Rape in Livy

I. Rape of Rhea Silvia

*Vi compressa Vestalis cum geminum partum edidisset, seu ita rata seu quia deus auctor culpae honestior, Martem incertae stirpis patrem nuncupat."

“When the Vestal, subdued by force, had given birth to the twin offspring, whether she actually thought so or since a god was a more honorable source of the fault, she claims Mars as the father of the uncertain progeny.”

1.4.2

A. Element of force present (*vi*).
B. Rhea is a passive recipient (*compressa*) – the perpetrator of the action is implied
C. Intimation that Rhea still was at fault for letting the rape happen (*culpaes*).
D. Violation of the sacred (since she was a Vestal, and her virginity was particularly sacred).
E. What comes of this? Rome’s foundation

II. Rape of the Sabine Women

*Ubi spectaculi tempus venit deditaeque eo mentes cum oculis erant, tum ex composito orta vis signoque dato iuventus Romana ad rapiendas virgines discurrit. Magna pars forte in quem quaeque inciderat raptae."

“When the time for the spectacle came, and their minds along with their eyes had been devoted to it, then, as agreed, force arose and with the signal given, the Roman youth ran around in order to abduct maidens. A great part were abducted by the one to whom each had fallen.”

1.9.10-12.

A. Again, Livy includes this element of force (*vis*) and the language that surrounds the force is very passive.
B. There is also an element of self-blame which appears later in the narrative: *nos causa belli, nos volnerum ac caedium viris ac parentibus sumus* (1.13.3)
C. Violation of the sacred
   a. It happened at a religious festival
   b. Violation of rite of hospitality: *violatum hospitii foedum* (1.13.1)
D. What comes of this? The certainty of Rome’s future and an alliance with the Sabines.
III. Rape of Lucretia

*Ibi Sex. Tarquinium mala *libido* Lucretiae per *vim* stupenda *capit*...

“Then an evil desire of ravishing Lucretia by force seizes Sextus Tarquin...”

1.57.10.

A. *libido* recalls preface: *per luxum atque libidinem* pereundi *perdendique omnia* (pref.13)

B. *Vis* appears again

... *stricto gladio* ad dormientem *Lucretiam* venit sinistraque manu *mulieris* *pectore oppresso* “*Tace,* *Lucretia,*” *inquit;* “*Sex.* *Tarquinius* sum; *ferrum in manu est; moriere,* *si emiseris vocem.*”

“... With sword drawn, he approaches Lucretia as she is sleeping and having pressed the woman’s breast with his left hand, says, “Be silent, Lucretia. I am Sextus Tarquinius; there is a sword in my hand. You will die if you let out a word.”

1.58.2-4

A. Violation of hospitality (Tarquinius was a guest in the home) and a violation of a woman who epitomizes womanly virtue for the Romans.

B. Here, were we see graphic *vis* (*stricto gladio,* *oppresso* – which recalls *compressa* in Rhea’s rape)

   a. The rapist’s actions are very clear- as opposed to the vague language of the others.

   b. The threat he makes is very explicate.

   ‘*quid enim salui est mulieri amissa pudicitia?* *Vestigia viri alieni,* *Collatine,* *in lecto sunt tuo; ceterum corpus est tantum violatum,* *animus insons*...’

   “‘For what safety does a woman have after her purity has been lost? Collatinus, the traces of another man are in your bed. But the only the body has been violated, the mind is innocent.”

1.58.7-8

A. *Pudicitia* – essential to a Roman woman of virtue.

B. Unlike the other women, Lucretia initially declares she is blameless.
consolantur aegram animi avertendo noxam ab coacta in auctorem delicti: mentem peccare, non corpus, et unde consilium afuerit culpam abesse.

“They console her, sick at heart, by turning away the guilt from the one forced onto the perpetrator of the crime: the mind makes the mistake, not the body, and that the blame is lacking where the intention was lacking.”

1.58.9-10

‘Ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet.’

“‘Even if I absolve myself of the fault, I do not free myself of the punishment; and no other woman thereafter will live shamelessly by the example of Lucretia.’”

1.58.10-11

A. However, after she finishes her speech, it appears as though her feelings may not have matched her words.

B. Livy here shows a distinction between fault (culpa/noxa/peccatum) and sense of shame (pudicitia) -- preserving pudicitia is more important than living, though innocent.

C. What comes of this rape? The foundation of the Roman Republic

- Sextus Tarquin’s libido brings down his regime

- Lucretia’s pudicitia inspires Lucius Junius Brutus

Bibliography


