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Florentine marriage chests depicting the story of Lucretia and the war with Giangaleazzo Visconti¹

'Quid enim est Florentinum esse, nisi tam natura quam lege civem esse romanum, et per cosequens liberum et non servum?'²

Among the Florentine *cassoni* or marriage chests housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York there is one whose iconography has not yet been satisfactorily explained (ill. 1).³ Its painted front, decorated with embossed

¹ Some of the observations presented in this paper are to be found in the second chapter of my book *Soggetti classici sui cassoni fiorentini alla vigilia del Rinascimento*, Warszawa 1996, 25-44.

² Coluccio Salutati, *Invectiva in Antonium Luschum Vicentinum*, in ed. E. Garin, *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, Milan and Naples 1952, 32.

³ F. Zeri with the assistance of E. E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings. A Catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Florentine School*, New York 1971, 60-1; K. Baetjer, *European Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Artists Born before 1865: a Summary Catalogue*, New York 1995, 16. Cf. Miziołek, 1996, 32. Most of the *cassone* panels discussed in the present paper are in M. Boskovits, 'Il Maestro di Incisa Scapaccino e altri problemi di pittura tardogotica', *Paragone*, 501, 1991 (published in 1994), 46-48; and in Everett Fahy, 'Florence and Naples: Cassone Panels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art', in *Hommage à Michel Laclotte. Etudes sur la peinture du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, Milan 1994, 242-3, both papers deal with the panels produced by an anonymous Florentine master named the Master of Ladislas d'Angio Durazzo or the Master of Charles d'Angio Durazzo. These lists, of which first version was compiled as early as 1968, are of great importance for any studies on the earliest historiated *cassoni*, cf. Miziołek 1996, *passim*. The variety of names for marriage chests throughout the Renaissance era was investigated by A. Schiaparelli, *La casa fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV*, (reprinted from the first ed. 1908), Florence 1983, 1, 257. See also

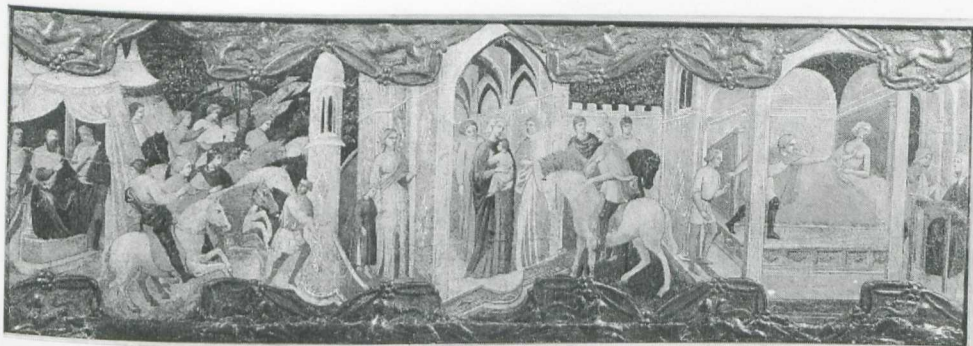
ornament bearing the motif of a leaping leopard or lion, depicts four scenes which should be read from left to right. The first scene shows a group of horsemen leaving a camp filled with tents. In the second there is a small group of riders before a house in front of which stand four ladies; one of the latter, placed centrally, holds a baby in her hand. The third scene shows a man stealing into the bedroom of a lady, and the last scene depicts a standing lady dictating a letter to a servant. It has been suggested by some scholars that the panel depicts either three scenes of female virtue or a story based on the *Aeneid*.⁴ Federico Zeri, who vaguely put forward the latter hypothesis, is of the opinion that the cassone was painted about 1410.⁵ However, it seems that the theme of the panel is the first part of the story of one of the most famous heroines of the ancient world – Lucretia. If this is true it would be one more *cassone* with this theme produced in Florence at the turn of 14th and 15th centuries.⁶ A group of such chests numbering at least nine examples which have never been properly studied is the subject of the present paper. I will try to discuss briefly all the earliest *cassoni* with the Story of Lucretia, clarifying at the same time the iconography of the Metropolitan Museum *cassone*. First, I will try to answer the question why the legend became so widespread in Florentine art at that time. Even if the story of Lucretia is very well known it

P. Thornton, 'Cassoni, forzieri, goffani e cassette. Terminology and its problems', *Apollo*, CXX October 1984, 246-51 and idem, *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400-1600*, London 1991, 97, 192, 247. In the 'Life of Dello Delli (1403-1461)', Giorgio Vasari, (*Lives of the most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. J. Foster, I, London 1850, 328) writes that at the time of this painter it became fashionable to paint large coffers or chests. Schiaparelli, 1983, 1, 265, drawing on archival sources, already referred to a record from 1390 of 'an old cassone (*forziere*) with figures'. According to the latest research, *cassoni* with figural scenes but not yet historiated, some of which have survived, were already being executed around the year 1350. Among those are two *cassoni*, one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the other in the Cini Collection at Venice; see F. Zeri et al, *Dipinti toscani e oggetti d'arte dalla Collezione Vittorio Cini*, Venice 1984, 58-61. According to C. Alberici, *Mobile Veneto*, Milan 1980, 8, there is a document of 1156 concerning 'cassoni per corredo da sposa'. From the beginning of the 14th century written sources abound with information on *cassoni/forzieri*. The ceremonial processions (*ductio ad domum mariti*) during which the chests were carried to the spouse's home, are examined by B. Witthoft, 'Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence', *Artibus et Historiae*, 5 (III), 1982, 43-59, esp. 46. Usually a new bride received only one pair of *forzieri*; however, in the case of rich couples there were exceptions to this rule. For example Giovanna Orsini, wife of Biordo de'Micheletti, Signore of Perugia, had in her marriage procession 'tre paia di cofani', see *Cronache e storie inedite della città di Perugia dal MCL al MDLXIII, parte I, 1150-1491*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, XVI, 1, 1850, 262.

