Teaching about Rape: A Project

The rape of Lucretia: a long debated and revitalized episode from Classical Antiquity

(Rosanna Lauriola, University of Idaho)

1. The Genesis of the Project

I think it appropriate to briefly introduce this work by explaining the genesis of my project, given that it was originally not designed for participating in the workshop where I then presented it. The call for paper for the workshop New Avenues in Classics Pedagogy: The Challenge of Teaching Rape-texts came a bit later. I was impressed by the decision to organize a specific section completely devoted to the teaching of such a difficult topic as rape, within the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association. I thus thought my project could match with the intentions and features of that workshop. Hence, I decided to try, and I submitted the related abstract.

During the fall of 2008 that my project started taking a specific shape in my mind. While working on building my first class ever of “Civilization of Ancient Rome” for the following semester, I planned to read several excerpts from Livy – above all from the very early centuries of Roman history, i.e., from the origin to the first years of the Republic. I thus worked on the selection of passages from the first 3 books. While re-reading those books, the way in which women were represented attracted my attention more than ever, especially the silence and invisibility to which women were usually confined. And exactly in light of this it struck me that, with the exception of Cloelia (Livy, II. 13), where women were prominently represented in those books of Livy, not only did they usually figure as functional to male’s actions, or catalyst for their actions, but exactly in that respect they often appeared as victims of rape, or, to use the questionable, ambiguous terminology referring to that action in classical antiquity, as victims of abduction as Rhea Silvia, the Sabines, and Lucretia appear respectively in Livy I.4, I. 9-13, I. 57-60. And, at least as victim of an attempt of rape (yet she was literally ‘abducted’, in some way) Verginia appears in Livy III. 44-48. This calls my attention to the way in which, in general, ancient authors – and their addressees - tended to sanitize the clear undercurrent of violence at women’s expense: the violence itself is overridden, and in some ways, it is obscured by what was an almost common way to conceive rape/abduction in ancient time, i.e., as a stage toward an ultimately great outcome. In Greek mythology, Zeus’ “rape” of Leda, for instance, resulted in the birth of Helen, thus serving, in some way, to the myth of “super-heroic proportions

---

1 “Those women who are mentioned by Appian, Livy or Tacitus typically perform very restricted roles, either demonstrating a general principle, or throwing light on the character of a leading male, rather than advancing the narrative in their own right”, Dixon 2001, p. 20. I deepened most of the issues I shall touch on in this paper in another work pertaining to rape and abduction in Classical Antiquity and in its reception through century. The title of this work, currently submitted, is Re-proposing ‘heroic’ abduction in art: On the side of the victims. The abduction of the daughters of Leucippus by Peter Paul Rubens (1616) and Classic Tragedy by Michael Merck (2004). I shall often refer to this paper in the following pages.

2 See Arietti 1997. See also below, n. 18.
responsible for the eventual fall of Troy\textsuperscript{3}. Similarly, in the legendary, early Roman history, Mars’ rape of Rhea Silvia is seen as serving the positive outcome of the birth of Romulus (the founder of Rome). And so, the rape of the Sabines is seen as a means for Rome to continue to live through the offspring born from the Sabines’ abduction and subsequent marriage with Roman men. The rape of Lucretia – to put it with Giovanni Boccaccio\textsuperscript{4} - “led ultimately to freedom for Rome”, i.e., to the end of the monarchy and to the creation of the Republic\textsuperscript{5}.

After this quick, yet revealing analysis, several poignant facts led me to choose to touch specifically on the rape issue, while planning a discourse on cultural aspects of ancient society in parallel to the historical outlines. These poignant facts – as I call them – were namely:

- the usual disregard of the victims’ side,
- the traces, that we may find since Livy’s story, of prejudices surrounding cases of rape even nowadays – such as, in particular, the social stigma that, in the males’ eyes, rape imprinted on the women. For instance, Rhea Silvia, when “forcibly violated” (\textit{vi compressa}; Livy I. 4, 2), was compelled to name the god Mars as the father of the twins “because the fault might appear more respectable (honestior) if a deity were the cause of it”\textsuperscript{6}. Lucretia, when her body was violated, had to die to show her innocence and to make it possible for any woman to live chastely by pleading Lucretia’s example\textsuperscript{7}. Verginia had to be killed by her own father, for it was the only way to save her purity and reputation\textsuperscript{8}:

\begin{quote}
Was this the condition on which they were to rear children, was this the reward of modesty and purity?
\end{quote}

so the matrons asked, crying at the sight of Verginia’s death.

