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ELIZABETHAN FREESTONE'S STAGE PERFORMANCE OF THE RAPE OF *LUCRECE*: LUCRECE'S SELF-REPRESENTATION AS VICTIM IN THE POWER PLAY OF MEN[1]

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ABSTRACT: *The response to the story of rape in Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece has traditionally focused mainly on the literary representation of sexual violence or its political consequences. This paper uses Elizabeth Freestone's adaptation of The Rape of Lucrece, staged at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2012, to explore the tensions between the representation of rape from a female perspective and the dominant social, moral, and sexual discourses around rape that have shaped the reception of the poem.[3] This paper argues that Freestone's adaptation, a mixture of narration and singing performed by Camille O'Sullivan, dramatizes sexual violence by transforming the physical experience of rape into narrative storytelling, which allows a more powerful and immediate way of witnessing the act of violence. While Freestone's adaptation emphasizes a woman's subjective experience, it also makes the audience feel a sense of shame for participating in a voyeuristic activity. More importantly, however, it goes beyond the traditional portrayal of male brutality and female innocence by having O'Sullivan perform the roles of both Tarquin and Lucrece. This adaptation allows us to see how rhetorical and physical sexual violence against women was embedded in the cultural apparatus of the objectification of women by men in early modern England; it also urges us to reflect on the existence of such violence in modern times, which is often concealed and more complex than in the past.*

KEYWORDS: the rape of Lucrece, sexual violence, rape, objectification of women, Camille O'sullivan, doubling

INTRODUCTION

> *It is true that the rapist, however impoverished or abusive his background, must be held accountable for his crime. But in this situation, both rapist and the rape victim may be outsiders, in various ways. Just as the rapist's guilt may be better understood in a larger social, political, and historical context, so too the law—as constructed and interpreted by men—has for historical and political reasons shown far too much sympathy and even forgiveness for the rapist* (Bandes 1996: 410-411).

On May 22, 2013, a senior male cadet allegedly sexually assaulted a junior female ca

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[3] For this study, *RAPE OF LUCRECE* (filmed 20 March 2011) directed by Elizabeth Freestone was used. As for the film, see SBT DVD ref. RSC/TS/2/2/2001.RAP1 (running time 82 minutes).

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det in her bedroom. The sexual assault on campus of the Korea Military Academy ca
used a national uproar and both the Academy's handling of the case and the military'
s sexual culture, which promotes the objectification of women and rationalizes hostilit
y towards all things female, have been criticized. Frustrated by the Army's response t
o the case, which resulted from the Army's lack of understanding of the complexity
of gender, cultural, and sexual issues in the military, one of my particular interests ha
s been the presence of women in the military. It was not a coincidence that an incre
asing number of works have focused on justifying, or dis-justifying, the ontological st
atus of women in a male-dominated military culture through the examination of three
female characters—Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca—in Shakespeare's *Othello* (Seo 2
015, 241-269; 2016, 651-673). The Army has now increased its emphasis on sexual a
ssault prevention and created awareness about the issue amongst the soldiers. In this r
egard, it is a natural choice to turn to *The Rape of Lucrece*, which illustrates a histor
ically, socially, and culturally specific context, to define rape, the most extreme form
of sexual violence endemic to any military culture. Especially following gender equalit
y education, introduced earlier this year to raise broader concerns about how the milit
ary culture sees the roles of women in the military, I would like to re-visit the issue
of the tension between masculine military culture and traditional femininity in *The R
ape of Lucrece*. My premise is that Lucrece, like the above-mentioned female characte
rs in Shakespeare's plays, appears to mirror "another spoiled man-made structure," bec
ause her story shows that there is a limit upon what can be said and how can be sai
d (Smith 2005, 22).

If we look back to most previous studies which have looked at the poem as the stor
y of Lucrece's rape and suicide, focusing on the political aspect of her rape, it beco
mes clear that Lucrece was a figure of conventional immorality. For example, some a
uthors, like Don Cameron Allen (1962, 89-98), in St. Augustine's view, have found L
ucrece guilty, arguing that her suicide is unnecessary and immoral. On the other hand,
those influenced by feminism, like Nancy Vickers, have argued that the female victi
m is an erotic object and have condemned the male rapist (1985, 95-115). To a degre
e, the reading of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* has for a long time hinged on such interpreta
tions of rape and questioning of the construction of rape victim, explaining the vulner
able position of women in male-dominated society.

