

## Livy's Dead History: An Analysis of Feminine Agency in Classical Latin Texts

Female characters in ancient literature are often depicted as passive victims of circumstance.

This matters because historical depictions of women continue to inform our social biases about them.

In Livy's *History of Rome*, this idea of passive femininity is made apparent through his recounting of the Bacchanalian scandal and the woman at the center of its disruption. *Hispala Faecenia*, a freedwoman and courtesan, is often depicted by Livy as lacking in choice and occupying a social position derelict of agency due to her role as a sex worker. By contrast *Perpetua*, a martyr who authored an auto-biographical tale while imprisoned by *Septimius Severus*, created a tale of her life that consistently centers her active role in choosing her fate. Both occupy a marginalized and denigrated role within society, yet the way they are represented in their respective texts has vast implications for understanding feminine agency through authorship.

My poster will be organized into 5 distinct sections: introductory remarks, a critique of Livy, a comparison of contrasting modes of authorship in relation to *Perpetua*, a retelling of *Hispala's* role in Livy's history that doesn't disregard her agency, and concluding remarks. I will include relevant images to help convey these themes as well as relevant Latin passages, translated into English, from both works.