

Speaking Up for Rome: How Rome's Talkative Matrons Serve the City and Save the Day.

Rome's heroines are often described as symbols, victims, or *exempla* in scholarly analysis of their role in the early books of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* (Stevenson 2011, Vandiver 1999, Chaplin 2000). S. E. Smethurst described women as passive and voiceless (1950), while Sandra Joshel (1992) and T. J. Moore (1993) argued that women are often worth more to their country as silenced corpses than living citizens. This paper posits that Livy's early matrons had an additional role in Rome's history. Livy's matrons could speak on behalf of themselves and their city when their words could benefit the state. The trend suggests that in Augustan Rome the reading public recognized the role matrons as intercessors in civic affairs. In the interest of brevity, this paper will use Hersilia, the Sabines, and Lucretia as examples.

Livy establishes the precedent of matronly intervention after the Romans defeat two groups of Sabine men, the Caeninenses and the Antemnates, and capture their towns (Liv. 1.10.1-1.11.4). The two groups are then incorporated into Rome's citizen body, an accomplishment credited to Hersilia, Romulus's wife (Mustakallio 1999, Ogilvie 1965). Livy emphasizes Hersilia's role as a speaking agent. Hersilia is the subject of the active verb "*orat*," affirming that Hersilia accomplishes her goal through a speech act. She articulates her request through a jussive noun clause, and the civic benefit is communicated through her indirect speech rather than narration (Liv. 1.11.2). The change made through an agentless neuter perfect passive participle, *facile impetratum*. As a result, the agency is distributed equally between Hersilia and her addressee, Romulus. Hersilia is therefore given credit benefiting the state through advocacy.

The Sabine women repeat the gesture on a larger scale, when the rest of the Sabine men make their full-scale assault (Liv. 1.11-1.12). Once again, Livy emphasizes that the military side

of the conflict has been satisfactorily dealt with. The battle has not yet finished, but the Roman side was gaining the upper hand (*res Romana erat superior*). However, the Sabines intercede physically and verbally, convincing their menfolk in both direct and indirect address to make peace (Liv. 1.13.3, Miles 1995). The state benefits again through the increase in population and the Sabine women's contribution is woven in the oral fabric of Rome's civic identity. The women's names are used as designations for the newly created *curias* (1.13.6-8). Not only is the women's speech act recognized as highly beneficial to the Roman People, it is memorialized as a civic contribution.

Lucretia also uses word to contribute substantively to the greater good of the state. Lucretia might have achieved her greatest utility once she was dead and silenced, but her usefulness was contingent upon her telling her story beforehand. Had she killed herself without reporting her assault, or had she only reported it to her husband and father without insisting on additional witnesses and an oath to avenge her, her corpse would have been a symbol of private tragedy rather than civic rebellion (1.58). Livy particularly emphasized Lucretia's voice as a manifestation agency. During her assault, Sextus Tarquinius forcibly silenced her (1.58.3). However, when she confronted her menfolk and their witnesses, she was the only one who speaks directly (1.58.7-12). Their pledge and their assessment of her innocence are reported through indirect discourse (1.58.9). Lucretia's choice to tell her story and force action on her menfolk empowers Brutus to incite the rebellion that founds the Republic.

Rome's early heroines are often silenced objects, but their voiceless bodies are not the only contributions that they make to the betterment of Rome. Through their choice to intervene in the public sphere through speech, Rome's matrons contributed substantively to Rome's development.

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