

The Case of Lucretia: A Linguistic Construction of Absence
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In reading Livy's account of the *Rape of Lucretia*, an overpowering silence permeates the text, a silence found at the heart of the episode, in the person of Lucretia herself. Scholars (e.g., Newlands; Joshel; Joplin; Beard; Smethurst) have examined Lucretia's silence in an effort to understand how this passive female character fits into the overall literary framework of Livy's *Histories* and how it informs the moralistic agenda he announces in his preface. Both political and sociological significance have been read into this episode contextualizing Lucretia variously as a founding figure of Republican freedom (Newlands), a symbolic representation of abstractions such as *libertas*, *respublica*, *virtus*, *pudicitia* (Vandiver), and as an embodiment of the space of the home (Joshel). This paper aims to further the discourse on Lucretia's silence in this episode by examining the linguistic framework that informs Livy's passive construction of this exemplary female, a framework that permeates every word, phrase, and syntactical unit in which Lucretia grammatically participates. Livy skillfully deploys such linguistic instruments as the Latin case system, passive verbal constructions, and indicators of grammatical possession to infuse Lucretia's character with a magnified texture of passivity and silence that essentially erases her from her own narrative. In Sandra Joshel's analysis, which centers on Livy's penchant for sacrificing his female characters once their auxiliary function within the male centered narrative has been fulfilled, she addresses the overpowering silence driving this episode when she says that Lucretia becomes, 'a blank space, a void, for Livy effectively eliminates her voice...' While the linguistic elision of this female figure may mirror both the passive experience of a violated and disempowered woman as well as the social dynamic existent between female *pudicitia* and the political potency of the Roman state, such a passive construction of the quintessential exemplary female character from the primary foundation myth of the Roman Republic reveals an unsettling ideology underwriting Livy's grand moral vision for Roman society and the role he imagines for women within it.