I thought that the feature of the “stigma” on women’s reputation would be particularly relevant for contemporary experience, and thus would enhance a discussion spanning from antiquity to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{3} See Brownmiller 1975, pp. 283-284. Whether the chosen woman may or may not be overjoyed does not matter (a good evidence of this is Horace, \textit{Odes} 3. 27 where the poet invites Europa, ‘raped/abducted’ by Zeus, to resign to her fate and be happy with that).
\textsuperscript{4} G. Boccaccio, \textit{De mulieribus claris} 48 (Lucretia, wife of Collatinus) (1361-1362). \textit{De mulieribus claris} (1361-2) includes 104 women, from Greek to biblical to Roman to imaginary. His treatment of Lucretia mostly depends on Livy’s version; however, it also includes a moralizing tone that reveals Boccaccio’s Christian interest in the story.
\textsuperscript{5} Arietti 1997. As to Lucretia, and in general the way in which the female body appears in Livy’s stories of early Rome, Josheel (1992) observes that the female body become a metaphor for the private territory of the Roman male: Sextus Tarquinius conquered the chastity of Lucretia, \textit{alias} he invaded the home of her husband Collatinus; by besieging and conquering Collatinus’ home, Sextus has reduced Collatinus, and by implication the Roman males, to the status of a conquered people.
\textsuperscript{6} Indeed, as Ogilvie noted (1965, p. 48: “The Vestal’s rape was common and sordid: it is ennobled when a god is credited with having been responsible”.
\textsuperscript{7} So Lucretia said: “it is only the body that has been violated, the soul is pure; death shall bear witness to that”… “although I acquit myself of the sin, I do not free myself from the penalty; no unchaste woman shall henceforth live and plead Lucretia’s example.” She had a knife concealed in her dress which she plunged into her heart, and fell dying on the floor”. (I., 58)
\textsuperscript{8} Indeed, this is the report of Livy: “Verginius, seeing no prospect of help anywhere, turned to the tribunal. "Pardon me, Appius, I pray you, if I have spoken disrespectfully to you, pardon a father's grief. Allow me to question the nurse here, in the maiden's presence, as to what are the real facts of the case, that if I have been falsely called her father, I may leave her with the greater resignation." Permission being granted, he took the girl and her nurse aside to the booths near the temple of Venus Cloacina, now known as the "New Booths," and there, snatching up a butcher's knife, he plunged it into her breast, saying, "In this the only way in which I can, I vindicate, my child, thy freedom." ... The matrons, who followed with angry cries, asked, "Was this the condition on which they were to rear children, was this the reward of modesty and purity?"
modern times. Stigma is undeniably a modern issue; as we all know; it is what impedes reporting cases of rape; it is something that generates reluctance and hesitation to speak out. Reflecting on this, I thus decided to focus a bit more on the theme of rape in the very early history of Rome as narrated by Livy in Book I, and I chose to deepen the discourse on Lucretia’s case and to make it also the topic of a group project I assigned to some students majoring in Classics and History, a project which I closely designed and coordinated.

1.1. Why Lucretia?
For three basic reasons I chose to focus in particular on Lucretia’s episode:

1. For the strong and intense anguish that transpires – to me more than in other case – through her action, such an anguish, such a sorrow that may vividly represent what a rape meant and means for a woman, no matter the historical time in which it occurs.

2. For the fact that, according to Livy’s report, the incident of Lucretia took place during a war, in a time in which – as the world’s history well shows – there is an unbalance of power, and, above of all when war is protracted, there is less and less control, on the male side, on the observance of simple civil rules; hence, the potential for violence to harmless beings – from women to children – increases. This specific circumstance, I thought, could also help in relating an ancient fact to modern, contemporaneous reality.

3. It seemed to me that few incidents in antiquity itself have been more widely celebrated than the incident occurring to Lucretia. Indeed, Livy himself mentioned the case of Lucretia when narrating the incident of Verginia, as a kind of famous precedent; Ovid does retell the story, when talking of the Flight of the King (i.e., the Regifigium, in Fasti 2, 685-852) and movingly describes the interior struggle of the victim; and Augustine notoriously focuses on the legitimateness, so to speak, of her suicide, a subject matter that most called the attention of the students – as I could verify –, exactly for the sense of injustice, of double injustice (rape and undeserved death) that Lucretia had to suffer, such a double injustice that resonates with not uncommon

---

9 According to the reports of RANN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), in fact, rape/sexual assault is one of the most unreported crimes: about 60% of cases of rape is not reported (see the data on http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/reporting-rates. The statistics come from government-funded studies. They are more or less consistent with recent data collected by Feminist.com at http://www.feminist.com/antiviolence/facts.html: “The FBI estimates that only 37% of all rapes are reported to the police. U.S. Justice Department statistics are even lower, with only 26% of all rapes or attempted rapes being reported to law enforcement officials”.