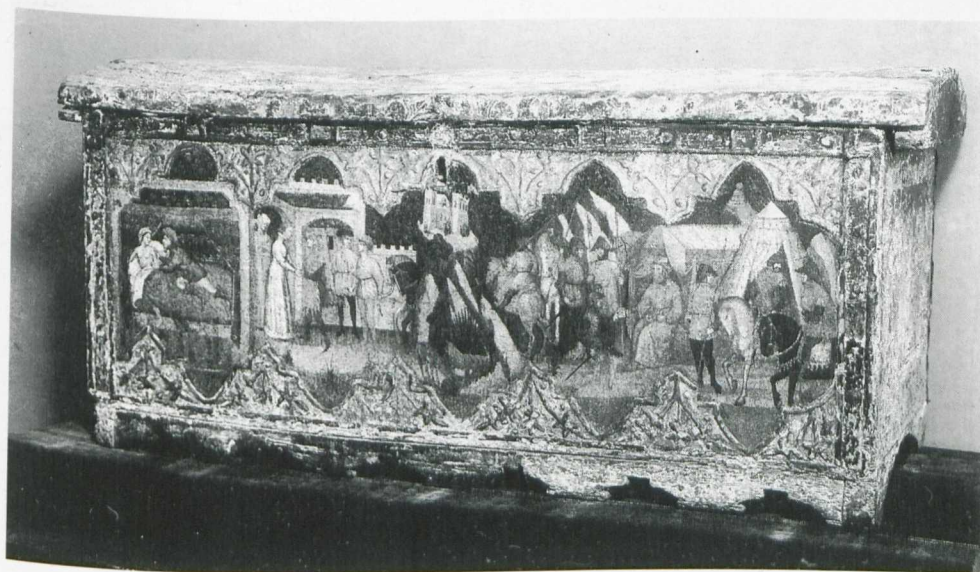
⁴ Cf. Zeri and Gardner, 1971, 61 for previous interpretations of the panel.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 60-1.

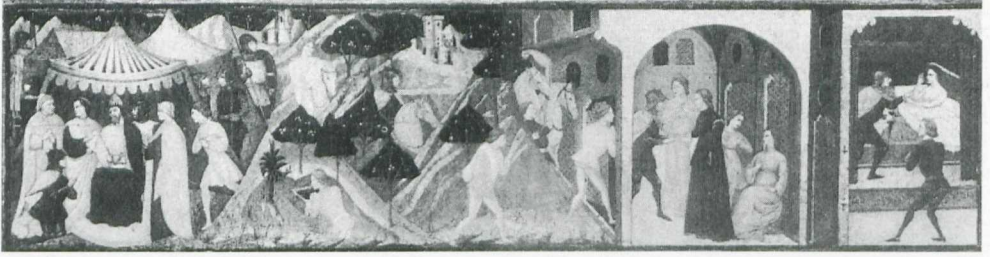
⁶ An early date for a number of Florentine *cassoni*, including most of those examined in the present paper, was first suggested by Boskovits, 1991 (1994) and Fahy, 1994 and is extensively discussed in Miziolek, 1996. Many scholars are of the opinion that historiated *cassoni* appeared only at the beginning of the 15th century and those with classical subject only in the 1430s.



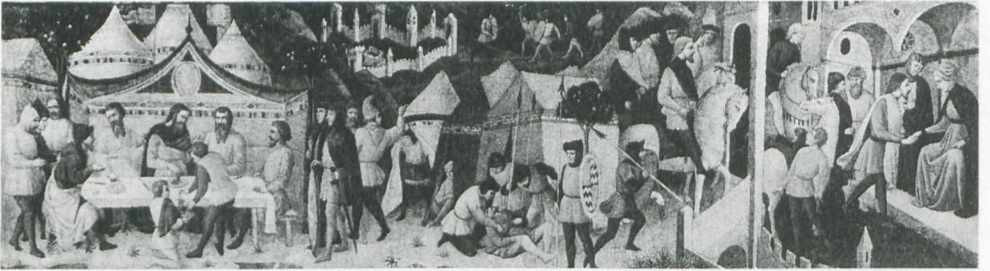
1 *The Story of Lucretia, cassone front.* New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



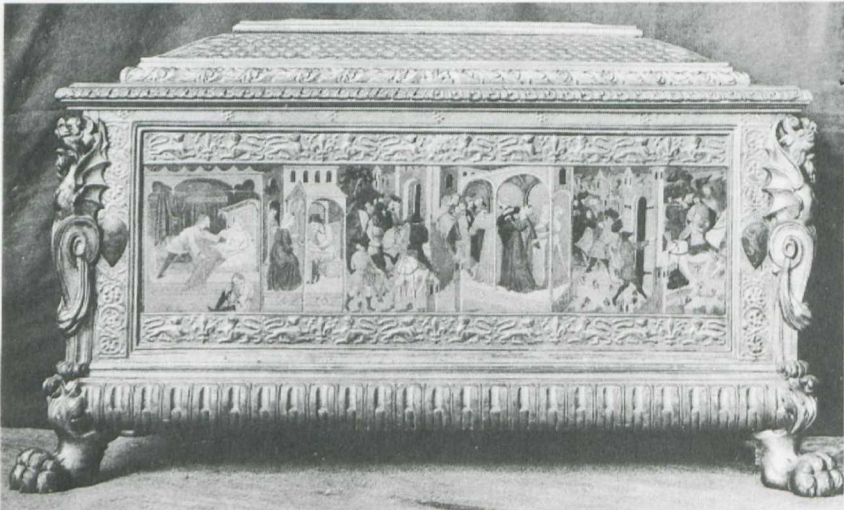
2 *The Story of Lucretia, cassone.* Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Photo: Fondazione Giorgio Cini)