Recent studies, however, have adopted a different view of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*, an
erotic poem that allows its readers to envision the rape by employing an imaginary f
orce and take pleasure in the exploration of rapist's consciousness. Paul Edmondson, f
or example, refers to the poem as "defiantly tragic" (2010, 187) even though its eroti
c power makes 'the readers feel complicit in the crime it relates'. Thus representing r
ape in literature is violent, yet beautiful, because it deals in an illusion and invites th
e readers to participate in it. As Edmondson observes elsewhere, rape like pornograph
y "assumes the power of the viewer over the 'suffering' object (Schnabel 6). As we r
ead the description of rape and sexual violence, we take part in the voyeuristic act—
observing without being observed in return. Although "[being] followed by a lingering
sense of disgust, guilt, or sheepishness," we, as Ian Moulton argues, "would not pre

clude an urge to repeat the experience (2000, 11). Thus we can be sympathetic with the rapist Tarquin who detached himself from 'the burden of the guilty mind' (745).[4]

In this article, I have attempted to argue that representing sexual violence on stage makes the audience experience rape narrative differently. Because of a reasonable doubt as to how Shakespeare's narrative poem would work as a drama, there have been few attempts to present this poem on stage. I believe that unlike a poem, a drama can provide a concrete representation of actual individual bodies, as a graphic representation of pornography in photography and cinema does today (Moulton 2000, 12). Except for Thomas Heywood's successful play *The Rape of Lucretia* in 1607, the story has served as inspiration primarily for visual and musical artists rather than playwrights. The stage adaptations include Katherine Cornell's pantomime version in 1932, Ernest Krenek's chamber opera version in 1940, and Benjamin Britten's opera in 1946 (Kabatchnik 2017, 216). The only recent staged production worthy of attention is Kristin Horton's adaptation of 2014. As in much of contemporary theatre, which tends to address rape as a war between male power and female powerlessness primarily from a feminist perspective, in Horton's adaptation a male actor plays Tarquin and a female actor plays Lucrece (Fitzpatrick 2010, 184). This production is significant as it aims to tell women's voices which have been silences in the public sphere but it, thematizing campus sexual violence, is not enough on its own to explain why they have to be continually silenced.

However, Camille O'Sullivan's doubling performance plays out in symbolically different way: my interest in Freestone's *Lucrece* goes beyond how O'Sullivan's expressing the threat of rape and her experiencing it challenges the latent desire to exert and defend patriarchal authority. Rather, my interest lies in the fact that O'Sullivan's performance–as she puts it, "a story about beauty and violence"–creates a combination of poetic imagination and abstraction. She plays both the rapist and the victim, and this allows her to explore the contradictions of the combination of beauty (imagination) and violence (abstraction). Shakespeare, as Peter Hühn rightly points out, often "sets out to resolve the contradictory attitudes of (unselfish) adoration and (selfish) desire…by dividing their reference between two persons" (2016, 55). Hence, my analysis focuses primarily on how O'Sullivan's unusual approach to the Shakespeare's text—namely character doubling—manifests itself on both the physical representation of Tarquin (his assertion of desire) and Lucrece's physical and emotional agony (her statement of love). According to Hühn, the poetic narration of bereaving the loss and coping with it is a "doubly *eventful* narrative" because event brings unexpectedness, exceptional events which take new (negative or positive) turn in the story (2016, 6). Together with the narrative's double effect found in Hühn's poetic narration of bereavement, by doubling good character with bad O'Sullivan could not only tell her story dramatically into a visual performance, but also let us participate in the poetic narration of bereavement itself.

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[4] All quotations from this paper come from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 240-338.

