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Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens.

A Public History case study: the *Matronae* podcast.

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Plautus, *Rudens*, 1114: «*Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens.*» (Trad. «It is always better to have a silent woman than a talkative one»).

Matronae podcast

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Introduction

There has always been a model for women to follow since ancient times. According to the Roman tradition, the ideal woman was characterized by virtues, values, and behaviours defined by the *mos maiorum*.[1] In accordance with the title of Luciano Franzoni's book,[2] the Roman woman was expected to be *pia, pudica, casta, domiseda, lanifica*:[3] these were characteristics that relegated her to the confines of a domestic and private existence. More importantly, she was required to respect and worship *Tacita Muta*, the goddess of female silence. A woman's representation in Roman times - especially in epigraphic sources - referred to her service to her husband and son, rather than her cultural and intellectual *status*. As early as the first centuries of Rome, women were completely subordinate to the *pater familias*,[4] the husband or a guardian. It was instead the prerogatives of men to engage in warfare and politics, which they did with great eloquence. Not surprisingly, while women were obligated to follow the model set by *Tacita Muta*, men had *Aius Locutius* as their *exemplum*.[5]

During the second century BC, civil wars erupted in Roman society, giving women the opportunity to enter the political arena for the first time. Having come from aristocratic, senatorial, or military families, these women belonged to the social class of *matronae*.[6]

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[1] Trad. Customs of the ancestors.

[2] Franzoni, L. (2019). Donna romana. Pia, pudica, casta, domiseda, lanifica. *Ceccarelli.*

[3] Trad. Pious, demure, chaste, housekeeper, woolworker.

[4] Trad. Family man.

[5] Cantarella E. (2021). Passato prossimo, Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia, Milano, *Feltrinelli Editore.*

[6] Matrons in Roman times represented an elevated social class. Members of aristocratic or military families, they were subject to the power of the *pater familias* and bound within the confines of their own homes. However, in the late republican age when fathers and husbands were engaged in civil war, matrons managed to create a place for themselves in the public life of Rome as well.

Thus, they distinguished themselves from the rest of the Roman female population by their strong family ties, from which they could draw the power of their male counterparts to perform defence actions on behalf of their families and communities. Consequently, women began to speak out on political issues in these contexts: some in the privacy of their homes, others even in the *forum* before the triumvirs. Historiographers have recorded these female speeches throughout the centuries as a tribute to their courage. However, it should be noted that authors frequently used these female speeches to praise, laud and glorify their close male relatives.

In a society that values history's polyphony, it is imperative to provide a voice to these women, whose stories have been told by men for so many centuries. The *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* cultural dissemination workshop[7] emphasises the importance of providing an inclusive and balanced historical narrative from the perspective of women. In the academic year 2022/2023, the project, which was the result of collaboration between several academic institutions,[8] enters its second edition. By using new *media* to reach a wider audience, it was decided to produce a podcast to tell these stories. Through six episodes, the authors recount the lives of five Roman *matronae* and more importantly, their political actions and speeches. As a Public History project, it incorporates careful research and references to ancient and modern sources throughout the narration. The political speeches are translations of Latin and Greek texts written by great authors such as Cicero, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Livy, and others. As a result, these historiographical episodes are presented with accuracy. Although the content must

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[7] *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* workshop: https://www.unive.it/data/agenda/2/65212.

[8] The project, part of a collaboration between GIEFFRA (Groupe International d'Etudes sur les Femmes et la Famille dans la Rome Antique), Ca' Foscari University of Venice and VeDPH (Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities), is taught and supervised by Roman history professor Francesca Rohr Vio and also involves female students from the university.

respect historiographical rigour, academic language must be adapted to the audio mode and podcast format. An understanding of media language requires a knowledge of genres, technical codes for print and audio-visual media, and an understanding of how ideological viewpoints are constructed, and messages are communicated and interpreted by diverse audiences.[9] By combining academic content with new *media* language, a narrative of accurate historical research is made accessible to the general public. Clearly, the question arises: can new *media* formats – such as podcasts – serve as useful output of academic research? Although scholars remain sceptical about this, the large number of historical podcasts appearing on the biggest podcasting platforms confirms the public's interest in history.

It is the objective of this thesis to provide a concrete answer to this question. Taking as an example the *Matronae* podcast - produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice - it will be demonstrated how historical podcasts can be produced starting from academic research based on historical sources to reach the general public.

It is fitting that the title chosen for this thesis symbolizes the ties between the past and the present of history. Plautus' quotation recalls the condition of women in ancient Rome, in which women were unable to respect the role assigned to them by society unless they remained silent.[10] In contrast, the reference to not only technological but also scientific progress provides women of the past with the opportunity to speak up for themselves and tell their own stories (via a microphone).

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[9] OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA), (2017). Media Studies. Delivery guide. *OCR.*

[10] Plautus, *Rudens*, 1114. Trad. «It is always better to have a silent woman than a talkative one».