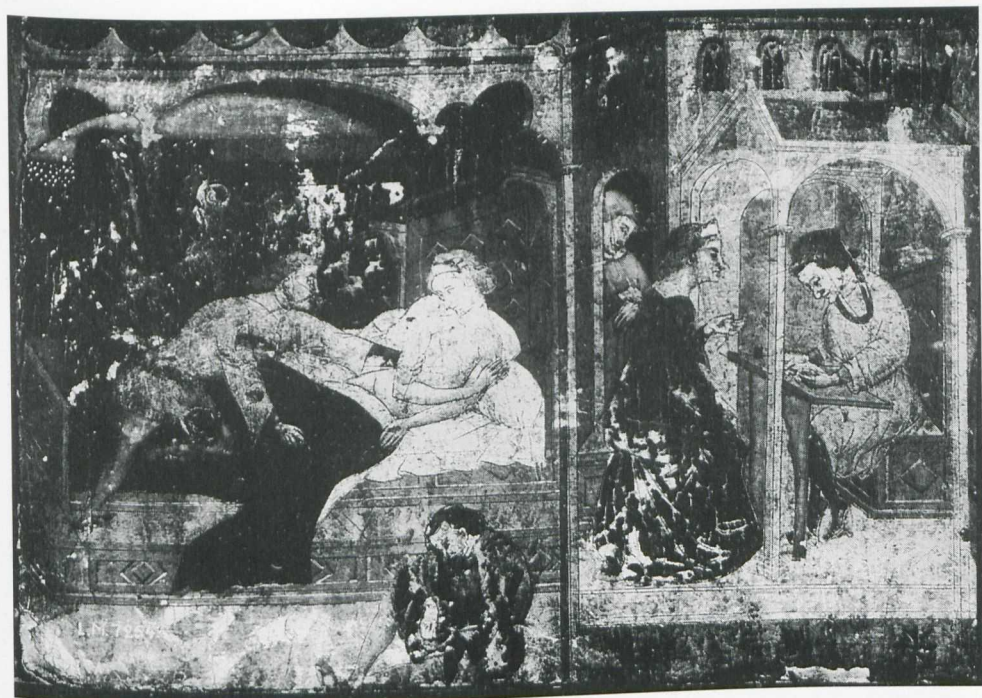
3 *The Story of Lucretia, cassone front.* Present whereabouts unknown (Photo: after *Pittura dal Duecento al Primo Cinquecento nelle fotografie di Girolamo Bombelli, Milano 1991*)



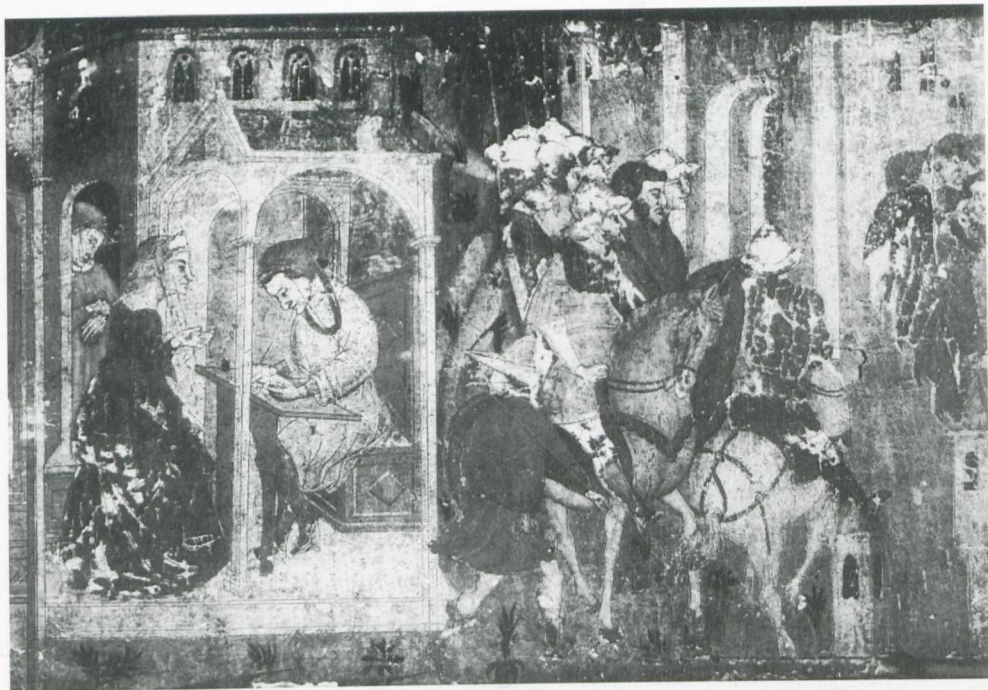
4 *The Story of Lucretia, cassone front.* Cracow, Fundacja Książąt Czartoryskich at the Muzeum Narodowe (Photo: Muzeum Narodowe, Cracow)



5 *The Story of Lucretia, cassone.* San Simeon, The Hearst Collection (Photo: after The Holford Collection)



6 *The Story of Lucretia*, detail of the *cassone* front. Zurich, Schweizerische Landesmuseum (Photo: Landesmuseum)



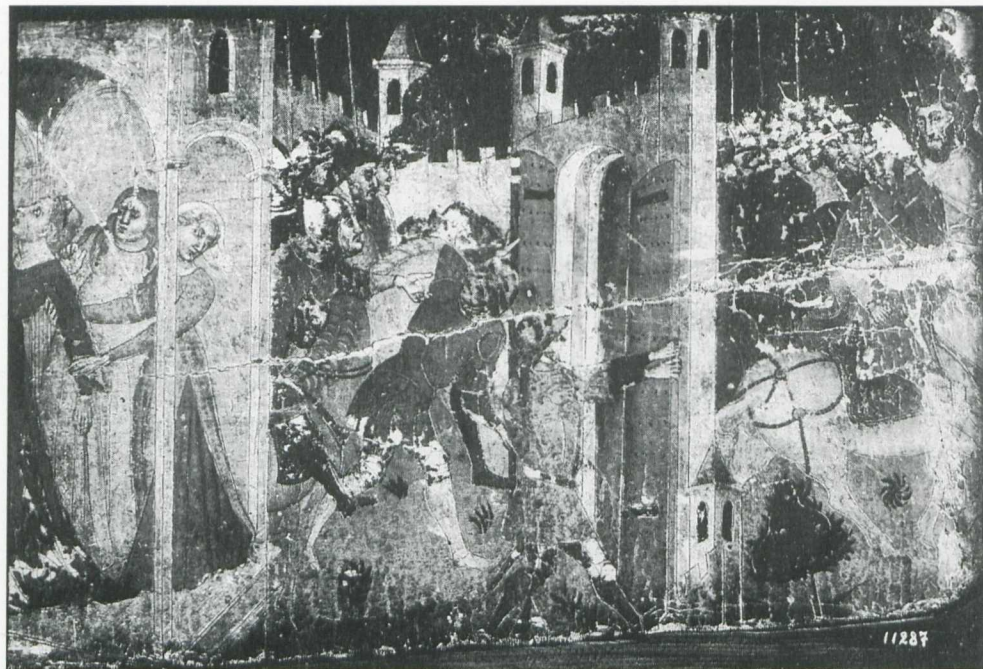
7 *The Story of Lucretia*, detail of the *cassone* front. Zurich, Schweizerische Landesmuseum (Photo: Landesmuseum)



