inheritance. But for women, [00:10:00] I think that marriage law is often what concerned them most and what they learned.

[00:10:03] **David Staley:** I think you've already started to dive into this. Your early work involves a study of divorce, the study of marital violence. You've also done studies on forensic medicine. And again, in some ways, maybe you've already started to touch on this: did medieval Europeans experience these things, divorce, for instance, or forensic medicine, did they experience in the same way we did? Or we do?

[00:10:30] **Sara Butler:** I think that's an excellent question. Quite frankly, I, I think that the simple answer to that is well, kind of yes and kind of no. So part of the reason that I've gotten really interested in looking at these sort of areas in the Middle Ages is to fight the idea that the Medieval period was primitive.

[00:10:50] **Sara Butler:** It was backwards, and particularly when it comes to women that nobody cared about women. My students always use the phrase a second class citizen, which is not accurate 'cause no one's a citizen [00:11:00] really in this period. But at the same time, I'm not sure that they were always second class subjects, either. They were considered important in particular because of their labor in this period, which was appreciated in a way that we don't tend to appreciate it.

[00:11:15] **David Staley:** Say more about that. What does, what does that mean?

[00:11:18] **Sara Butler:** No family could survive without women's labor. And by this, I'm not talking about women spending their time inside the house, sweeping floors and raising children. Sure they had that stuff to do, but that was just on top of their actual jobs. Every family worked in a business together and husband and wife were partners in that business.

[00:11:36] **Sara Butler:** Yes, husband was senior partner; wife was junior partner. But the business could not survive without the woman. And the fact that whenever men traveled anywhere, women just immediately took over their positions tells us how intimately they were involved in the running of businesses. Husbands died. Women took over their businesses without problems, including their apprenticeships.

[00:11:58] **Sara Butler:** Women were integral [00:12:00] as laborers and that made them valuable in society. So having said all of this, I mean part of the reason then that I was really interested to look at these ideas about the Middle Ages. When you look at women in a lot of movies or tv for example, there is so much violence against women because the assumption is they weren't valuable.

[00:12:20] **Sara Butler:** And men seem to believe that women were just play things, you know, just there for their own leisure. That's a very modern perspective, and that is just not accurate to the way the medieval world conceived of women and treated women. They did make sure that there were protections for women.

[00:12:39] **Sara Butler:** Again, it's not equal, particularly when we look at what's written down on paper when it comes to the laws, women often seem to be disadvantaged, However, when you look at what's actually going on in the way people use the laws, for example, you see that women really are being treated much better and that [00:13:00] it's really not the backward, primitive society that we're often led to believe it was.

[00:13:04] **David Staley:** Treated much better than...?

[00:13:06] **Sara Butler:** Than what we see on the TV screen. You know, women were not regular targets of violence. Women did have recourse when there was any sort of violence against them. There were ways to solve the problems.

[00:13:21] **David Staley:** Well, and the reason I ask that is, you know, in some ways I look for instance at at Victorian women. And maybe they didn't have the same sorts of advantages or privileges in what you're talking about?

[00:13:32] **Sara Butler:** Oh, I think they did not, and I think the most important thing to always remember here is history is not a story of progress. Quite frankly, Victorian women have destroyed so many of our ideas about the Middle Ages because people have looked at it as a history of progress.

[00:13:48] **Sara Butler:** And if women were treated so poorly in the Victorian era, well then it must have been awful in the Middle Ages. In general, I think that women in the Middle Ages had a lot more rights. And certainly they had a lot more [00:14:00] rights in the Middle Ages than they did in the early modern era. The early modern era is a really hard one because there's so many women on the throne across Europe.

[00:14:07] **David Staley:** Right.

[00:14:07] **Sara Butler:** And of course when you have women on the throne, you can't be seen to treat women well, because then everybody assumes you're doing that because of your sex. So if anything, as a woman on the throne, you have to treat women even worse.

[00:14:19] **David Staley:** Hmm. I wanna talk about your most recent book, *Pain, Penance and Protest*.

[00:14:23] **David Staley:** Mm-hmm. Tell us, tell us about this research. What's your thesis here?