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Minor actors' doubling is a common convention in theatre business. The technique of character doubling has been employed for practical reasons such as financial constrai nts or limited number of actors. But it has been also used as a way of defining theat ricality itself. Stephen Greenblatt emphasizes the effect of doubling in his introduction of *The Comedy of Errors* in terms of theatrical personation:

> How can one person represent another? The drama is the perfect medium for the expl oration of the question for the form of the drama itself invites reflection on the extent to which it is possible for one person to assume the identity of another. (Greenblatt 1997, 684)

O'Sullivan's doubling as theatrical personation, I argue, acts as a test case, providing an alternative view that allows us to challenge the long-held dichotomous mode in Sh akespeare. In so doing, I rely on René Girard's concept of the "mimetic desire" (200 0, 24). In Girard's formulation, the lover pursues the beloved of an emulated desires. Violent mimetic rivalry which destroys male action in Shakespeare's tragedy arises fro m this universal mechanism as seen from *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Two Noble K insmen*. However, in O'Sullivan's doubling Targuin instead imitates first his own belo ved (Lucrece) and then object his beloved emulated (Targuin). Tarquin's rape of Lucre ce and her suicide in Shakespeare's poem reveal that this mechanism to victimize two antagonists to reunite Rome is disrupted by mimetic rivalry. In this respect, O'Sulliv an's doubling of two antagonists can be regarded as an attempt to draw our attention to the paradoxical reconciliation of opposing desires in the human heart. Furthermore , it should be noted that in such representation we realize that theatrical practice deali ng with sexual desire is still dependent upon a masculine mode of expression. So, in a later part of this article I will also examine O'Sullivan's performance with the noti on of a deeply gendered power imbalance in mind.

STAGE SETTING AND O'SULLIVAN'S REPRESENTATION OF OPPOSING ROLES

The stage is bare floor boarding with a plain brick back wall. There are large piles o f white paper on both the right and left upstage corners, signifying that the performa nce is based on the narrative poem (See Figure 1). A pair of black army boots and a pair of slippers at the front of the stage indicate two main characters: Tarquin and Lucrece. The pianist is seated at a grand piano upstage right. The piano becomes lou der and more threatening as Tarquin issues threats. There is no other accompaniment and lighting is used to great effect, particularly during the rape scene.

O'Sullivan enters upstage left and does not use the vomitorium. She does, however, move around the stage addressing the audience whenever she is emphasizing a point (See Figure 2). She also moves back upstage and indicates left and right backstage to highlight the points at which Tarquin leaves to find Lucrece's bedroom and at which he escapes after the rape. The original verses (1,855 lines) were cut and transposed to present the horrific event in an

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artistically enjoyable way. In the poem, the rape scene constitutes only ten lines (673-683), or less than 1% of the poem, and the rest are the two characters' internal debates before and after the rape. The simple stage with a patch of light and shadow serves to emphasize the performer's words, song, and movement (Dunne 2014).

[Figure 1. and 2. Stage setting][5]

O'Sullivan appears clothed androgynously in black leggings and a long black jacket, under which there appears to be a white shirt. There is no standard costume change and the difference between the narrator and Tarquin is emphasized through voice changes: her voice becomes stronger and her posture more erect (and possibly more masculine) when speaking as Tarquin (See Figure 3).

[Figure 3. O'Sullivan as Tarquin and Figure 4. O'Sullivan as Lucrece]

As Lucrece, her voice becomes softer and her hand gestures more graceful. Rhythmic stamping emphasizes Tarquin's darkest thoughts and O'Sullivan addresses his internal struggle and his determination to have Lucrece directly to the audience, sometimes appealing to individual audience members, but hangs her head in shame on the rhyming couplets that follow these descriptions (See Figure 4).

[5] Images provided by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) for personal study.

O'Sullivan, as Tarquin again, holds her finger to her lips to hush the audience and moves upstage as if it exits backstage in search of Lucrece's room. All this action is underscored by the changing tempo and volume of the piano score.