8 *The Story of Lucretia*, detail of the *cassone* front. Present whereabouts unknown (Photo: after P. Schubring)



9 *The Story of Lucretia*, detail of the *cassone* front. Zurich, Schweizerische Landesmuseum (Photo: Landesmuseum)



10 *The Story of Lucretia*, detail of the *cassone* front. Zurich, Schweizerische Landesmuseum (Photo: Landesmuseum)

may be helpful to recall it briefly and to record its great popularity in Italian Trecento literature.⁷

In the first book of his *Ab urbe condita*, Livy tells the story in the following way.⁸ In 509 BC the king of Rome, Tarquin the Proud, besieged one of the towns of Latium, Ardea, with his armies. During supper, prepared in his son's tent, an argument broke out over the qualities of their wives and the participants decided there and then to return to Rome in order to settle the disagreement. The proposer of this nocturnal expedition was Collatin, husband of Lucretia, who was convinced that his wife rose above all other women. The visit to Rome and subsequently to the residence of Collatin, named Collatium, confirmed Lucretia's qualities. The triumphant Collatin gave a feast, during which one of the royal sons, Sextus Tarquin, overcome by Lucretia's beauty and her virtue which was so highly spoken of by everyone, decided to take possession of her by force. Several days later, he secretly made his way from the siege of Ardea to Collatium. Here, received like a close friend of the family, he stole into the chamber of Collatin's wife late at night and, under the threat of fabricating a story about her giving sexual favours to a servant, he forced Lucretia to lie with him. Following Tarquin's departure, she sent messengers to her father and husband in order to recount her tragedy to them. They came accompanied only by two trusted friends, Publius Valerius and Lucius Junius Brutus. Then, in spite of the pleas of each of those assembled, she stabbed herself with a knife. Just before taking her life, she pronounced the significant words, 'nor in time to come shall ever unchaste woman live through the example of Lucretia'. The disgracing and death of Lucretia shortly proved to be the cause of Tarquin the Proud being driven from Rome, followed by the collapse of the kingdom and the establishment of the Roman republic. It was Lucius Junius Brutus who incited the people of Rome to banish the tyrant-king.

⁷ See H. Galinsky, *Der Lucretia-Stoff in der Weltliteratur*, Breslau 1932, passim; for Early Renaissance Italy, 40-4; G. de Tervarent, 'Le banquet de Lucrece', in *Les enigmes de l'art. L'heritage antique*, Paris 1946, 72-5; J. Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia*, Oxford 1982, passim; S. H. Jed, *Chaste Thinking. The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism*, Bloomington 1989, passim. See also G. Voigt, 'Über die Lucrezia-Fabel und ihre literarischen Verwandten', *Abdruck aus den Berichten der philol.-histor. Classe der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Öffentliche Gesamtsitzung 23.IV.1883*, 1-36; R. Kleszczewski, 'Wandlungen des Lucretia-Bildes im italienischen Literatur der Renaissance', in *Livius. Werk und Rezeption. Festschrift für Erich Burck zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. by E. Lefèvre and E. Olshausen. München 1983, 313-335; C. E. Newlands, *Playing with Time: Ovid and the Fasti*, Ithaca and London 1995, 146-174: chapt. V: The silence of Lucretia.

⁸ *Ab urbe condita*, I, 57-9; *Livy*, I, trans. B. O. Foster (Loeb Classical Library), London 1919, 196-209. For Livy in translation available at that time in Italy, see G. Fogolari, 'La prima deca di Livio illustrata nel Trecento a Venezia', *L'Arte*, 10, 1907, 330-45; A. de la Mare, 'Florentine Manuscripts of Livy in the Fifteenth Century' in ed. T. A. Dorey, *Livy*, London 1974, 177-99.

The tragedy of Collatin's wife reappears in many literary works, ancient, medieval and modern, including such writers as Ovid,⁹ Valerius Maximus,¹⁰ St Augustine (who severely criticised Lucretia's suicide),¹¹ the unknown author of the *Gesta Romanorum*,¹² Petrarch,¹³ Boccaccio,¹⁴ Giovanni Sercambi,¹⁵ Arrigo da Settimello, Guido da Pisa, Fazio degli Uberti¹⁶ and others. Coluccio Salutati, the chancellor of Florence between 1375 and 1406 and at the same time leader of humanistic movement, also produced in c.1390 his *Declamatio Lucretiae* which became one of the most widely read works of the early Renaissance.¹⁷ Although usually following Livy, later writers often added new elements of their own to the legend. Giovanni Sercambi claims that Lucretia's death took place in a public place in Rome, and thus not in Collatium.¹⁸ In the *Gesta Romanorum*, in which the story begins with the participants in the siege of Ardea arriving at Collatium and a description of the feast arranged by Lucretia's husband, the reader is even made privy to letters written by her to her husband and father, as well as to their arrival in

⁹ *Fasti*, II, 725-852; see *Ovid's Fasti*, trans. J. G. Frazer (Loeb Classical Library), London and New York 1931, 107-19.

¹⁰ Valerio Massimo, *Detti e fatti memorabili*, Turin 1988, 396-7 (VI, 1).

¹¹ *De civitate Dei*, I, 19, see St Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. G. E. McCracken (Loeb Classical Library), I, Cambridge, Mass 1954, 82-91. It is interesting to note that in spite of the great authority of St Augustine, not many references were made to his criticism of Lucretia's act, see Donaldson, 1982, 21-39, esp. 28 ff. (as noted by Donaldson, Lucretia takes her place in both Jerome's and Tertullian's lists of admirable women, both pagan and Christian. See also S. Behuniak-Long, 'The Significance of Lucretia in Machiavelli's La Mandragola', *The Review of Politics*, 51, 1989, 264-80, esp. 274 ff).

¹² *Tales of the Monks from the Gesta Romanorum*, trans. C. Swan, New York 1959, chapter 135, 218-19; for the Latin version, see *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. H. Osterley, Hildesheim and New York 1980, 489-90.

¹³ *Petrarch's Africa*, trans T. G. Bergin and A. S. Wilson, New Haven and London 1977, 63-8 (Book III, 811-1023); *De viris illustribus*, in Petrarch, ed. G. Martelotti et al., *Prose*, Milan and Naples 1982, 230-3.