[00:14:27] **Sara Butler:** My thesis in this book is very much that in the Middle Ages there was a system of penitential justice in place. Just to give you a sense of where this comes from. At the heart of this book is the practice of *peine forte et dure*, which is when a person who has been accused of a felony gets into court and refuses to plead. In England in this period, there is no way to deal with a person like that. Pleading is your way of giving permission to be tried. Without your permission, they can't try you. [00:15:00]

[00:15:00] **David Staley:** Hmm.

[00:15:00] **Sara Butler:** So what do they do? They send you back to court and try to encourage you to change your mind and plead, and one of the ways of doing that was to starve you and then put heavy rocks on your chest.

[00:15:11] **David Staley:** Oh,

[00:15:12] **Sara Butler:** Yes. Which I know is probably not going well for my not primitive argument for the Middle Ages. But one of the things I wanna highlight is that most of the research that's been done on this in the past has been from the early modern era where I think there were a lot more people with rocks on their chest than there were in the Middle Ages.

[00:15:28] **Sara Butler:** The Middle Ages, it tended to be much more a starvation diet, but no matter what, it sounds utterly cruel.

[00:15:35] **David Staley:** Mm-hmm.

[00:15:36] **Sara Butler:** I'm trying to argue that all of the practices involved in this are actually part of the penitential process. They want this person to be reconciled not only with the court system and the state, but also with God, because in general, there was a pretty good chance this person was going to be acquitted.

[00:15:56] **Sara Butler:** Most people in England in the Middle Ages who went before the [00:16:00] courts for a felony were acquitted. Acquittal rates hovered between 80 and 85%. Nobody wanted to convict if they could avoid it because conviction meant putting a man to death. And if you're sitting on that jury, you're not sure if God is holding that against you as a homicide. So if there is any way you can acquit, you are going to vote for acquittal.

[00:16:21] **David Staley:** Then why would someone refuse to plead?

[00:16:25] **Sara Butler:** Someone would refuse to plead because that is exactly what Jesus Christ did when he stood before Herod. Of course, yes, it so often goes back to the Bible in the Middle Ages, and it's worth remembering that for a medieval audience, the Bible is not something that they read. It was something they saw performed once a year. The entire Bible, essentially Genesis to Passion, was performed once a year at these major mystery cycles. Mysteries are guilds in this period. So the trade unions essentially put on all of these plays and they traveled in circuits around the town for like a three [00:17:00] day period.

[00:17:01] **Sara Butler:** But people were very familiar with how Christ behaved when he was put on trial because the way it was presented was as if he was standing before an English court justice. They even use the same terminology like you hear them say 'Oyez, oyez' to call the court to order. I'm sure they weren't doing that actually in biblical times. That's an Anglo-Norman thing. So it, it's very much modeled on that and it is very much an attempt to protest royal

overreach at times when people felt it was in very inappropriate because the king should be paying more attention to the misery that they were forced to endure with bad harvests, over-taxation, and particularly endemic war.

[00:17:45] **David Staley:** Hmm. You are the co-founder of an online blog, Legal History Miscellany.

[00:17:52] **Sara Butler:** Yes.

[00:17:53] **David Staley:** Tell us more about this blog.

[00:17:54] **Sara Butler:** This is probably one of my favorite endeavors. So along with two of [00:18:00] my colleagues in legal history Krista Kesselring at Dalhousie University and Cassie Watson at Oxford Brookes University, we write blogs about great finds in the archives.

[00:18:13] **Sara Butler:** Part of what we are trying to do is to bring legal history to the masses. So people can realize how much fun this is. I mean, let's face it, when we watch television, people are excited about law and order,

[00:18:24] **David Staley:** Law and order.

[00:18:25] **Sara Butler:** You know, we're excited about shows like that. Well, that excitement actually is something that you can bring to the medieval period, but the cases get even weirder.

[00:18:35] **Sara Butler:** So we have a great time talking about our fun discoveries in the archives. It also though, gives us an opportunity to make our history relevant. And just to give you a couple of examples, so I wrote one blog about botched executions in the Middle Ages.

[00:18:53] **David Staley:** Oh, lovely.

[00:18:53] **Sara Butler:** And highlighted it to the number of botched executions that we have had recently in Ohio.

[00:18:58] **David Staley:** Oh sure.

[00:18:59] **Sara Butler:** To [00:19:00] talk about the future of execution for a felony in Ohio, which has very much been in doubt because we can't find a decent way to put a person to death without them feeling a great deal of pain.