10 As an atrocity and a result of brutal lust Livy describes the incident of Verginia, such an incident “ which led to consequences no less tragic than the outrage and death of Lucretia, which had brought about the expulsion of the royal family. Not only was the end of the decemvirs the same as that of the kings, but the cause of their losing their power was the same in each case” (III. 44, 1).

11 “Silence, Lucretia! I am Sextus Tarquin, and I have a sword in my hand; if you utter a word, you shall die.” (Livy, I. 58). “She said nothing: she’d no voice or powers of speech / nor any capability for thought in her whole mind. / But she trembled like a little lamb, caught straying / from the fold, brought low by a wolf’s attack. / What could she do? Fight? In battle a woman loses. /Cry out? But the sword in his right hand restrained her. / Fly? His hands pressed down hard on her breast, / a breast that had never been touched by a stranger’s hand… (Ovid, Fasti 2. 685-690)
outcomes of case of rape nowadays, i.e., the suicide\textsuperscript{12}. This element of suicide has been an additional reason for me to choose this case because of its appeal to students.

Furthermore, other implications persuaded me to propose Lucretia as an appropriate representative of the outlook on such a crucial issue as rape with reference to both ancient and modern time, implications such as:

\begin{enumerate}
\item the already mentioned stigma on reputation,
\item the subsequent temptation to be silent instead of speaking out -- as Lucretia did -- ,
\item and thus the issue of the consent,
\end{enumerate}

c. the everlasting, I would say, male-oriented culture that seems to need to test women’s virtues but does not question men’s conduct. We may remember that the incident of Lucretia occurred after a kind of bet among men, prompted by Collatinus, about which wives would deserve the high praise. And, to decide the winner those men went to visit their wives in order to check what they were doing and, in this way, ‘to test’ their conduct\textsuperscript{13}.

I thought that these additional implications would make Lucretia’s case highly relevant for the students’ present days and experience at college, if one takes into account what a huge problem rape is on campuses, and the weight of the stigma, the consent issue, and the always questionable behavior of the girls but unquestionable behavior of the boys. The trend to doubt of the morality -- the virtues -- of the girl and to question/test her behavior (‘was she drunk’?...), but never, or almost never, to doubt of, or question that of the man, as if it does not matter at all is notorious.

\section*{1.2. Finalizing the project}

\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, making a quick search with reference to the possible correlation rape-suicide, I found that numerous rape victims have suicidal thoughts. Many die by suicide. About 33\% of rape victims have suicidal thought. About 13\% of rape victims will attempt suicide. Suicide attempts may occur years after the rape (Caruso’s report). There exists, in fact, a number of organizations for the prevention of suicide among rape victims, such as the organization “Rape & Suicide Crisis of Southeast Texas”, a founding crisis center for the National Sexual Assault.

\textsuperscript{13} So Livy writes: “When troops are stationary, as is the case in a protracted more than in an active campaign, furloughs are easily granted, more so to the men of rank, however, than to the common soldiers. The royal princes sometimes spent their leisure hours in feasting and entertainments, and at a wine party given by Sextus Tarquinius at which Collatinus, the son of Egerius, was present, the conversation happened to turn upon their wives, and each began to speak of his own in terms of extraordinarily high praise. As the dispute became warm, Collatinus said that there was no need of words, it could in a few hours be ascertained how far his Lucretia was superior to all the rest. "Why do we not," he exclaimed, "if we have any youthful vigour about us, mount our horses and pay our wives a visit and find out their characters on the spot? What we see of the behaviour of each on the unexpected arrival of her husband, let that be the surest test." They were heated with wine, and all shouted: "Good! Come on!" Setting spur to their horses they galloped off to Rome, where they arrived as darkness was beginning to close in. Thence they proceeded to Collatia, where they found Lucretia very differently employed from the king’s daughters-in-law, whom they had seen passing their time in feasting and luxury with their acquaintances. She was sitting at her wool work in the hall, late at night, with her maids busy round her. The palm in this competition of wifely virtue was awarded to Lucretia” (I. 58). And with reference to the ‘wifely virtue’, interesting is what we may find in Greek literature, from Homer (IIiad 6, 490-493: “Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff, and see it that your handmaidens ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting”) to Xenophon (“Certainly, a husband should be pleased if he marries a wife who knows how to make clothes, and how to share the spanning work among the female slaves”; Oeconomicus, 6.17-10; the translation is mine)
Because rape is such a big issue and so relevant to the college’ life and, more in general, to the present time, I finally had the idea both to involve some other disciplines, and to organize a kind of public performance. As to the involvement of other disciplines, beside giving students a vivid picture of the powerful influence of such an ancient episode, I thought it would be an input for organizing, in the future, multidisciplinary projects centering on this problem, such projects that could involve more varied Humanities’ disciplines than the usual social science and psychology. And, for the current project, which – I thought – might be a kind of pilot work, I exposed the students to the analysis and discussion of a few literary and artistic re-elaborations of the episode itself.