¹⁴ *De claris mulieribus*, 48, in ed. V. Branca, *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, X, Milan 1967, 194-197; *De casibus virorum illustrium*, III, 3, in *ibid.*, IX, 1983, 203-9.

¹⁵ G. Sercambi, *Novelle*, Bari 1972, I, 203-5 (Novella XLIII).

¹⁶ Arrigo da Settimello, *L'Elegia, sive de miseria* III, 217, in S. Battaglia, *Il Boezio e l'Arrighetto nelle versioni del Trecento*, Turin 1929; Guido da Pisa, ed. F. Foffano, *I fatti di Enea*, Florence 1978, 31; Fazio degli Uberti, *Il Dittamondo e le rime*, ed. G. Corsi, Bari 1952, 59 (cap. XX). See also Dante, *Inferno*, IV, 128 and *Paradiso*, VI, 48.

¹⁷ The dialogue is discussed in detail by Jed, 1989, *passim*; for the Latin text, see 133. See also H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Renaissance*, Princeton 1966, 115; E. Menesto, 'La "Declamatio Lucretiae", manoscritti e fonti', *Studi Medievali*, Ser. III, XX, 2, 1979, 917-24; Voigt, 1883, 25 f.; *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. F. Novati, 4 vols, 1, Rome 1891-1905, 253f; and Galinsky, 1932, 44 ff. For Salutati, see R. G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*, Durham, NC 1983.

¹⁸ G. Sercambi, I, 1972, 203-5.

the company not only of the two close friends but also of several other people, including King Tarquin the Proud in person.¹⁹ One should admit that some of the writings by the above-mentioned authors were available in various Italian translations (or, better, in various dialects) and sometimes even illustrated in manuscripts of the *opere* of Livy, Valerius Maximus and Petrarch.²⁰

Representations of the story of Lucretia decorate a considerable number of early *cassoni* whose chronology has never been examined.²¹ This failure is the result, among other things, of the fact that many of these have survived in a poor condition or have been repainted, thereby complicating accurate dating. Most of them can probably be linked with a so far anonymous Florentine painter called the Master of Charles of Durazzo (Charles was the King of Naples in the latter half of the 14th century) who is currently attributed with more than 30 works, of which most are *cassoni* and *deschi da parto*, and who worked at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries.²²

The earliest of his *cassoni*, executed most probably for the Alessandri family, was housed until the 1920s at Castello di Vincigliata near Florence (ill. 8).²³ Its three compartments, which are created by gilded gesso, depict the king's

¹⁹ Gesta Romanorum, 1936, 219: 'the lady, full of the deepest grief, despatched letters to her father and husband, to her brothers, to the emperor, together with the governor; and when they were all present she spoke...'

²⁰ For *volgarizzamenti*, see ed. C. Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento*, Turin 1980, with further bibliography; M. T. Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca. I volgarizzamenti di Tito Livio e Valerio Massimo*, Padua 1982.

²¹ For representations of Lucretia in Renaissance art, see G. Walton, 'The Lucretia Panel in the Isabella Gardner Museum in Boston', in *Essays in Honour of Walter Friedländer*, New York 1965, 177-86; G. de Tervarent, 1946, 72-5; W. Stechow, 'Lucretiae Statua', in *Essays in Honor of Georg Swarzenski*, Berlin-Chicago 1951, 114-24; idem, 'The Authorship of the Walters "Lucretia"', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, XXIII, 1960, 73-85; H. Diehl, 'Bewhored Images: The Iconoclastic Rhetoric of Cranach's "Lucretia"', in *Renaissance Papers*, Durham, NC 1990, 1-17; C. Baskins, 'Corporeal Authority in the Speaking Pictures: The Representation of Lucretia in Tuscan Domestic Painting', in ed. R. C. Trexler, *Gender Rhetorics. Postures of Dominance and Submission in History*, Binghamton 1994, 187-200. See also E. Callmann, 'The Growing Threat to Marital Bliss as Seen in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Paintings', *Studies in Iconography*, 5, 1979, 84-000; and J. Miziołek, 'The Story of Lucretia on an Early Renaissance Cassone at the National Museum in Warsaw', *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, XXXV, 1994, 31-52. See also R. Schumacher-Wolfgast, 'Anticappella' del Palazzo Vitelleschi, in *Società Tarquiniese di Arte e Storia: Bollettino dell'Anno*, 1985, 73-90; G. Ceccarini, 'L'Anticappella del Palazzo', in *I Vitelleschi: fonti, realta e mito*, Tarquinia 1996, 29-32.

²² See n. 3 above. Previously this master was called the Master of the Siege of Tarent. Miklòs Boskovits, 1991(1994), named him the Master of Ladislas of Durazzo (Ladislas, the only son of Charles of Durazzo, died in 1414); and Everett Fahy, 1994, named him the Master of Charles of Durazzo.

²³ P. Schubring, *Cassoni. Truhen and Truhenbilder der italienischen frührenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Profanmalerei im Quattrocento*, 2nd. edn., Leipzig 1923, I, 223, II, pl. III no. 21; see also Miziołek, 1996, 34-7, with discussion concerning dating and further bibliography.

son stealing into Lucretia's chamber, Lucretia stabbing herself in the presence of a servant and only two men (almost certainly her husband and father), and the banishing of Tarquin from Rome. Almost as though intended to avoid any confusion in identifying the scenes, two of them are provided with inscriptions: 'Lucrezia' and 'Roma'. It is enough to compare the rigid poses, gestures and clothes of the people painted on this *cassone* with figures on a *cassone* front depicting the War of Charles of Durazzo, precisely dated 1381/1382 and housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to be almost certain that the Vincigliata chest was also produced in the 1380s.²⁴ Further support for this dating is the reliquary of St Andrew of Ireland, of 1389, preserved in the church of San Martino, which at that time belonged to the Alessandri family.²⁵ Not only the shapes of both chests but also the style of their paintings are almost identical.