He, like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence;
She, like a wearied lamb lies panting there.
He scowls and hates himself for his offence;
She, desperate, with her nails her flesh doth tear;
He faintly flies, sweating with guilty fear;
She stays exclaiming on the direful night.
He runs and chides his vanished loathed delight. (736-742)

As seen in the combined contrasts of "lamb" and "thievish dog" or "fear" and "delight", synoeciosis (or oxymoron) governs the whole poem (Dubrow 164) and as Catherine Belsey notes, 'synoeciosis brings contraries together to form oxymoronic or paradoxical truths' (315): "Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week / Or sell eternity to get a toy?" (213-214). In this respect, it is interesting to note that on Freestone's stage O'Sullivan's doubling and her copied body position constitute brilliantly the antithetical structure and image pattern in the poem. In addition, such doubling reflects the fact that Lucrece's gender oppression which makes her involuntary or unconsciously accepts and duplicates a male-dominated language and behaviour patterns which have been called indirect or "structural violence" (Galtung 2). This kind of violence, according to Galtung, is always present and yet hard to aware of its presence in cultures. It is therefore a brilliant choice to use the Lucrece/Tarquin (Victim/Offender) frame in order to reflect not only the male-dominated languages, but also the unseen exercise of power in the affairs of everyday life. As this point will be further discussed later, O'Sullivan's strong interpretive skills, expressed through songs, allow her to shift freely between the rapist and the rape victim, and they work best when Lucrece is raped.

THE RAPE SCENE AND ITS IMEEDIATE AFTERMATH

The lighting creates a perfect square of light centre stage, which represents the bed. O'Sullivan rolls up the sleeves of the black jacket, as if readying herself for physical work. She approaches this bed as Tarquin, circles it, and reaches down as if to stroke Lucrece's body. She stamps her foot for emphasis on "His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye" (435) and appears to rest her hand on an invisible breast. She raises her arms as if appealing to heaven, before lowering one arm to point directly ahead like a knight carrying a lance about to charge. She switches roles, playing Lucrece as she awakes, bewildered and desperately looking for help. She catches her breath as if it were difficult to breathe. She physicalizes shaking "aloft his Roman sword" (505) but changes tone and speaks more gently when trying to persuade Lucrece to submit, "But if thou yield, I rest thy secret friend" (527). She shakes her head as if Lucrece had actually rejected Tarquin verbally.

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[Figure 5. and Figure 6. The rape scene]

The rape itself shows O’Sullivan adopt the role of Lucrece (See Figue 5 and 6). While still playing Tarquin, she strips off the black jacket, revealing a long white shi ft beneath. She wraps the jacket around her right forearm and appears to ram it into the invisible figure on the bed. She kneels and spreads Lucrece’s legs wide, but then immediately discards the jacket, and, switching to the role of Lucrece, lies on her b ack, with her head towards the audience in the centre of the thrust stage. She spreads her legs wide and pulls her white shift above her knees. She struggles, apparently at tempting to escape her attacker, and groans in despair. The music increases in volume and pace as the rape takes place. O’Sullivan refers to her ravaged character as “a w oman whose soul and body have been taken” (Kerrigan 2014). Indeed, performing the scene, she groans like a wounded animal on stage.

Reverting to the role of Tarquin after the rape, she kneels on “The guilty rebel for remission prays” (714) before standing with her head downcast in shame. It appears she is about to creep offstage, pointing to an exit upstage left, not looking at the audience. After pointing back to the bed, she stays on stage, “exclaiming on the direful night / He runs, and chides his vanished loathed delight’ (741-742). Reverting to Lucrece, O’Sullivan kneels again on ‘She prays she may never behold the day” (746).

She addresses the audience as she begins to blame herself for entertaining Tarquin in her home, before marching like a soldier around the stage as the lights come up to flood the entire stage with light. She grabs handfuls of paper piles upstage, tearing them and throwing them about her as if attempting to destroy her story while contemplating suicide. As she curses, crying “And let mild women to him lose their mildness / Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness” (979-980), she kneels once again as if in prayer.

THE EMBODIMENT OF THE VIOLATOR AND THE VIOLATED IN ONE PERAON

While watching the performance, one can wonder how it is possible for pain and ple asure to coexist, and how the story can at the same time be monstrous and beautiful. It is not surprising that the story of Lucrece has not been seen simply as a testimon

ial by a rape survivor but a classical story frequently re-contextualized in another hist orical and social context (Robertson and Rose 283). This new historical and social co ntext is what relates the show to the contemporary scene and the problem of the pre valence of violence against women. As Martha Nussbaum recognizes, this is possible because Lucrece, like Hamlet, is a tragic heroine who responds to what is before her with full sensitivity and imaginative vigour (84), but bitterly concludes that her word s are little more than "unprofitable sounds" (1017). This is also applicable to Tarquin who can be seen as a feminized Hamlet, impotent to do more than speak "words, w ords, words" (2.1.195), and who yet yields to his sexual desire. Freestone is successfu l in bringing out the poem's tragic elements through character doubling: O'Sullivan's Tarquin and Lucrece present not only the coexistence of violence and beauty in one person but also demonstrate that beauty does not exist without violence.