As to the public performance, beside giving the students a chance to be protagonist not only in the learning process but also in directly/personally delivering and sharing what they have learned, I thought it would be a way to involve the entire community, not only the campus-community, and contribute to overcoming what is regarded as taboo -- as we know even the word ‘rape’ sometimes is a taboo14. In my intention, the public performance would be a way to contribute to making the community aware both of this often-disregarded, problematic issue itself and of how much the university cares to instruct students on such an issue through and within a variety of appropriate tools, such as even Ancient Civilization, by thus offering them the chance to explore multiple approaches to a problem that still affect our modern civilization.

2. The project: format and methodology
A debate of ethical, social and legal issues related to the phenomenon in ancient time -- with a focus on Roman society by the time of Augusts (the time of Livy, the main source for the incident of Lucretia) and with references --where possible -- to modern time, has been the core of the format of the project15. The target was, at the same time, to ignite at least three of the most important skills that students can bring to other fields of study and to their future life: analysis, comparison and discussion. In other words, by proceeding in this way my intention was also to aim at showing that the study of such a social issue in our classical disciplines can indeed be twofold: it can contribute (a) to build some kind of ‘social’ awareness by contributing, at the same time, (b) to the development of academic skills.

1. The analysis: I exposed the students to the reading of the basic primary sources, such as Livy (Ab Urbe condita, I. 57-60), Ovid (Fasti 2, 685-852 ) and Augustine (The city of God 16-20)16. Although some priority has been given to Livy, I did invite students to consider the variety of the sources (from historical report, to poetry and philosophical reflections), and their own specificity in order for them to also learn how to discern among the disparate sources of information and how to draw possible conclusions. Students have been peculiarly attracted to Augustine’s reflections because of the striking choice of Lucretia to prefer death over life once she has been deprived – “robbed”, I would say -- of what was most important to her and according to her society’s expectations: honor and purity17.

14 See, e.g., Gunne-Brigley 2009.
15 About the legal terms of the issue we mostly relay on Gardner 1986. Additionally, I reported to my students observations from Rizzelli, 1987, 1997; and Botta 2004.
17 With reference to this students often insisted, in their arguments, on how Lucretia had made virtue and purity her chief ends in life, which would also define her as respectable woman in the ancient society. Accordingly discussing about her suicide, with these words the student Oliver Lemke commented on:”We choose things to live for in order
2. *The comparison*: I wanted my students to pay some attention, as I had, to the reception of Lucretia’s episode in modern literature and art (i.e., in some representations of modern literature and art) in order to analyze how the episode itself and, more generally, the rape issue might have been appropriated in other times and contexts. The target was thus to also teach students how to delve into multiple cultures and periods, how to discern connections and differences. As to Literature, I exposed the students to the reading and analysis of two great authors of different times and nationalities, namely: Giovanni Boccaccio (*De mulieribus claris* 48), and William Shakespeare (*The Rape of Lucrece*). As to modern art, we analyzed in some details two of the most well-known paintings of the Renaissance era – that is, *The tragedy of Lucretia*, by Sandro Botticelli (1499) and *The Rape of Lucretia*, by Titiano Vecelli, better known as Titian (completed in 1571) --, and a more recent sculpture, *Rape of Lucrece* (1953-1958) by Rueben Nakian. We also quickly examined a few other artistic renditions. As a result, we realized how the artists have differently focused on a specific segment of the story, with the exception of Botticelli. In fact, Botticelli’s composition seems to consist of a triptych that summarizes the entire story: at left, Tarquinius threatens Lucretia; at right, Lucretia receives her husband and father; in the center the most important consequence of the tragedy: Brutus excites the Romans to vengeance. Evidently -- we had to infer -- not the crime itself and thus the victim’s side were the object of main interest for the artist, but the ‘political’ result. In the other representations we could identify and single out basically three themes:

I. *Threat and rape*, which are, for instance, identifiable in Titian’s painting: the artist has highlighted the incident preparatory to the rape, that is, the moment in which Tarquinius threatens to kill Lucretia if she does not give in to him. And threat is the basic theme of the sculpture of Nakian, too. We observed how Nakian turned “the conventional representation of the scene into a violent confrontation of abstract forms constructed from steel plates and pipes. The intimidating figure on the left, topped by a helmet-like shape, threatens the slighter figure on the right, who starts back from the attacker, while she leaps (we can imagine) to the ground from her bed. Nakian’s disjointed shapes starkly express the breakdown of moral and social order represented by the crime of Tarquinius”.

