A Feminist Witch Hunt in Oxford

Dr Jeffrey Ketland
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1. Introduction

First thanks to Mike Buchanan for organizing this conference and also for inviting me to speak. This talk is in three parts.

The first part concerns my being victimized for over two years by a female BPD sexual harasser and stalker, Charlotte Coursier, who eventually committed suicide in Oxford in June 2013 when her boyfriend dumped her.

The second part concerns the witch hunt of harassment, defamation, intimidation and abuse from feminist vigilantes in Oxford, a witch hunt set up by Coursier’s American feminist housemate Brooke Berndtson and Berndtson’s feminist supervisor Dr Paula Boddington.

You can also read a brief summary of these events in the book:


The third part will mention some related topics, such as feminist witch hunting and feminist excuse-making for sexual and domestic violence against men.

2. Timeline

• **November 2008**: We meet for first time. We become extremely close over the next two years. In the first couple of months, Coursier drops out of her University course for a year, and makes several suicide attempts which I prevent, including an overdose of paracetamol/sleeping pills in Feb 2009.
• **April 2009 onwards**: This crisis settles down and stops around April 2009. At the time, I believed it was a short-lived event and over. I had never heard of BPD at the time.
• **Sept 2009**: She returns to University in Sept 2009. We remain very close after this, for the following year. She contacts me on countless occasions by phone, Facebook, text message, etc.
• **May 2010**: Coursier, who has said she’s in love with me, confronts my wife at our home; Coursier is reported to Edinburgh police and detained; furious with her, I break off any contact with her for six months.
• **Nov 2010**: My wife and I separate; I move to a friend’s flat; we begin to get divorced.
• **Nov 2010**: Coursier contacts me by text message; we talk for first time in six months; she invites herself to where I’m staying and there initiates a brief relationship between us lasted a few weeks. It was living hell. (This didn’t break any university rules; she was not my student; I wasn’t her supervisor.)
• **Nov 2010**: Domestic violence from Coursier: control, manipulation, violence.
• **Nov 2010**: Two sexual assaults by Coursier (20 Nov & 24 Nov); the second is eye-witnessed by my flatmate.
• **24 Nov 2010**: Edinburgh police are called because of Coursier’s assault on me, shouting and refusal to leave. My flatmate recorded this attack in his
physical diary and later described it in detail again. Police officer PC Burnside gave me an incident note, which I kept:

- **Nov 2010**: Stalking by Coursier at my flatmate’s flat, again recorded in my flatmates diary at the time.
- **Dec 2010 – Jan 2011**: Text message harassment and threats; I contact Coursier’s friend Rosa for help:
  “Charlotte is still threatening and stalking me and threatening to kill herself” (2 Jan 2011, text message)
- **2011**: Speaking to two medical friends for the first time about this, both are very clear: Coursier’s behaviour is BPD. I begin to find out about BPD.
- **Jan 2011 – Mar 2012**: Months of threats, harassing messages, stalking and love letters.
  “Please stop sending abusive and threatening emails” (9 July 2011)
- **March 2011**: Stalking at an Edinburgh bar; text messages and email.
- **Nov 2011**: We speak on Skype several times; Coursier is obsessed with me and wants to marry me. I break off contact again. These conversations are crazy. I stupidly told her I had applied to Oxford.
• **Mar 2012**: She reveals on Skype she is following us to Oxford; I suffer long illness.
  
  "Do not contact me ever again" (12 March 2012)

• **Oct 2012 – Mar 2013**: In Oxford, Coursier stalks my wife in Oxford for five months.

• **Nov 2012**: Coursier follows me outside the Faculty of Philosophy at Oxford and initiates a conversation for a few minutes (this was eye-witnessed by a post-doc): it is 5 minutes of sheer insanity. She tells me her father wants to kill his children and be crucified.

• **Oct 2012 – Mar 2013**: Coursier treated at Warneford Psychiatric Hospital (Oxford), explaining that she is suicidal.

• **Mar 2013**: Coursier has an abortion ("felt she had murdered her child").

• **6, 7 May 2013**: Renewed stalking at my seminars in Oxford; she turns up knowing I'd set up a club in my college (which had nothing to do with her), sits one seat away and pretends not to know me; I am terrified and ask her to leave me alone.
  
  "Please do not do this again" (7 May 2013)

• **20 May 2013**: Retaliation; lies; cajolment by feminist activists who "believe" the lies and fantasies; receive "PIN" from TVP (PC Osborne; PC Wizard), who are notified of her mental instability and history.

• **April - May 2013**: I notify Pembroke’s Academic Director and Chaplain of my extremely serious concerns about Coursier’s violent past, her abuse, her current behaviour and her stalking.

• **3 Jun 2013**: More stalking; I try to report this to TVP on 5 June 2013.