Hmm. And honestly, I think some of that they did better in the Middle Ages. Let's call it a miracle. You survived this many times. Go home. Another one that I have written. So we recently had an overturning of Roe v Wade and I had an opportunity to write about Justice Alito's leaked majority opinion in which he grounded a lot of this in 13th century law. And the statement that we've had a continuous prosecution of abortion providers since the 13th century, which is not even remotely true. As I pointed out, the only abortion that anybody cared about in the 13th century was when somebody beat a pregnant woman so badly, she miscarried. So abortion laws in the Middle [00:20:00] Ages were about the protection of women, which is not exactly what Justice Alito was talking about.

[00:20:06] **David Staley:** Hmm. Was it your intention with this blog to sort of connect medieval history to current events, current affairs, indeed, even the future? Was that the intention?

[00:20:16] **Sara Butler:** Not always. Sometimes it is. We sort of take things in whatever direction we feel like. Sometimes it's just to get excited about learning about the past, which I think more people need to do.

[00:20:28] **David Staley:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:28] **Sara Butler:** Actually, I think lots of people are excited about the past already, but don't necessarily have the right means to indulge in it. A lot of history books that are written out there by historians are not meant for the average person. We are trying our best to write them for average people. So for example, the last blog I wrote actually was about forest laws. And talking about dog owners in forests who were living in forests in the Middle Ages.

[00:20:53] **Sara Butler:** This may sound odd: why would you live in the middle of a forest. Because a lot of land that was actually not forested [00:21:00] was labeled as forest, so it could be designated as royal land. Oh. But because it was forest land and only kings were actually allowed to hunt, nobody else was, unless they had a license from the king, if you put a dog there, your dog had to be hobbled. They actually cut the

[00:21:17] **David Staley:** Oh dear.

[00:21:17] **Sara Butler:** Achilles tendon of the dog. So your dog couldn't hunt, which, I got interested in because I have dogs.

[00:21:25] **David Staley:** You say you got interested in this.

[00:21:27] Sara Butler: Mm-hmm.

[00:21:27] David Staley: How did you end up in history? Why are you an historian and not, I don't know, a philosopher or a physicist or something like that? Why history?

[00:21:33] Sara Butler: I suspect my mother is entirely to blame. She started passing me books about King Arthur when I was five.

[00:21:39] David Staley: Is that so?

[00:21:40] Sara Butler: Oh, yes, yes. But on top of that, I will say I think the first time anyone has been to the archives is the last time you question your career choices. It is so much fun to play with 14th century coroners' rolls. It doesn't get better than this.

[00:21:56] David Staley: Paint a picture for us. Paint a picture for the audience of what it means to do [00:22:00] archival research.

[00:22:00] Sara Butler: Well, archival research, first of all, you're dealing with really old stuff. I mean, the joy of the English sources. England has always had more sheep than people. So because of that, the material, everything that I'm looking at, is printed on sheep skin, which means it's actually in good shape.

[00:22:17] Sara Butler: There are parts of it that have been eaten at times by rats in the archives or sometimes they had imperfect parchment to begin with that already had holes, so they just wrote around it. But I always end up very much feeling like I am Sherlock Holmes or probably more appropriate for me, the Hardy Boys, hard at work, deciphering codes. Everything I read is in legal shorthand. So for example the endings of words in Latin, all of the words have different declensions in order to tell you the case and the tense. They don't bother to write those. They just signal them. You have to figure out what it is.

[00:22:55] Sara Butler: Often for words they'll just not bother to include any of the [00:23:00] vowels, so you have to figure it out. Letters like M N V I. These are all minims. They're all indicated by slashes down. So an M is three slashes. What do you do when you get a word that is nine slashes. In case you ever wondered why is there a character in King Arthur that is sometimes Vivian, sometimes Nimue. It's because it's all slashes, these minims. It's how you join them up that makes it exciting. So yes, I really feel it's a nice way to get in there and decode and try and figure out what was going on in the past by putting

together, basically I look at it like a jigsaw puzzle where you don't have all the pieces, but you gotta figure out what those missing pieces might have been.

[00:23:41] **David Staley:** But you were gonna be a medieval historian even at five.

