The End of Marriage: Sexual Violence After Clélie

MEGAN KRUER
(CORNELL UNIVERSITY)

Arreste, arreste-toy Lucrece,
Ta main commet un crime,
en le pensant punir:
Quel dessein t’oblige à finir?
Est-ce le remors qui te presse?
Le crime est en la volonté,
Et la tienne respond de ta pudicité.

Femmes illustres, 207

The rape of Lucretia is one of the most contested rape narratives in the Western tradition. According to the historical accounts, Lucretia commits suicide after she is forced to “yield” to rape by Sextus, the son of the tyrant Tarquin Superbus in 508 BCE. Outrage following her rape and suicide sparks the revolution that overthrows the monarchy and establishes the Roman Republic. However, after the smoke has cleared, the rape and suicide are reinscribed in a complex question of intention: as Madeleine de Scudéry asks Lucrèce in her Femmes illustres, “Quel dessein t’oblige à finir?” (207). Scudéry’s open-ended question frequently becomes more polarized, as it does in my epigraph. Did Lucretia commit suicide to prove her innocence during the rape or to atone for her complicity (remors) in it? Was Lucretia an innocent victim of Sextus’s coercion or a participant who willingly submitted to an act of adultery? For Philippe Bousquet, it is this ambivalence that leads seventeenth-century writers to return to her story again and again. When it comes to seventeenth-century France, Bousquet insists, “Un constant préliminaire s'impose: le XVIIe siècle est gêné par la figure de Lucrèce” (185).

Indeed, around fifty seventeenth-century French texts deal in some explicit way with Lucretia’s story (Bousquet 183). Four tragedies take the story as their principle subject: Urbain Chevreau’s La Lucrese romaine, Pierre Du Ryer’s Lucrèce, Nicolas Pradon’s unprinted Tarquin, and the anonymous

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manuscript *Tragédie sur la mort de Lucrexe*. Scudéry’s *Clélie, histoire romaine*, written between 1654 and 1660, makes the list as the only work of prose fiction to take the Lucretia story as its main subject. Bousquet argues that each of these seventeenth-century rewritings is an attempt to deal with the ambivalent cause of Lucretia’s suicide by accounting for its motivation. The rewritings “tendrait en effet toujours à rendre compréhensible le crime ou le suicide” by instilling it with a psychological rationale through its inscription in a diachronic fiction (184). Literature is the mode in which Lucretia’s ambivalent act of suicide comes to be defined as definitively deplorable or admirable.¹

However, I will argue that Madeleine de Scudéry’s *Clélie* invites us to consider Lucretia’s story *through* its ambivalence—her version capitalizing on the very features of the story that other rewritings seek to silence and comprehend. Briefly, *Clélie* entangles the decisively fictional love story of Clélie and Aronce with both the infamous history of the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquin and the gallant history of Cloelia’s escape from hostage.²

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¹ Indeed, we find in the seventeenth century rewritings of the story of Lucretia a frequent attempt to portray her as either the virtuous victim or the adulterer. Bousquet focuses on securing Lucrèce’s innocence. For the opposite aim, see Alexandre Hardy’s *Lucrece ou l’adultresse punie*, or Fontenelle’s *Dialogues des morts*.

² Cloelia’s and Lucretia’s stories come to us from four main sources: Books I and II of Livy’s *The Early History of Rome*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s *Roman Antiquities*, Pliny’s *Natural History*, and Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*. Scudéry, though a reader of neither ancient Greek nor Latin, would have had access to Du Ryer’s 1653 translation of Livy, *Les Décades historiques*, and Amyot’s 1572 translation Plutarch, *Vie de Publicola* (Godenne 246). Because we find direct traces of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Pliny’s versions of the story of the rape of Lucretia in *Clélie*, René Godenne and Robert Nunn suggest that Scudéry employed the service and knowledge of her friends, especially Paul Pellisson in order to access the untranslated sources (Godenne 247). However, if we follow Joan DeJean’s caution in *Tender Geographies* against assuming a single author for the texts attributed to Scudéry and consider *Clélie* to be the product of collaborative salon writing resulting from *le samedi*, then we might be less concerned with establishing which exact texts Scudéry *herself* could or could not have read (DeJean 120).