• **10 Jun 2013**: Coursier’s boyfriend dumped her in London; she threatened him with suicide; she returned to Oxford & committed suicide few hours later in her home.
Some examples of attempts (late 2010 until May 2013) to stop her stalking, threatening and harassing me:

3. Witch Hunt

After this, Coursier’s American feminist housemate Brooke Berndtson and her housemate’s feminist supervisor, Dr Paula Boddington, set up a vigilante campaign against me. They recruited many other militant feminist zealots, including Suzanne Holsomback, Jennifer Saul and others. The vigilantes:

- smeared me with fabrications;
- cyber-harassed me & my family with anonymous messages calling me a “murderer”;
- intimidated & libeled me on social media (Twitter, Facebook & feminist blogs);
- intimidated & harassed me out of teaching;
- eventually drove us out of our home, with smears;
- by mob pressure, got their lies read out in a Coroner’s court on 26 Feb 2014 (about which I wasn’t even consulted, and for which the Senior Coroner later apologized) and published in the national press;
- got me fired a few days later, after they’d published wild, frenzied lies and demands for punishment in an “Open Letter” (5 March 2014).

I was publicly smeared and vilified with flat-out lies and abuse. The truth was the exact opposite: we were victims of a violent stalker, Charlotte Coursier.

I spent about six months appealing, and was vindicated and reinstated, in August 2014. (The Sunday Times published a short story about this in August 2014.)
No evidence exists to support the completely made-up claims about me. All of the documentary evidence, witness statements and other materials proved the exact opposite—but all of this evidence was ignored. Inside the university I was supported by my boss and the academic director of my college, who knew what had happened (one of them was a witness); by several other colleagues who thought Oxford Administration's behaviour was grotesque; by all my own students, who got together to protest confidentially against it (see their letter below).

Even several prominent feminist activists in my profession pointed out that the actual evidence showed I was completely innocent of anything, and that I was the one being harassed, that I had correctly told her to stop contacting me and I had correctly notified and warned others of my extremely serious concerns (I was ignored; all of this was later covered up):

Dear Dame Master Lynne Brindley and Dr Mark Fricke,

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our disagreement with the allegations made against Dr Jeffrey Ketland that suppose unprofessional behavior between Dr Ketland and his female students.

We are female undergraduate students at Pembroke College, Oxford who have been directly under Dr Ketland’s tutorship during our course of study here at Oxford. Many of us have received his academic supervision for numerous modules in philosophy, and believe that we can confidently speak for Dr Ketland’s behavior in his teaching and pastoral duties.

Several weeks ago, we were made known of the accusations made against Dr Ketland and reported in the newspapers, as well as the rumors circulating amongst a few Oxford graduate students about Dr Ketland being “dangerous.”

We strongly disagree with these claims, and have not met a single student in Oxford who has met Dr Ketland and holds this view. In the last two academic years, Dr Ketland has been extremely professional in his teaching, tutorial organization, and pastoral duties. We are fully in support of Dr Ketland’s teaching and pastoral duties here, and furthermore believe that he has contributed very positively to the undergraduate philosophy faculty here at Pembroke College, Oxford. We are dismayed and saddened by Dr Ketland’s termination and believe this has come as a great loss to our studies and experience at Oxford.

Yours sincerely,

But these vigilante feminists had by then destroyed our lives and left us traumatized and pauperized.

After I was reinstated, I was silenced and threatened if I spoke out about the abuse, slander, intimidation, harassment and mistreatment.

And later, I was quietly forced out of my job again, on a trumped-up pretext (non-reply to a non-existent email). And ostracized, blacklisted and treated as a pariah. All on the basis of blatantly fabricated lies originating from a violent mentally disturbed stalker, and distributed by unhinged feminist vigilantes.

This witch hunt is quite complicated to absorb. Here is a diagram showing the main instigators and what happened.
3. A recent comment on moralizing and vindictive internet mobs in academic philosophy

"I find the current atmosphere of self-righteous moralizing and vindictive internet mobs in the discipline deeply disturbing (whether the mob is on the left or the right). Such attitudes easily produce injustice and cruelty to individuals and unwise and counter-productive policy-making. Here I'm moralizing too, though not naming individuals or proposing policies. The effects would be much less serious if universities could be trusted to observe basic principles of fairness and due process and to fulfil their duties of care to both students and employees, but they can't. Like most other institutions, they are more concerned to protect their reputations, which typically involves trying to cover up a problem or, if that fails, summary dismissal of alleged culprits. But those institutional failings are not specific to philosophy."

(Professor Timothy Williamson, Wykeham Professor of Logic, University of Oxford, interview, May 2017)

4. Relevant Parts of Social Justice Identity Politics

- Feminist promotion of rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment & stalking by women and how it is covered up/excused.
- Feminist demonization of men, vigilantism and witch hunting.