II. *Suicide*, which constitutes the epicenter of some paintings, such as *Lucretia* by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1538), and *Lucretia* by Andrea Casali (1750). In both, and in

---

19 About the tendency of artists to sanitize, so to speak, or aestheticize the dark size of the deed, see Wolfthal 1999. This is one of the topics I developed in the above mentioned submitted paper (see above, n. 1). Reflecting on new ventures in Classical Pedagogy for the teaching of such a difficult topic as rape, I think, and I myself mean to carry it out, that an approach through artistic renditions (from antiquity to our days) might be a good way to engage students in discussion and reflections on the theme.
20 This sculpture is a part of the collection of the *Hirshorn Museum and Sculture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C*. The analysis we conducted is based on Morford-Lenardon 2007 (I above reported *verbatim* the description the authors gave to the sculpture, p. 701).
similar paintings, the woman, semi naked, brings the dagger against her breast. To our eyes, her facial expression is that of despair, loneliness. Here and in other works where it occurs, the nakedness – we verified – may have a specific symbolic meaning: Lucretia’s nakedness suggests, on the one hand, her vulnerability, on the other – symbolically – her purity and truth.

III. Brutus’ revolution, that is, the political outcome: we observed that some artists have preferred to emphasize the political consequences, that is, the revolution carried on by Brutus. One of the most representative paintings of this kind, which we analyzed and compared with the others, is The Oath of Brutus by Gavin Hamilton (early 1760s). In this painting, Lucretia is not longer a solitary figure, nor is she even dominant in the composition. Indeed she is depicted on a side. Evidently, the main role is given to Brutus, who stands centrally in the group, and forcefully seems to indicate to his companions, with a gesture of his arm, the task that now they are called to accomplish: the vengeance.

3. The discussion, this has been the part that has mostly forged the final performance, which I wanted to be organized in the form of the ancient controversia. The discussion has been conducted on the basis of the results of the reading and analysis of both the primary sources, mentioned above, and the secondary literature pertaining to ethical, social, and legal aspects, with, additionally, the appropriate support of what was learned through the comparison, too. Four out of the seven students participating in the project prepared the controversia arguments that mostly pertained to the consequence of the rape from Lucretia’s perspective: the suicide.

3.1. Discussion on terminology
In order to have the students address the problem with the due respect for the ancient worldview (i.e., in line with the so-called cultural relativism), I thought it useful – above all in concomitance with the reading of the ancient sources – to expose them to a linguistic analysis of terms related to the phenomenon, given that language does reflect ways of thinking. And as I myself first verified, we realized that if rape is as topical as ever, the word rape itself is “an obscuring term”, in that it “fails to address the cultural status of the event”

22. We thus had a chance to concretely verify how while there is no problem in agreeing that ethical norms differ according to time and cultures, there are, however, some problems and difficulties in truly relating to other cultures and writing about them since the language we use is, inevitably, time and place bound. This is peculiarly true when we refer to such a critical issue as rape in ancient time. The definition itself of rape, nowadays too, has continued to generate debate, has been called into question, and has often been characterized by imprecision.

We realized how the key, or one of the main keys, in defining rape is that of consent, both for the ancient as well as for the modern way to look at rape.

---

21. As to this painting, we observed and discussed how Lucretia, clinging to his tunic, seems to place her trust in Brutus and to take her left strength from him. It has been observed that, Hamilton meant to capture the moment in which while life in Lucretia is almost over, in Brutus newly aroused leading him in his ‘political’ mission.

We considered the etymology of the term “rape”, and we thus focused on the Latin root *raptus*, which notoriously means “the action of carrying off by force, abduction”\(^{23}\). I thus called the students’ attention on the fact that the term rape, since its origin, certainly implies lack of consent\(^{24}\), but, in its very origin, it does not imply the sexual connotation, i.e., the sexual violence that characterizes the modern sense and use of the word\(^{25}\). To mention one of the most famous of ancient ‘rape/abduction’ cases that we find in Roman civilization, i.e., the abduction/rape of the Sabines, Livy, the main source for this event, refers to it by using – and more than once – the verb *rapere* (I.9.10 ff.), commonly translated “to carry off”\(^{26}\). We then focused on the fact that, not accidentally, with reference to ancient time, the action is often, if not preferably, referred to with a term that is used synonymously, i.e., with abduction, whose Latin root, the verb *abducere*, literally meaning “to carry off, to appropriate by force”\(^{27}\).