I have briefly explained the story of the rape of Lucretia above. Cloelia’s story is told in Livy’s *The Early History of Rome*, Book II. After the Roman Republic is formed, the Etruscans launch a siege against the city. A peace treaty is forged demanding Rome send Cloelia and a group of other hostage men and women to Clusium in order to end the siege. For no reason identified in the classical sources of the story, Cloelia initiates a flight to Rome, which violates the peace treaty. The women arrive safely in Rome but are immediately sent back to Clusium by the Romans at Porsena’s request. When Cloelia returns to Porsena’s camp, the King is so impressed by her gallantry that he frees her and a group of hostages of her
Following the adventures of young Roman nobles as they battle tyranny and their passions (and the tyranny of their passions), *Clélie* nests these two historical events within an arch-marriage plot that opens and closes the text. Frequently treated as a *roman à clef* and a relic of seventeenth-century préciosité for these additions, *Clélie*’s radical rewriting of the Lucretia story and its potential import to modern understandings of rape remains to be given serious scholarly attention.3 While a marriage promised and fulfilled bookends the text, the intervening stories and conversation cannot—and must not—simply be sublated into this arch-marriage plot.

This is not to say that criticism has simply neglected to attend to the subject of sexual violence in the *roman*. In fact, many scholars have considered Lucretia’s rape in *Clélie*.4 What is missing, however, is an interrogation of the ways that sexual violence functions on a broader tropological and narratological level in *Clélie*. In this paper, I will only begin to touch on the ways that *Clélie* does not simply represent a single rape (Lucretia’s), but more subversively puts forth a literary thinking of rape, one in which rape is not contained in a single moment or event. In *Clélie* the event of rape is absent—or, divided and spread throughout the rest of the narrative. In this way, rape is nowhere and everywhere; it is figured as violent insofar as the “event” is irrecoverably or originally missed. This literary thinking of rape would then need to be brought to bear on contemporary reflections on sexual violence, which routinely think of rape as primarily or exclusively a violence based in a discrete event. While I do

3 I would argue that *Clélie* does not explore violence in spite its function as a *roman à clef* and product of a précieuse, but precisely by way of these commitments. These classical classifications contribute to the particular writing of violence that comes to pass in *Clélie*. See Joan DeJean’s *Tender Geographies*, especially her chapter devoted to the salon writing associated with Scudéry, and Nicole Aronson’s *Madeleine de Scudéry, ou le voyage du pays de Tendre*.

4 Among others, see Robert Nunn “The Rape of Lucretia in Madeleine De Scudéry’s *Clèle*,” Sharon Diane Nell’s “Salon Ethics: Lucretia in the Land of Até,” and James Gaines’ “Lucrèce, Clélie, and Junie: Burdens of Female Exemplarity.”
not mean to imply that real rapes do not happen and occur, we must ask after reading *Clélie* if by effacing the moment of rape, Scudéry does not avoid or suppress the subject of sexual violence from her *roman*, but instead arrives at a better or more accurate figuration of rape’s specific and unwieldy violence.

**Love is Binding**

Although Scudéry takes the rape of Lucretia and the expulsion of the Tarquin’s as the historical setting of her *roman*, a marriage arch structures her text. The completed marriage ‘ends’ this seemingly endless text, bringing to a close the abductions, murders, wars, and rapes intervening between its promise in book one, part one, and fulfillment in book five, part three. The marriage restores order; and through it, love and virtue prevail over violent passions and tyranny. As Anne Duggan points out in “*Clélie, histoire romaine* or Writing the Nation” this inclusion of the marriage (or love story) in *Clélie* “functions as the overarching cause of events, creating a logical connection between the accidental, disordered, and sometimes illogical elements constitutive of ‘true’ or description history” (73). The love story that structures the *histoire romaine* about Lucrece and Clélie supplants the illogical and contingent sexual violence that is central to the Roman histories of Lucretia and Cloelia.