[00:23:44] **Sara Butler:** Yes. I really love the Middle Ages. I do love other periods as well. And I will say during my free time, just to get a little crazy, I read a lot of historical fiction that is not medieval fiction. In that in particular, I get really excited [00:24:00] about other places in the world and their histories, you know, Asia, Africa, the Middle East. And I tend to read more modern historical fiction there. But there is something about the Middle Ages that I just absolutely love. It is a foreign land that feels like it is just familiar enough to make sense.

[00:24:22] **David Staley:** I introduced you as Director of the Center for Historical Research. Tell us more about the center and its activities.

[00:24:27] **Sara Butler:** Mm-hmm. So the Center for Historical Research has been at Ohio State for, I believe, about 20 years now, although, don't quote me on anything like that.

[00:24:37] **Sara Butler:** The point of the Center for Historical Research is to bring interesting discussions about history and particularly the relevance of history to the public. But we're trying to approach it in a very interdisciplinary way, so it's mostly us bringing in visiting speakers, but not just historians.

[00:24:58] **Sara Butler:** So for example, [00:25:00] our upcoming series, we have philosophers. We have cultural anthropologists, we have musicologists, we have art historians. We have two year programs that help us to stay organized. Our upcoming program, for example, is on the history of violence.

[00:25:17] **David Staley:** Oh dear.

[00:25:18] **Sara Butler:** And obviously this is something that is right up my alley. It is going to give us a chance to look at violence basically from the Middle Ages to the present, but we're going to be asking a lot of big questions and trying to understand the place of violence in the world that we're living in, but also how we got to where we are. Our first speaker is actually going to be Jennifer Carlson, who is talking on gun violence and democracy in America, which I think is basically going to set the stage for highlighting how everything we're doing is very relevant, but we were inspired to talk about this because

everybody keeps saying that we are living in a [00:26:00] culture of anger these days, which I think we see in a lot of the news that is out there, the politics in America, but what does it mean to be living in a culture of anger?

[00:26:13] **Sara Butler:** And does that normalize anger? Does that privilege anger over other emotions? Is there any other way we could be describing this? Is anger somehow intertwined with despair? So, We're going to have a little bit of fun with this over the next couple of years and we've got great speakers coming in.

[00:26:32] **Sara Butler:** Rebecca Traister, for example, who has written *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger* is going to be one of our speakers. We also have Mitchell Merback who's coming to talk about medieval art history and Peter Bruegel the Elder, and his portrayals of anger in the Middle Ages.

[00:26:50] **David Staley:** Tell us what you're working on now. What's next for your research?

[00:26:53] **Sara Butler:** I recently came across a really interesting class of documents in the archives that nobody else has looked at since the [00:27:00] 1950s, and I think they're really fun. So if you are accused of homicide in the Middle Ages, you had no right to be bailed. They sent you off to prison to await trial. Hmm. With one exception, if you could prove that you had been indicted or if you had been accused maliciously by someone out of revenge, then you could get bail. Well, this produced an entire class of documents of people who paid for essentially an extra trial to prove that they had been accused maliciously. And these are the most fun documents. I feel like I've walked into I don't know if it's Oprah Winfrey or Geraldo Rivera. I mean, it's somewhere in between there, maybe Maury Povich. But what I'm particularly excited about is the domination of these private accusations by women. Women at law were only supposed to accuse people of any sort of felony in two situations. If their [00:28:00] husband had murdered and died in their arms or if they had been raped. But I'm discovering women were accusing just about anybody of murdering just about anybody. And these cases were going through. Judges had absolutely no pro problem with it whatsoever. And this is leading me to a better understanding of the role that women were able to play in the legal system, even though the legal system did try hard to force them to be represented by their husbands. Women seem to have seen themselves in an official role as the family accuser for any sort of crimes out there.

[00:28:34] **Sara Butler:** It's also very fun to see what people classified as malicious when it comes to a woman accusing them compared to a man. And in particular, all of this is coming in at a point in time where compensation for homicide has just disappeared from the books. People are supposed to be happy now that the Anglo Norman Kings have decided to put homicides to death to execute them, rather [00:29:00] than to demand compensation for their victims. Of course, people are not so happy with that. They would actually rather have compensation than execution, but when a woman asked for compensation, it seems to be blackmail.

[00:29:13] **David Staley:** Hmm. Sara Butler, thank you.

[00:29:17] **Sara Butler:** Thank you for having me.