Of the subsequent four *cassoni* produced by the same master, the first is in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford,²⁶ the second is in the Hearst Collection in California (ill. 5),²⁷ the third belongs to the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris,²⁸ and the fourth, the most damaged, is in the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum in Zurich (ills. 6,7,9,10).²⁹ All of these depict the second part of the story. The narration begins with Tarquin stealing into Lucretia's chamber and continues with Lucretia writing a letter to her father and husband, her death and Tarquin's banishment from Rome. In the last scene the red standard of the newly born Republic, with the inscription SPQR, signifies the collapse of the tyrant and thus the beginning of a new era. In contrast to the *cassone* from Castello di Vincigliata, in which barely a dozen figures are shown, the fronts of these *cassoni* portray whole crowds of witnesses, especially in the final two episodes. Comparing the scenes from Lucretia's death encourages

²⁴ See the excellent paper on this *cassone* panel by Fahy, 1994, and further evidence for an early dating in Miziolek, 1996, 34-6, where I discuss a letter, so far unnoticed by art historians, by Salutati to Charles of Durazzo written in 1381/1382, in which all the events depicted on the *cassone* are discussed; the letter is transcribed in *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, 1893, II, 11-46. The *cassone* might therefore have been commissioned by the Signoria of Florence as a gift for the King of Naples. Neither the letter nor the *cassone* ever reached Naples, as soon after his victory Charles of Durazzo showed his cruelty and hostility towards Florence.

²⁵ R. Fremantle, *Florentine Gothic Painters from Giotto to Masaccio. A Guide to Painting in and Near Florence 1300-1450*, London 1975, fig. X; Fahy, 1994, 239, fig. 234; Miziolek, 1996, 34, pls 6b and 13b. The best illustrations of this superbly preserved chest are to be found in A. M. Massinelli, *Il mobile toscano*, Milan 1993, pls I-III.

²⁶ C. Lloyd, *A Catalogue of the Earlier Italian Paintings in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford 1977, 132-3, fig. 93.

²⁷ *The Holford Collection, Dorchester House* (sale catalogue), Oxford 1927, II, pl. CLXXIV, no. 207; Miziolek, 1996, pl. 8b.

²⁸ Schubring, 1923, I, 368, II, pl. CXXXVIII, no. 644; see also Miziolek, 1996, 30, pl. 7b.

²⁹ G. Freuler, *Manifestatori delle cose miracolose. Arte italiana del' 300 e' 400 da collezioni in Svizzera e nel Liechtenstein*, Milan 1990, Appendix no. 8, attributed to Bicci di Lorenzo; see also Boskovits, 1991(1994), 47; Miziolek, 1996, 37-39, pls 8a, 11a, 18-20 and 22.

the assumption that in the case of the *Vincigliata cassone* the artist had most probably drawn upon the texts of Livy and Boccaccio, since only four people are shown in a small chamber. In the case of the four other *cassoni* Lucretia's death has the character of a public event, as described in the *Gesta Romanorum* and by Sercambi. Another factor suggesting that this source was used is that among the chevaliers on the Paris *cassone* summoned by Lucretia is a king who undoubtedly is Tarquin the Proud. It is worth emphasising that in all these four *cassoni* the artist repeated very accurately, in virtually every detail, not only the same scenes but also the same background and architectural details. This also seems to show the great popularity of the subject in that particular version. One may easily make a host of comparisons both of the style and of numerous motifs in these panels with late Trecento Florentine painting to demonstrate that they date not in the first half of the 15th century, as is usually suggested, but in the last decade of the 14th century.³⁰ It is enough to compare for example fresco from *Paradiso degli Alberti* precisely dated 1395 and the last scene on the *cassone* in Zurich to find the same way of painting groups of soldiers and almost identical characters with helmets represented in the foreground.³¹

Of a further three *cassone* panels, all of which depict early episodes from the Lucretia story, the first is in the Czartoryski Collection in Kraków (ill. 4)³² and the second in the Cini Collection, Venice (ill. 2),³³ while the whereabouts of the third are unknown (ill. 3).³⁴ These depict the feast at the encampment by Ardea, the expedition to Rome or Collatium, and the meeting with Lucretia. On the two latter *cassoni*, which do not belong to the first decade of the 15th century (note for example that in the Cini panel Lucretia's gown with collar looks like the one worn by Ilaria del Carretto in her tomb dating c.1406),³⁵ there is also the scene of the tyrant's son stealing into Lucretia's chamber.

In view of these three paintings, it appears almost certain that the Metropolitan Museum *cassone* (dating c.1410) which introduced this discussion also shows the sad story of Lucretia (ill. 1). Not only the camp filled with tents, the journey of a group of men and the bedroom scene are shown, but also the lady dictating the letter, as on the *cassoni* in the Hearst Collection (ill. 5) and

³⁰ For the dating of all these *cassoni*, see Miziołek 1996, 25-44, with bibliography.

³¹ ed. M. Gregori et al., *Il 'Paradiso' in Pian di Ripoli. Studi e ricerche su un antico monastero*, Florence 1985, 84, fig. 70-1; see also Miziołek, 1996, 38 and pls 22 and 23b.

³² Schubring, 1923, I, 223 and II, pl. III no.21.

³³ N. Barbantini, *Il Castello di Monselice*, Venice 1940, fig. 191.

³⁴ W. Angelelli and A.G. De Marchi, *Pittura dal Duecento al primo Cinquecento nelle fotografie di Girolamo Bombelli*, Milan 1991, no. 46.

³⁵ For fashion and dating of early Renaissance paintings, see L. Bellosi, 'I Limbourg precursori di van Eyck? nuove osservazioni sui 'Mesi' di Chantilly', *Prospettiva*, 1, 1975, 24-34; see also Miziołek, 1996, 104-5 with further bibliography.

at the Landesmuseum in Zurich (ill. 6). However, one question still remains to be answered: can the lady holding a child shown on the Metropolitan Museum *cassone* in the centre of the panel beneath a Gothic arch be identified as Lucretia? The explanation may be found in Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*, for we read there *expressis verbis* about the heroine as mother. Her father pronounces the following words:

'Lucretia, do not wish to make your husband a widow, to deprive your father of his child, to make your children orphans... Your body has been violated, but your soul is untouched'.³⁶

These nine extant *cassoni* suggest strongly that the story of Lucretia was a very popular subject in Florentine domestic painting at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Moreover, as Wackernagel convincingly suggested, only a small proportion of this kind of painting has survived; thus the number of marriage chests with the Story of Lucretia produced at the time of Salutati was probably much larger.³⁷ Before considering why this particular story was so popular in Florence at that time it is worth examining another problem.