However, love is not only an ordering principal and cause of narrative action in *Clélie*; it is also part of the narrative. Love is the subject of conversation and reflection among the characters. The ordering principal of the historical *roman* becomes part of the very story it orders. Pivotal, during these self-reflexive conversations about love, the progression of the narrative is interrupted. Little happens; conversation supplants action. As we will see, it is through these pauses of narrative progression that we glimpse *Clélie*’s absenting, spreading, and dividing of sexual violence.5

In what follows, I will explore two conversations in which discussions about love interrupt narrative progression through their elliptical figurations of sexual violence. Surprisingly, neither moment will be Scudéry’s rewriting of the rape of Lucrèce by Sextus. In fact, as I alluded above, *Clélie*

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5 In an interview with Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman discusses his notion of “pausal reading,” which Caruth describes as “a paradoxical link between something that interrupts and something that continues” (222). Although I encountered this interview after writing this article, Hartman’s “pausal reading” with “overspecified ends and an absent middle” certainly speaks to my reading of rape in Scudéry’s *Clélie*.
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does not figure the rape itself. Rather, the text treats the subject of sexual violence almost everywhere else, but in ways that are not immediately apparent. The first conversation I will examine serves as the narrative origin of the famous *carte de Tendre*. The second serves as the narrative grounds of one of Scudéry's more scandalous deviations from Livy's text: the addition of a love story between Brutus and Lucrèce. Both of these discussions partake in an ongoing, though discontinuous and implicit, debate in *Clélie* regarding just how Clélie and Lucrèce ought to manage the sexual violences to which they find themselves again and again vulnerable.

**Off the Carte: The Inadvertent Inclusion of Sexual Violence in the *Pays de Tendre***

The *carte de Tendre*, which has surpassed the text for which it was created in renown, finds its narrative source in a discussion among Clélie and her companions about the affinity between romantic love and a virtuous sentiment known as tenderness. *La tendresse*, Clélie explains is “[u]ne certaine sensibilité de cœur” found “presque jamais souverainement, qu’en

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7 By this, I am not suggesting that women are biologically or physically more vulnerable to sexual assault but rather that in *Clélie* the perpetual return of the threat of sexual violence marks a pervasiveness and endlessness that is a peculiar aspect of Scudéry's treatment of it.

8 For an image of the map, see *Clélie* vol. 1, p 179. In “L'Oiconomie des plaisirs: La praxéologie de l'amour galant à propos de la *Clélie*,” Jörn Steigerwald also examines the narrative sources of the famous *carte de Tendre*, but with an emphasis on the ways that it lays out an ethic of gallantry. Although he also cites several of the passages that I will cite below, his reading of this *Conversation sur la naissance de l'amour* makes no mention of violence. Steigerwald emphases the positive and prescriptive gallant ethic offered by this conversation and the map at the expense of a reflection on the violence that narratively provokes it.
des personnes qui ont l’âme noble, les inclinations vertueuses, et l’esprit bien tourné” (Scudéry 1: 118). This virtuous disposition “fait que, lorsqu’elles ont de l’amitié, elles l’ont sincère, et ardente, et qu’elles sentent si vivement toutes les douleurs, et toutes les joies de ceux qu’elles aiment, qu’elles ne sentent pas tant les leurs propres” (1: 118). Tenderness is marked by a sincerity that demands an abdication of the self for the friend, by a sympathy for and feeling with the friend’s pain and joy that eclipses one’s own feelings. For Clélie, these virtuous inclinations spring from friendship and not love: she “n’a jamais entendu dire une tendre amou

In the context of the discussion this definition aims to justify Clélie’s exclusion of love from tenderness (and her determination never to marry). However, Aronce hears in it the necessity of a tendre amour. Were there not tender love, he argues, love would not only be in excess of reason, but would turn utterly violent:

[J]e dirai hardiment que la tendresse est une qualité encore plus nécessaire à l’amour, que à l’amitié. Car il est certain que cette affection, qui naît presque toujours avec l’aide de la raison, […] pourrait quelquefois faire agir ceux dans le cœur de qui elle est, comme s’ils avaient de la tendresse, quoique naturellement ils n’en eussent pas; mais pour l’amour, Madame, qui est presque toujours incompatible avec la raison, et qui du moins ne lui peut jamais être assujettie, elle a absolument besoin de tendresse pour l’empêcher d’être brutale, grossière, et inconsidérée. (1: 119, my emphasis)

Whereas friendship’s affinities with reason can produce the illusion of tenderness in a heart from which it is lacking, love being in excess of reason has no limit except in tenderness. Love without tenderness leaves only “des désirs impétueux, qui n’ont ni bornes, ni retenue” (1: 119). The lover “qui porte une semblable passion dans l’âme, ne considère que sa propre satisfaction, sans considérer la gloire de la personne aimée” (1: 119). Reiterating Clélie’s own explanation, Aronce explains that “un des principaux effets de la véritable tendresse, c’est qu’elle fait qu’on pense beaucoup plus à l’intérêt de ce qu’on aime, qu’au sien propre” (1: 119). Love’s violence can only be checked by tenderness, which transforms the impetuous and violent desires of the lover by making one think more of the beloved than oneself. Set in relief by an unchecked love that seeks to seize and consume the love object with immediacy, tenderness protects love by delaying it, or perhaps more radically, by eradicating possession of the beloved as love’s telos.

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9 Steigerwald rightly notes that Clélie does not, in fact, define tendresse, but instead explains its effects.
Coming from the lips of a suitor, Aronce’s evocation of the affinities between love and sexual violence could easily be dismissed as his attempt, perhaps a perverse one, to win Clélie’s heart. The temptation to set aside his argument is further bolstered by Clélie’s residual resistance towards tender love and her refusal to acknowledge Aronce’s warning of love’s potentially violent excess in the carte de Tendre. However, upon further interrogation, the map betrays a disavowed anxiety over the violence of love. The map presents three ways to arrive at each of the three towns of Tendre: Inclination (the most direct route), Esteem, and Reconnaissance. Hopefuls who choose to deviate from these three routes risk ending up in the towns of Orgueil or Oubli or at the Lac d’indifférence. Impetuous ‘friends’ who try to go beyond the tender towns to the Terres inconnues must first cross the treacherous Mer dangereuse. By naming and excluding the Terres inconnues as such, the narrator explains, Clélie “a trouvé lieu de faire une agréable morale d’amitié, par un simple jeu de son esprit, et de faire entendre d’une manière assez particulière, qu’elle n’a point eu d’amour, et qu’elle n’en peut avoir” (1: 184-185).

Despite Clélie’s and the narrator’s claims cited above, the topographical rendering attests to a contamination between amitié (Tendre) and amour (Terres inconnues) even as it establishes a physical distance between them. The Fleuve d’inclination, the most direct route to the towns of Tender, empties into the Mer dangereuse, into the dangerous excess and violence of the sea that divides and links Tendre and the Terres inconnues. At the northernmost point on the map, the Terres inconnues serve as the map’s culminating point, the final destination that voyagers seek. That all the features of the map of Tenderness together take the form of the female reproductive anatomy only further undermines Clélie’s refusal to acknowledge the contamination between friendship and sexual desire. Behind the facade of the ideal program for how men and women ought to conduct themselves in matters of the heart, the map conceals the pervasiveness of the threat of sexual violence. In fact, it is more than a threat. Violent sexual desire is not restricted to the Terres inconnues, but saturates the entire map from its origins in the Conversation sur la naissance de l’amour.10 Rather than