I want to go back to the point made earlier in this article: the objectification of wom en in military culture. The female body has always been a battle site of masculine oc cupation, of economic, social and political struggles (Stallybrass 123-142). The domina nt mode of constructing the male authority and privilege is through the description of female beauty, an act of praising each fragment of the female body in a highly orna mental fashion, as in the following descriptive images of Lucrece's body:

> Her hair like golden threads played with her breath
> O modest wantons, wanton modesty!
> Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
> And death's dim look in life's mortality.
> Each in her sleep themselves so beautify
> As if between them twain there were no strife,
> But that life lived in death, and death in life.
>
> Her breasts like ivory globes circled with blue,
> A pair of maiden worlds unconquerèd,
> Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,
> And him by oath they truly honourèd.
> These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,
> Who like a foul usurper went about
> From this fair throne to heave the owner out.
>
> What could he see but mightily he noted?
> What did he note but strongly he desired?
> What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,
> And in his will his willful eye he tired.
> With more than admiration he admired
> Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,
> Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin. (400-420)

The literary dissection of Lucrece's body – which has often been regarded as a conve

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ntional lyrical imagery – is an abstraction of a female body. As Sara E. Quay argues, "Lucrece is not able to be raped because she is a woman, but because she is constr ucted as a woman who is able to be raped" (4). The fragmentation of her body by T arquin's perspective sets the stage for objectification, and her body is thought to repre sent the prey for his sexual desire. Furthermore, Shakespeare reinforces the traditional image of female beauty with an unconventional description of masculine body:

> His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,
> His eye commends the leading to his hand;
> His hand, as proud of such a dignity,
> Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand
> On her bare breast, the heart of all her land; (435-439)

Shakespeare seems to understand the interrelation between beauty and violence, believi ng that the fragmentation on stage is necessary the objectification of a whole, as indi vidual parts are thought to represent the whole body (Hoddges 84). However, O'Sulli van's song as Tarquin looks at Lucrece's lovely body articulates "first his desire, and later his shame and self-hatred, with passion and verve. In this respect, the repeated song of an erotic image "Her azure veins, her alabaster skin, / Her coral lips, her s now-white dimpled chin" (419-420) comes from the mouths of both the violator and t he violated and becomes, as Dunne puts it, "an eerie, haunting refrain" (Dunne 2014).

[Figure 7. and Figure 8. Before and after the rape scene]

The significance of the idea that the two key antagonists are one being makes the 'mimetic double bind' visible to us (See Figure 7 and 8). At the same time, O'Sulliv an's doubling emphasizes that the female body is still marked as a battle site within a culture providing "a medium for reconstituting and circulating the society's norms a bout male power and male dominance" (Boose 249). However, as Peter J. Smith argu

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es, the poem itself suggests another possibility – there are the various poetic attempts to exonerate Tarquin's offence and salve the male reader's conscience (Smith 2009, 414). In fact, Sam Hynes argues that in the poem 'the significant rape is the rape of Tarquin's soul': thus, O'Sullivan's Tarquin can be seen as more damaged by his crime than O'Sullivan's Lucrece. I intend to use Susan Bandes' work to analyse the staged rape, since there are real-life cases in which people cannot fully sympathize with rape victims, yet understand the rapist. However, if we view O'Sullivan's Tarquin/Lucrece using Girard's concept of mimetic desire, any attempt to find a definitive way of analysing the violator and the violated may potentially be partial. Girard observes, Shakespeare dramatizes in this poem the "hidden repositories of mimetic rivalry," "the rapist and the husband" (27). Thus, Lucrece's rape arises from their mimetic rivalry. However, in O'Sullivan's performance mimetic desire devolves into violence not owing to the rivalry between Tarquin and Lucrece's husband, but owing to two souls in one body. So the apparently contradictory, or conflicting, combination of Tarquin and Lucrece allows us to discover the mimetic desire in ontological sense, concealed until it reaches a violent crisis – until his hands conquer her and let "some of her blood still pure and red remained, / And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained" (1740-1741) flow from her body.[6] The song 'To Kill Myself' is so compelling that it seems to me not so important to recognize the song as only Lucrece's song.