It is well known that for each wedding in late medieval and Renaissance Tuscany two chests were as a rule ordered, of which very often only one is preserved.³⁸ Among the *cassoni* discussed here, however, no two were produced for the same marriage. But the Czartoryski *cassone* (ill. 4) and each of the four almost identical panels with the second part of the legend (ills. 5-7,9-10) present the story of Lucretia complete. Apparently the Czartoryski *cassone* was produced at least a decade later than these four panels, but it appears to follow quite closely a model made in the last decade of the Trecento. Both the style of the Czartoryski panel and the clothes worn by the *dramatis personae* are different. On the other hand, not only the walls with characteristic towers but also the soldier on horseback followed by an armour-bearer in the foreground are very similar to those on the late Trecento panels (ill. 9).

Marriage chests serving as bedroom furniture were intended constantly to recall the ideal of a beautiful and virtuous wife.³⁹ However, the chests discussed here depicting the dramatic scene of Lucretia's death and Tarquin's banishment from Rome, in which the standard bearing the inscription SPQR

³⁶ Quoted from Jed, 1989, 146. The original Latin edition of this text is to be found also in Menesto, 1971, 68.

³⁷ M. Wackernagel, *Il mondo degli artisti nel Rinascimento fiorentino*, trans. A. Sbrilli, Rome 1994, 178 and 182 (first published in German in 1938).

³⁸ For the number of *cassoni* commissioned for weddings, see n.3 above.

³⁹ On the scope of *cassone* paintings, see for example E. H. Gombrich, 'Apollonio di Giovanni: a Florentine Cassone Workshop Seen through the Eyes of a Humanist Poet', in *Norm and Form*, London 1966, 11-28; Callmann, 1979, 73-92; and Miziolek, 1996, *passim*.

appears, may also have been intended to be seen as anti-tyrannical and therefore closely linked with political life of Florence at turn of the 14th century.⁴⁰ It should be borne in mind that *cassoni* or *forzieri* were also publicly displayed during the *domumductio* or marriage procession in which the bride, accompanied by a member of her family and friends, rode on a white horse to the house of the groom.⁴¹ This was the most important event of each marriage. Apart from demonstrating the richness or social position of the families, marriage chests carried through the streets could also show stories 'worthy of memory', as Ernst Gombrich put it, and even the families' political sympathies.⁴²

Alberti in his *Della famiglia* writes about the analogy between family and state:

'Industry, good arts, brave deeds, wise counsel, honest practices, just desires, and knowing how to bide one's time, these are the qualities that ennoble, honour, maintain and defend republics and principalities... those who know this will judge that it applies to the family as well'.⁴³

The story of Lucretia is relevant both to the family and to the republican state, especially in Florence which around 1400 had to fight for its independent and republican liberty during a dangerous war, which broke out in 1390, against the tyrant of Milan, Giangaleazzo Visconti.⁴⁴ Before the Giangaleazzo's sudden death in 1402, Florence remained the only independent republican city-state in the whole of northern and central Italy; even Siena and Bologna had by then been defeated. This war had an immense impact on both Florentine humanism and the visual arts.⁴⁵ As observed by Gene Brucker, the war was unique in the entire history of Florence because it was supported by the whole of

⁴⁰ This aspect of the *cassoni* under discussion has not previously been examined, although there are some important publications dealing with anti-tyrannical ideas in some domestic Florentine panels with the Story of Lucretia and the Story of Virginia produced at the turn of the 15th and 16th century; see n. 61 below.

⁴¹ See Witthoft, 1982, 43-59; and idem, 'Riti nuziali e loro iconografia', in ed. M. De Giorgio and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Storia del matrimonio*, Bari 1996, 119-48, esp. 136-42 with further bibliography.

⁴² Gombrich, 1966, 32-3.

⁴³ *The Albertis of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's 'Della Famiglia'*, trans. G. A. Guarino, Lewisburg, PA 1971, 32-3. This passage is quoted and analysed by A. B. Barriault, *Spalliera Paintings of Renaissance Tuscany. Fables of Poets for Patrician Homes*, University Park, PA 1994, 95-6; and Miziołek, 1996, 40-1.

⁴⁴ See G. Brucker, *Dal Comune alla Signoria. La vita pubblica a Firenze nel primo Rinascimento*, Bologna 1981, 151-219 (first published in English in 1977).

⁴⁵ See A. Lanza, *Firenze contra Milano. Gli intellettuali fiorentini nelle guerre con i Visconti (1290-1440)*, Rome 1991.

Florentine society.⁴⁶ Although written in 1441, Alberti's *Della famiglia* is based on the teaching of early humanists such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni.⁴⁷ It is true that important words on Lucretia are to be found in the writings of Petrarch and Boccaccio, but Salutati records the story a number of times, and his already mentioned *Declamatio Lucretiae* was most probably written just at the beginning of the war.⁴⁸ Already before becoming Chancellor of Florence in 1375, he had propagated love for the Republic, and had proposed Brutus who banished Tarquin the Proud from Rome as the *exemplum* of justice.⁴⁹ 'Romae libertatis auctor Brutus' is a phrase Salutati repeated often from 1374 onwards,⁵⁰ and his reaction to the tales of Lucretia and other Roman heroines was similar. Thus great figures of ancient Rome, but exclusively from the Republican age, became Florentine national heroes.

'Please read once again', wrote Salutati at the beginning of the war with Giangaleazzo in one of his public letters, 'stories of Romans, whose descendents we are; look through their chronicles and think about the centuries of the republic after the banishment of the last king'.⁵¹ In this context Lucretia's suicide and the banishment of Tarquin the Proud were a perpetual reminder of republican liberty. As noted earlier, the *Declamatio Lucretiae* became the most widely read of all Salutati's writings; more than seventy manuscript copies of it are to be found in various libraries all over the world.⁵² It has already been analysed by historians of literature, so suffice it to say here that apart from justifying the heroine's suicide it also contains a severe condemnation of tyrannical or autocratic rule. Lucretia's name is recorded by Salutati together with that of Brutus on the margin of his personal copy of Petrarch's *De viris illustribus*, in a letter to Filippo di Bartoletto di Valle di Querciola of 1391, in a second letter, this time to Bernardo Moglio,⁵³ and in an epigram composed for the *aula minor* of the Palazzo della Signoria which reads:

⁴⁶ Brucker 1981, 155.