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10 In Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies, Anne Duggan explains that “[O]rgeuil connoted in the seventeenth century both amour proper and a sense of military aggressiveness. It should come as no surprise, then, that the name of the most demonized character in the novel, Tarquin Superbe, can be translated as ‘Tarquin l’Orgeuilieux’ ['Tarquin the Proud']” (71). Significantly, Scudéry’s Tarquin will attempt to rape Clélie after she is forgotten by Sextus in favor of Lucrèce. In utilizing Orgeuil as one of her town names, Scudéry places the very French adjective that would translate Tarquin’s latin name, Tarquin Superbus, not only on
acknowledge and deal with this uncontainable threat, Clélie takes cover under ignorance, claiming neither to have nor know love.

Riddles... and Rape

A companion scene to the discussion of tenderness features a conversation among Lucrèce and her companions that continues the contemplation of love and sexual violence by again interrupting the narrative progress of Clélie. In its reprisal, this conversation challenges the strategy laid forth by the conversation on tenderness and the map, in which one avoids becoming the victim to another’s violent sexual desire through ignorance or exclusion of love and the regulation of the acceptable directions and distances the lover might go. In so doing, this second conversation opens the narrative, and it’s Lucrèce, to the very ambivalence that most other rewritings of the story seek to settle.

Lucrèce and her troupe are in the midst of a debate over a question quite similar to that of Clélie and her companions. However, in this conversation the stakes are made explicit. In lieu of Clélie’s “manière assez particulière” of relating her virtuous ignorance, Lucrèce and her troupe take up the question head on: does a woman’s virtue consist in having an unaffected heart until her sanctioned marriage or in resisting temptation in the face of unsanctioned love? The conversation begins with the Prince de Pometie’s assertion that “la véritable vertu d’une femme ne consistait pas à ne pouvoir avoir le cœur touché, et qu’au contraire une dame ne pouvait jamais être tout à fait assurée d’elle-même si elle n’avait eu une violente affection dans l’âme” (2: 130). The true test of virtue, the Prince de Pometie insists, is not resistance to what one has not felt or cannot feel, but resistance to what one feels acutely, even violently. Not only do these lines critique Clélie’s exclusion of sexual desire from the land of Tender, but they also offer an intratextual argument for Scudéry’s rebellious addition of the love story between Lucrèce and Brutus introduced narratively by this discussion.11

the map, but within the territory of l’Amitié. She thereby demonstrates the ways that violent sexual desire cannot be excluded from friendship, as Clélie claims it to be. Although, as Duggan points out, the town of Orgeuil is at the farthest remove from Tendre as possible—further even from Tendre than the Terres inconnues—it nonetheless makes up part of the carte de Tendre.

11 This addition is particularly surprising since the way that most other rewritings of the story of Lucretia secure her status as innocent victim is by raising her the level of a passionless goddess. For an example of this tendency, see Pierre Du Ryer’s 1638 Lucrece.
Provocatively, the Prince’s argument (and Scudéry’s rewriting of Lucretia’s story) goes against one of the most prevalent means by which writers have secured Lucretia’s innocence. By giving Lucrèce a lover—i.e., sexual desire—Scudéry explicitly opens her Lucrèce to the very ambivalence that other authors seek to overcome in rewriting Lucretia’s story. The group’s conversation explicitly acknowledges this risk. Valérie gives voice to the vulnerability to which desire opens women:

Je pense pourtant, Seigneur, répliqua modestement Valérie en souriant, qu’il est bon de ne songer pas toujours à donner cette marque de vertu, de peur qu’en commençant d’aimer innocemment, on ne vînt enfin malgré soi à aimer quelqu’un plus que sa gloire. (2: 131)

Despite oneself, Valérie warns, one might love the lover more than one’s own glory, one’s chastity. It is telling that Valérie opposes the Prince’s position not simply because she thinks there is greater virtue in rejecting love (the position Hermilie takes: “En mon particulier, […] je pense qu’il est encore plus glorieux de résister à l’amour, que d’en avoir, quelque innocente qu’elle soit”), but “de peur que,” for fear that, what begins innocently might be uncontainable (2: 131).