The linguistic puzzle centering on rape has then been a starting point for reflection on the legal puzzle we found in the Roman law system\(^{28}\). With reference to this, while analyzing the Latin vocabulary related to rape, since our focus was the case of Lucretia, inevitably we met with another term: *adulterium*. And we found that:

a. *adulterium* was at the beginning often used interchangeably with rape. Indeed, differently from now (we all know they signify far different acts), under Roman law they were essentially viewed as the same and thus punished in the same way: a

\(^{23}\) In turn from *rapere* which means ‘to seize/ to carry off by force’

\(^{24}\) At least starting from a certain point, the person whose consent is at issue seems to be questionable. The common and, I would say, normal expectation is to link the ‘consent-issuer’ with the woman who is victim of rape. But, according to the *Enciclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* (s.v. “raptus”, p. 667) it seems that what was at issue was the consent of the parents. So we read in the mentioned Dictionary, “Raptus. The Abduction of a woman against the will of her parents”.

\(^{25}\) For a more complete analysis of the terminology related to ‘rape’ in Classical Languages I refer to my paper I mentioned above (n. 1). The difficulty of translation is certainly not a new topic, nor is it related only to classical languages. With reference to the words related to rape, the taboo-issue may sometimes make even more complex the translation process and may contribute to overriding the cultural fact which is behind the words. With this respect one can find an interesting survey, focusing on the terminology of rape of classical languages, in Packman 1993. On the terminology, see also Adams 1982. Following the example of Packman, in terms of trying new ventures in teaching rape in Classics classroom, I would think that engaging students in some research-projects on translation of ‘disturbing-challenging terms’ related to the issue might be an effective way to study what is actually behind the language, what was the perception of the Ancients of that specific action. The plethora of texts in both classical cultures, where we may find references to rape and to related topics, would provide the teachers with a great amount of material, and would demand some logistic organization, such as that by literary genre, which would have the additional benefit to let students analyze the specifics of the genre itself, and how the issue under discussion, and its terminology, may depend on or may be closely linked to those specifics.

\(^{26}\) So Livy wrote (I. 9, 11-14): “… the pre-concerted signal was given and the Roman youth dashed in all directions to carry off (ad rapiendas) the maidens who were present. The larger part were carried off (raptae) indiscriminately,… One, conspicuous amongst them all for grace and beauty, is reported to have been carried off (raptam) by a group led by a certain Talassius… The abducted (rapitis) maidens were quite as despondent and indignant…” Interestingly the overall action is then defined ‘inuria’ (I. 9. 15: “An injury had often led to reconciliation and love”).

\(^{27}\) It is also interesting that the verb *abducere* admits a metaphorical meaning of ‘attracting away’, namely “to seduce”, “to charm”. This seems the meaning on which most part of the reception of mythic rape, as heroic rape (something of which to be proud) is based. For the meaning of *abducere* as ‘to seduce and to charm’ see the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v. ‘abducere’ (p. 4).

\(^{28}\) As to the legal component, we basically conduct a quick survey of some of the laws on marriage and adultery of the Augustan period (in particular, the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*). For the related bibliography, see above, n. 14.
married woman who was raped was seen as having committed adultery. It seems that the position of being married was what made the rape be adultery. Starting with the *Lex Julia de adulteriis* adultery itself became a criminal offence.\(^{29}\)

b. consent was not really at issue; the fact that the act had been committed with a person other than her husband was.

Another term we met during our analysis is *stuprum*. Again, we found difficulty in identifying the specific, precise meaning of the term, to what action it referred, considering that *stuprum* has been given the generic meaning of ‘sexual disgrace’, and it was used to refer to any sort of sexual indecency or deviancy including adultery.\(^{30}\) We also found another interesting fact that is evidence of the subtle borders between sexual offenses to women: if *stuprum* was defined by the use of physical violence, where only the threat of violence has been used there would have been (as it might be the case of Lucretia) no way to distinguish adulterer and rapist.