CONCLUSION: DOUBLING DEFICIT AND YET CLAIM OF RELEVANCE

I would like to conclude my argument by making one last point about the inadequacy of doubling in the adaptation. Doubling by a cross-dressed woman for the purpose of exploring the issue of beauty and violence can be regarded as relatively safe, because a woman who cross-dresses is not subject to the same criticism as a cross-dressing man. The ending of the performance explicitly equates masculine desire with natural patriarchal tyranny. At the end of O'Sullivan's performance, she says grace as a narrator for "Collatine's fair love and Lucrece the chaste" (RSC 2014). The adaptation is thus undermined by the narrator's words which place the female body as an object of sexual desire. Without Shakespeare's most extensive, 200-line-long description of the of the Trojan War, what matters in Freestone's adaptation is the "helpless smoke of words" (1027) that surround sexual desire, not the desire that pursues "momentary joy' despite 'months of pain" (690). More specifically, the last seven lines (1849-55) in the end of the last song – especially "[Collatine] did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence, / To Show her bleeding body through Rome, / And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence" – have often been quoted as evidence of attaining a belated justice. But his vow to honour her by showing her dead body to the public without her consent simply, as Amy Greenstadt observes, reminds us of the earlier moment of the production when Collatine 'became "the publisher" of "Lucrece the chaste" by publicly boasting of his wife's chastity (79).

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[6] As for a similar approach to the mimetic desire in ontological sense, see Martha J. Reineke, *Intimate Domain: Desire, Trauma, and Mimetic Theory* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014).

Removing other lines spoken by Brutus, Freestone has portrayed O'Sullivan's roles of both Collatine and Lucrece as complex and problematic rather than simple and self-evident. So ending the performance with those quoted lines means that Lucrece's status remains merely as men's property. Insofar as the doubling is concerned, it seems absurd for a compelling 85-minute-long performance about beauty and violence to end with an assertion of masculine ideology.

If this ending – making the audience leave with the grieving Collatine, vowing revenge for Lucrece's death – seems absurd, we need to take note of it as another example of how in representing sexual violence it is nearly impossible to escape from the cultural framework which makes 'a hierarchy of male viewing subject over female viewed object' (Smith 2009, 409). By doubling the antagonists, O'Sullivan's Lucrece gains the audience's sympathetic response by means of altering the relationship between the rapist and the rape victim, but cannot change the long embedded gender relations, especially at the point of death. In contrast to Tarquin, who is banished but alive, Lucrece's dead body becomes a particular kind of battlefield that is always vulnerable to masculine violence (Gardner 2012). In this respect, this staged adaptation of the poem proposes a different point of view from literary critics who tend to read the story in the context of the eroticisation of male domination and even rape in literature, although it does not sufficiently challenge gendered violence in the male-dominant culture.

Despite the deficiency mentioned above, it can be claimed that the theatrical representation of *The Rape of Lucrece* – especially through female voice – is powerfully relevant to our understanding of gendered violence today, since it reveals the truth that the real threat of violence against a female body is not the physical aggression associated with rape or sexual assault but the loss of soul and irreparable damage to her own life. In a society like ours "where a male-dominated, collectivist and military culture prevails" (Yon-joo 134), Freestone's portrayal on stage of Lucrece helps unveil some features of our society which have been little explored. Although the #Me too movement has sparked a variety of changes in our male-dominated culture, it is very hard to challenge the orthodox of traditionally male dominated area of military. However, I believe that when we see Freestone's *Rape of Lucrece* in the light of the present day context of military culture, it will offer us an opportunity to avoid the romanticization of violence or eroticization of sexual assault in the military.

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