Lucrèce, on the other hand, is seduced immediately by the Prince de Pometie’s proposal of a virtuous love, of a virtue that requires love. But when she is asked in turn to give her thoughts on the role of love in feminine virtue, she demurs—like Clélie does through the strategic naming of the Terres inconnues—insisting that her ignorance on the subject prohibits her from contributing. When her companions finally convince her that she can nonetheless have an opinion on the question, she proffers it, like Clélie, in writing. As Lucrèce looks for a tablet on which to write, she encounters instead her hidden admirer, Brutus, who has been listening in on the conversation. Brutus offers her a tablet and joins the group as Lucrèce writes the following words: “Toujours. l’on. si. mais. aimait. d’éternelles. hélas. amours. d’aimer. doux. il. point. serait. n’est. qu’il.” (2: 132).

Assuming that what she has given is void of meaning, her company accuses her of a malicious ruse, to which she replies,

Je sais bien […] qu’il n’appartient qu’aux Dieux de parler obscurément: mais après tout puis qu’une fantaisie de modestie m’a obligée de ne dire pas mon avis clairement sur une chose dont je ne saurais pas parler trop à propos, il faut que vous expliquiez mes paroles, ou que vous ne m’entendiez pas. (2: 132-133)

As soon as Brutus sees Lucrèce’s riddle, he decodes it as two jumbled lines from the verse of Phocilides which read: “Qu’il serait doux d’aimer si l’on aimait toujours./ Mais hélas il n’est point d’éternelles amours” (2: 135). Her
explanation of the use of a riddle reveals her to be not ignorant of all things amorous like Clélie but doubtful of their existence in reality. Her fantasy of modesty—not a true ignorance—is based in a familiarity with love, particularly with its limits and failures.

The riddle is, like Clélie’s map, self-undermining. Brutus underscores the ambivalence of Lucrèce’s position when he responds to her riddle in kind. He writes two more lines of the poem, also scrambled and divided by periods, below hers on the tablet: “Moi. nos. verrez. vous. de. permettez. d’éternelles. jours. qu’on. peut. merveille. amours. d’aimer. voir.” (2: 135). In Brutus’s riddle response, Valérie, Collatine, Hermilie, and the Prince de Pometie again fail to see any meaning. Only Lucrèce decodes in Brutus’s reply his intelligence and promise of tender love: “Permettez-moi d’aimer, merveille de nos jours,/ Vous verrez qu’on peut voir d’éternelles amours” (2 : 136). Brutus’s message does more than promise Lucrèce the eternal love she seeks to deny; the two jumbled lines are in fact lines from the very same poem by Phocilides quoted by Lucrèce. In this way, Brutus’s response calls attention to the fact that the poem Lucrèce uses to argue against the possibility of eternal love contains both her position and its opposite.

While it might seem that Brutus merely offers Lucrèce positive proof of the existence of tender love and her own unconscious belief in it, his repetition of her scrambling and use of periods to produce the riddle from the poem calls attention to her insertion of something into the lines. Lucrèce and Brutus do not merely cite the poem: they rearrange it and cut it up with periods. Just as the conversations on love divide and delay the narrative from arriving at its happy conclusion in love (marriage), the periods divide and delay syntactical meaning, preventing the reader from comprehending the words as anything more than a string of meaningless signifiers. Only once the periods are erased and the words put back in a syntactically meaningful order can the reader leave the ignorant company of Valérie, Collatine, Hermilie, and the Prince de Pometie, and join Lucrèce and Brutus in their understanding. But in doing so, the reader risks, with Lucrèce and Brutus, forgetting the periods, which, taken in the larger narrative context of Clélie, prefigure the penetrative (rape) and cutting (suicide) acts that will soon be inflicted on and by Lucrèce. Once withdrawn from the poem, the periods become a string of ellipses. In this text that figures the rape only as an absence, these ellipses serve as the perfect mark of the sexual violence. Like the map, the ellipses conceal as they reveal the dividing and spreading of sexual violence throughout Clélie.12