But, what we found striking and wanted to emphasize, also with relevance to modern time issues, is that all of them, rape, *stuprum* and *adulterium*, produced a *stigma* on the women. Indeed, as in modern courts, the problem of accusations of rape/stuprum was proving consent versus non-consent; in other words was to prove the use of force. The woman needed evidentiary proof that the act had been nonconsensual if she wished to pursue charges, and even if she was successful she could still be accused of *stuprum*, or *adulterium*, due to having engaged or been engaged in illegitimate sexual activity As the case of Lucretia shows, the issues of reputation and the further consequences of bringing the situation into light might result in, as it still can do today, reluctance on the part of the victim to officially accuse her assailant.\(^{31}\)

### 3.2 Discussion on ethical components

Students were peculiarly more interested in debating the ethical aspects, looking at the side of women, at the side of Lucretia. What mostly impressed the students – as all of us, I suppose – was the extreme action of Lucretia, i.e., the suicide, and the noble motivation of that action, which tells us a lot about not only the way in which a raped woman was – and would be still now – seen, but – and I wanted to emphasize this during my discussion with the students – the way in which a woman, that has been violated, might feel, a side – i.e., the feeling of the violated woman – that rarely is taken into account in studies, analysis etc., and that Lucretia vividly expressed. For once, we may say, a woman dared to break the silence that usually surrounded – and surrounds – such an event; hers – as I tried to emphasize while discussing of Lucretia - is the crying soul of any violated woman, her thirst for justice is the one of any raped woman.\(^{32}\)

---

\(^{29}\) See Gardner 1986, 127

\(^{30}\) Gardner 1986, 125-126.

\(^{31}\) Gardner 1986, 121.

\(^{32}\) It is striking the case of Lucretia who dared to speak out, above all if we compare it with the myth of Philomela and Procne, where the victim, beside the rape, is subjected to another atrocity: the rapist Tereus cut her tongue out and imprisoned her so that she could tell no one of his crime. Yet, she found a way to speak anyway by weaving a tapestry that ‘pictured’ the event. Lucretia’s denouncement is also remarkable considering how much silence was valued and regarded as a high virtue for women: see Sophocles, *Aiax* 293; Aristoteles, *Politics* 1260a20-32.
“What can be well with a woman when her honor is lost?” (Livy, I. 58\textsuperscript{33}): this is the consideration of Lucretia, in answer to her husband's inquiry whether all things were fine, and her decision to acquit herself of the sin yet not to free herself from the penalty, not to give a bad example to other women. The honor of the women is what Lucretia is standing for, an honor brutally violated and often, still nowadays, not appropriately defended and protected.

Did Lucretia have choice? Could she rebel? Could she claim her honor in other way than choosing death? Why did she commit suicide, considering that - as she herself said – “it is only the body that has been violated, the soul is pure; death shall bear witness to that” (Livy, I. 59)? These have then constituted the most debated compelling questions for the students to discuss. On these questions we thus organized the rhetorical debate in form of controversia – as said above. And the reading of Augustine has been crucial for this part of the project.

4. Conclusion: reflections on the survey’s results, and students’ final remark

Since, as stated above, one of the targets of this project was also to contribute to raising some kind of social awareness within the community, I then decided to elaborate a survey to distribute to the audience (see the survey in Appendix, below) at the end of the public performance. Unfortunately out of 50 persons who came to the event, only 13 filled out the survey, which means that any statistical analysis would not be reliable. However, it has been possible to single out some common trends of thought that tell us a lot about the modern reception of the episode and to a modern audience’s perception of the issue. In this respect I found the following results particularly significant:

1. Those who knew about the episode of Lucrece, before to attend to event, had ideas perfectly in line with what actually was the ancient way of thinking –without even realizing it. Indeed, in answer to the question “What were your thoughts about the case of Lucretia before this performance?” (Survey: question n. 3, section B), most admitted that their thoughts and view were ‘a political’ one: their emphasis – they admitted - was on the outcome for the history of Rome (birth of Republic) by thus overlooking – I would add – the deep implications of the action which led to that outcome, i.e. the victim’s side – which is what Ancients as well tended to do. I find this result interesting from a pedagogical point of view, since I would think that the ‘political’ view of the audience who knew about the episode might be the result of a conventional, common way to present the episode itself in textbook and class, if it is presented\textsuperscript{34}.

2. At the same time, however, despite this almost ‘induced’ disregard for the victim’s perspective of the episode, I found it interesting that in answer to the question, “what you found effective in how the topic of rape has been proposed, considering the

\textsuperscript{33} It is also striking the vivid way in which Livy described how Tarquinlus destroyed the woman’s honor: “and Tarquinlus went off exulting in having successfully attacked her honor” (I. 58), so we are told after the Tarquinlus committed his crime.