⁴⁷ For an excellent paper on the teaching of early humanists, see E. Garin, 'I cancellieri umanisti della Repubblica Fiorentina da Coluccio Salutati a Bartolomeo Scala', in *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano: ricerche e documenti*, Florence 1992, 3-37.

⁴⁸ See Jed, 1989 passim and Menesto, 1971, passim.

⁴⁹ Cf. Baron, 1966, 115-16.

⁵⁰ *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, I, 1891, 191-2. For Brutus in Florentine art, see S. Morpurgo, 'Bruto il 'buon giudice' nell'Udienza dell'Arte della Lana in Firenze', in *Miscellanea di storia dell'arte in onore di Igino Benvenuto Supino*, Florence 1933, 141-63.

⁵¹ Cited from Garin, 1992, 16.

⁵² Baron, 1966, 116; Jed, 1989; Menesto, 1971.

⁵³ *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, IV,1, 1905, 253; B. L. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Rome 1973, 290. See also Miziotek, 1996, 41-2.

'Lucretiae vindex sapiens non Brutus ut ante
Regibus expulsis in libertate quirites
Asserui pro qua virgis iustaque securi
Percussi natos, hostemque cadendo peremi'.⁵⁴

Salutati also refers to the banishment of Tarquin in *De Tyranno*, in the *Invettiva contro Antonio Loschi di Vicenza*, and in a letter to King Charles of Durazzo written in 1381.⁵⁵

In order to understand better both the great popularity of Salutati's *Declamatio* and the wide diffusion of *cassoni* with the legend of Lucretia, it is worth quoting from a letter of Salutati dated May 1390:

'To the tyrant of Lombardy who wishes to be the only king we declare war to defend our liberty and we raise our arms to liberate all the defeated states from this horrible yoke'.⁵⁶

It was not only Salutati who thought in this way. For example, in a letter of 1391 to Franco Sacchetti, Donato Acciaiuoli, then the *gonfaloniere della giustizia* or standard-bearer of justice of Florence, wrote:

'I read your observations concerning our state with truly great interest, and particularly all the examples of the ancient stories, which should serve as everlasting memory. I thought about the characters you mentioned and thus about Romulus, first king of Romans, a ruler of great heart, founder of the city, and then of the first founder of liberty, namely Brutus, who, moved by the tragedy and sacrifice of Lucretia, banished King Tarquin from Rome with the help of the people and of justice, and founded liberty'.⁵⁷

For Acciaiuoli, the ancient stories are *sempiterna memoria*, and Lucretia herself appears together with Romulus and Brutus as an *exemplum* precisely during the first years of the war against the Lombard tyrant. A number of

⁵⁴ T. Hankey, 'Salutati's Epigrams for the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXII, 1959, 363-5.

⁵⁵ See Miziołek, 1996, 42.

⁵⁶ Quoted from Garin, 1992, 15. For *florentina libertas*, see R. G. Witt, 'The Rebirth of the Concept of Republican Liberty in Italy', in eds A. Molho et al., *Renaissance Studies in Honour of Hans Baron*, Florence 1971, 175-99; and N. Rubinstein, 'Florentina libertas', *Rinascimento*, XXVI, 1986, 3-26.

⁵⁷ Translated from Lanza, 1991, 164.

more or less similar texts can be found in Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentine urbis*,⁵⁸ in the *History of Florence* by Goro Dati, and in the mysterious book attributed to Giovanni Gherardi da Prato entitled *Paradiso degli Alberti* which reflects the atmosphere of Florence in the age of Coluccio Salutati. One of the most interesting passages in Dati's *History of Florence* reads:

'E però, questi Fiorentini, nati di quei Romani liberi, seguitano la natura loro, hanno sempre sospetto di chi potesse occupare e torre loro libertà del loro reggimento popolare comune, e per questo sono nimici e contrari d'animo di chi studia occupare per tirannia e superbia la libertà, come fanno coloro che per gentilezza sdegnano di stare al pari degli altri e cercano ufficio sopra gli altri per perpetuo o per forza o per inganni come tiranni'.⁵⁹

And the last quotation is from the *Paradiso degli Alberti*:

'...io per me mai ridire non potrei, se cento e cento anni fosse il mio tempo, quello che dai sette regi fu fatto fino che gran Bruto colla inusitata l'onta di Lucrezia, cacciando Tarquino, vendicò lla già potentissima città ad libertà dolcissima magnanimamente redusse formando il santissimo consolato, principio, fondamento della gloria immortale del popolo romano averso, contrario e nimico d'ogni spaventevole tirannia. O quanto la sua patria con zelo innistimabile ferventissimamente amò!'⁶⁰

Thus, as we have seen, in a Florence which felt itself to be the inheritor of the ancient Roman republic, it was enough to mention the names of Brutus and Lucretia, for citizens to think immediately about the *patria*, about liberty and the collapse of tyranny. At the time that the war with Giangaleazzo Visconti was at its height, wedding chests carried through the city's streets depicting

⁵⁸ For the *Laudatio*, see L. Bruni, 'Panegyric to the City of Florence', in eds B. G. Kohl and R. G. Witt, *The Earthly Republic. Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, Philadelphia 1978, 135-75.

⁵⁹ See Lanza, 1991, 266.

⁶⁰ Giovanni Gherardi da Prato, *Il Paradiso degli Alberti*, ed. A. Lanza, Rome 1975, 46. For dating of this text, see H. Baron, *Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the Beginning of the Quattrocento*, Cambridge 1955, 13-24; and P. Salwa, 'Il Paradiso degli Alberti: la novella impigliata', in *La novella italiana*, Atti del Convegno di Caprarola, 19-24 settembre 1988, Rome 1989, 755-69.

Lucretia, wearing the clothes of contemporary Florentine women, and the banishment of the tyrant, were not only illustrations of women's virtue but also a true anthem in praise of *florentina libertas*. The story of Lucretia was popular throughout the Italian Renaissance, but its revival in Florence at the end of the 15th century was, as has been convincingly demonstrated by some scholars, once again closely linked with republican ideas and liberty.⁶¹ The most interesting expression of these ideas is to be found in some *cassone* or *spalliera* panels executed by Sandro Botticelli and his followers.

⁶¹ Walton, 1965, 177-86; R. Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli. Life and Work*, New York 1989, 267-9, pls 107-8; Barriault, 1994, 124-8.