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12 The ellipsis has, in fact, been traced by literary scholars on sexual violence as a sign that frequently (and enigmatically) marks the omission of rape in literature.
We have seen two scenes in which figurations of rape interrupt the progress of the *roman* from which rape is conspicuously absent. Sexual violence “emerges” in these conversations as an absent but determining anxiety over the potentially violent side of sexual desire, which both conversations seek to contain and erase through discourses on love. The map and the riddle each figure rape not as a temporally and spatially located event, but as a violent and uncontainable threat that has both never and already happened. Both the map and the riddle seek to conceal the pervasiveness of sexual violence that they bring to light. And yet, the narrative progress that these conversations serve both to precipitate and to defer is Lucrèce’s rape by Sextus, which is absent from the narrative to the extent that it is never represented in *Clélie*. Like the figurations of rape in the map and riddle, the rape of Lucrèce will only happen as a missed event.

What, then, are readers to make of the fact that despite its preoccupation with what I have argued is an absent, divided, and spread sexual violence, *Clélie* ends with the “end” to sexual violence, with marriage. In a historical period in which marital rape is impossible, insofar as—legally speaking—rape is the theft of property and a husband cannot steal his own property, is it a stretch to think that rather than marking a shift away from the sexual violence, the concluding marriage might also be read in light of it?\(^{13}\) In other words, does the marriage between Aronce and Clélie end sexual violence, or does it further spread sexual violence after *Clélie*? Although marriage seems to put an end to sexual violence according to laws of the period and its coincidence with the literal end of the text, it might rather be read as another example of its absent figuration in *Clélie*.\(^{14}\)

An analysis of the structural similarities between the story of the rape of Lucretia by Sextus in Livy and Scudéry’s narrative of Lucrèce’s forced marriage to Collatin would, for example, demonstrate the ways that

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\(^{13}\) Not only is rape a crime against a father or husband, rather than the victim, but in the seventeenth century, “French law made no distinction between a woman’s willing elopement and her violent rape” (Orenstein 150). For more on rape law in seventeenth-century France see George Vigarello *L’Histoire du viol* and Catherine Orenstein *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*.

\(^{14}\) In fact, marriage between the rapist and the victim is a common way that rape was rectified in the seventeenth century. See Vigarello, *L’Histoire du viol*. 

Famously, Heinrich von Kleist employs an ellipsis to mark the absence of the rape scene in *Die Marquise von O*. For a discussion of the ellipsis in Kleist, see Susan Winner’s “Marquise’s ‘O’ and the Mad Dash of Narrative” in Higgins and Silver’s *Rape and Representation*. See also Gunn and Thomson’s edited volume, *Feminism, Literature, and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation*, for a discussion of the ellipsis and rape in other rape narratives.
Marriage is not an end to sexual violence in *Clélie*, but more often, a sanctioned form of it.¹⁵

The possibility of this reading, I would argue, points to some of the advantages of considering sexual violence not only legally but also literarily, particularly when dealing with texts from the early modern period. As we saw in my opening discussion about the debates concerning Lucretia’s intention in her rape and suicide, many literary texts do join in the juridical impulse to determine guilt or innocence, in pursuing, that is, answers to legal, moral, or ethical questions raised by Lucretia’s rape. Scudéry, on the other hand, gives us to think a literary conception of sexual violence that not only does not seek to determine guilt or innocence or to answer unanswerable questions, but one that also demonstrates how an overemphasis on the question of a victim’s intention in an event fails to consider the extent of rape’s nefarious violence, as well as the potential violence of such juridical determinations.

Works Cited


¹⁵ In “Salon Ethics: Lucretia in the Land of Até,” Sharon Dell Nell argues that the marriage of Luçrèce to Collatin marks the character’s “first death” in *Clélie*.


____. *Les Femmes illustres, ou les harangues héroïques.* Lyon: F. Comba, 1661.