\textsuperscript{34} So, for instance, the student Oliver Lemke, in his personal comment on the project, wrote: “Lucretia’s story is a window into a mindset which is alien to us not only because it is ancient, but also because it is rarely included in the history books”.


occurrence of rape on modern college campuses?” (Survey: question n. 8, Section B), all of them emphasized:

i. The parallel between ancient and modern time for the focus on the ‘devastating’ effect on the woman suffering a rape.

ii. The connection between present and past for the ‘stigma’ issue: the victim is still blamed! How always, still nowadays, the dignity and virtue of the rape victims are questioned.

iii. The questioning of innocence and chastity

iv. The fact that is a timeless subject, Lucretia’s action has been inspirational; it helps raise awareness

I can say that the community has appreciated the event and it has had some effects. Equally important are the effects that the project has had on the students, and in particular on those who actively participated in this project. The following final remark that the students elaborated by themselves, without any intervention on my behalf, and delivered to the audience to conclude the event, is a good evidence of how important it is to address such a topic in our classes:

“Before we took the Roman Civilization class from professor Lauriola, by whom this project and presentation were designed, the only things we knew about ancient Rome were the highlights of Julius Caesar’s murder, the grittier details about Nero and Caligula, and the names of dwellings as described by the city-building computer game, Caesar 3. To put it mildly, we did not know much, but that’s what classes are for: to extend your knowledge. And it goes without saying that we have learned a lot from this project and the class in general.

It’s a compelling topic: the story of Lucretia, which as you by now know, has had a great impact on modern civilization. The art, the literature, the history books and blah, blah, blah. And why? Because it touches on all the dark and familiar themes of human history: rape, suicide, tyranny, oppression, lust, love, sorrow, and revolution. The act of one man and one woman changed the course of Roman history, and indeed, of the world history. What if it didn’t happen to Lucretia? What if Brutus wasn’t there?

But…the point we want to leave you, the point we also wanted to appropriate, is not just and simply that of historical significance, it is of human significance. 2500 years after the fact, Lucretia tells us her story of suffering and loss, and we are moved not because we put ourselves into her shoes or reshape our minds to fit into the mold of Roman laws and social mores. We are moved because we are Brutus in the story, sitting in the parlor listening to Lucretia, thinking “this is wrong, this is unjust”. And when he rallies the people together in the forum, demanding that the criminal be punished, we cheer him on because that is what we want to do for Lucretia…for any woman, violated, in ancient as in modern time, that has been not heard…The end of the monarchy, the establishment of a republican state, the political and social consequences of such a change, these things are matters of history, certainly important… But… the story of Lucretia is one of personal loss, remorse, and ultimately redemption… is a story of everlasting, human significance”.

Acknowledgment
I would like to thank the students who with enthusiasm participate in this project: Erin N. Green, Elizabeth A. Last, Josi A. Lemke, Oliver S. Lemke, Allyson R. Neterer, Hector E. Palacios, Joshua D. Wetzel.
Appendix: The Survey

Teaching Rape and Rape texts: The Case of Lucretia. A project

(Saturday, April 25 – 2009, University of Idaho)

Part A: Instructions: Please take some time and mark the appropriate category in which you identify or fill in the blank as requested.

1. ___ Undergraduate student
   ___ Graduate student
   ___ Faculty
   ___ Staff
   ___ Community member

2. ___ Female
   ___ Male

3. Your age in years: __________

4. Ethnicity: ___ White
   ___ Black
   ___ American Indian
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ Asian American
   ___ Other

5. How do you identify in terms of faith/religion? ____________________________

PART B: Please respond to the following questions concerning the performance you just observed.

1. What motivated you to come to today’s performance?
   ___ class assignment
   ___ interest in the subject
   ___ other (if possible, please specify) ____________________________

3. If you answered yes to the question above, what were your thoughts about the case of Lucretia before this performance?

4. How did the performance shape your thoughts about rape in ancient times?

5. In the rhetorical debate within the performance, which argument do you think was the most effective? Why?

6. How helpful was the performance in helping you understand the complex issues of rape in ancient times?

7. Did this exposition and debate arouse your curiosity to learn more about [check all that apply]
   ------ classical literature and culture
   ------ the history of sexuality
   ---- attitudes toward violence to women thought time
8. Please explain what you found effective in how the topic of rape has been proposed, considering the occurrence of rape on modern college campuses?

9. What do you suggest I could have done to make the analysis of the topic, the reflections on it and its presentation more effective?

Your anonymous responses to these questions will help me assess the value of such performances. The assessment will be reported to other colleagues at a professional conference concerning the teaching of sensitive societal topics. Please mark the appropriate category to give permission to use your responses for such assessment purposes.

1. Yes, I give my permission

2. No, I would not like to give my permission

__________________________ (date)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