The first section of the thesis presents a detailed description of the instruments and methodologies used in the creation of the *Matronae* podcast. The production of the episodes begins with the writing of the texts, which are carefully verified according to historical sources. Then, will be analysed microphones and stratagems to ensure that the recordings are as professional as possible. From designing the covers with the aid of Artificial Intelligence technologies, to audio and sound editing through Audacity. And finally, the distribution of the podcast and the promotion strategy that was adopted in the first few days following publication. Since May 21, 2023, the podcast has been available on Spotify, Google Podcasts, and the official GIEFFRA website, but work is underway to make the episodes available on Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music as well. The project team objective is to place the series on as many platforms as possible so that the general public will be able to discover these stories.

The second part of the dissertation is devoted to a historical analysis of the development of the relatively new Public History discipline and the technological advances which led to the first podcasts. In the 1970s, a new social movement aimed to make history more accessible to the public.[11] The study of history, which had been the privilege of the wealthy for centuries, has emerged from the walls of academic institutions and affected the lives of all citizens. As a result of this movement, a new field of study was born: Public History. Since the discipline involves a wide range of methodologies and output formats, it has a difficult time defining itself during its early years. Early academics are united only by the placement of the subject outside the academic environment. Thus, it involves activities to engage and interact with the public in order to create a shared history from which knowledge and insight can be drawn. In this sense, history serves as a *migistra*

[11] Kelley, R. (1978). Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects. *The Public Historian, 1(1),* 16–28.

vitae,[12] a guide from which to seek *exempla* from the past. Specifically, as this subject develops, issues not previously addressed by traditional history are explored, including the role of women in different historical periods. By providing to the general public a wider range of stories and perspectives, Public History is dedicated to the collective growth of the society: firstly, working on our sense of identity; and then promoting a sense of empathy and unity that would benefit everyone.

Furthermore, as a result of technological progress, the discipline is now also exploring new ways to make its content accessible to the general public through the use of the new *media* that are emerging. In this way, Public History engages with new technologies such as websites, social media, and podcasts. This practical analysis will be followed by a discussion of the potential impact of re-telling these historical events and the development of new methodologies for disseminating historical information.

Is the podcast a valuable means of disseminating historical research to the general public?

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[12] Cicerone*, De Oratore,* II, 9, 36. Trad: «History [….] the teacher of life. »

FIRST PART

WOMEN'S LIVES, WOMEN'S HISTORIES PROJECT: *MATRONAE* PODCAST.

1. Academic research for the public benefit

In the 1970s, the academic world opened to the public.[13] However, this step was anything but straightforward. Scholars had to learn how to communicate first with an audience of non-experts, and then – with the advancement of technology – through new *media*. Although the language has evolved over time, the priorities of any academic research has remained intact: accuracy, methodological rigour, transparency; which, specifically for Public History, were conjugated in historical truth. Despite this, historical representation outside academia allows a certain amount of fiction. Films, television series, and novels with historical themes are not intended to portray historical events objectively, but rather to evoke an emotional response in viewers and readers.[14] These productions, according to Professor Martin M. Winkler in *Gladiator: Film and History* (2004), reflect a form of «story not history». Historiographers and experts who criticise these historical contents fail to recognise the difference between cinematic fiction and academic accuracy.[15] There is great potential for popularising history through films and

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[13] See Johnson, G.W. (1999). The Origins of The Public Historian and the National Council on Public History. *The Public Historian, XXI, n.3.* and Kelley, R. (1978). Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects. *The Public Historian, 1(1),* 16–28.

[14] György Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel* (1974) offers a reflection on the British author Walter Scott and his 1819 novel *Ivanhoe*: «what counts in the historical novel is thus not the narration of events, but the poetic evocation of the men who figured in those events. »

[15] Italian historian Sergio Bertelli in *Corsari del tempo* (1994) criticises the fact that Brutus, played by actor James Mason, in Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* movie (1953) read from a "small volume" and not a scroll or parchment, as was the custom in Roman times. In response to this controversy Pier Maria Pasinetti, the historical supervisor of the film, wrote in his essay "*Julius Caesar": The Role of the Technical Adviser (p. 137)*: «Dramatic opportunity may even suggest conscious incongruities in minor details. For instance, Brutus was not only a politician but also very much a thinker and reader; at some points he carries with him a book or reads in it. We know, of course, that the Roman book was a scroll (*volumen*); but what with letters and messages of practically the same shape being handled in the play, that book would have been unrecognizable, if it had been a scroll, and therefore ineffective. I suppose I am responsible as anyone for

historical novels. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary not only to possess knowledge of reliable sources, but also the expertise to interpret them.[16] Therefore, it is essential to present projects to the general public that parse from reliable sources and employ the language of the new *media* to build truthful and compelling narratives.

This first chapter discusses how the *Women's Lives, Women's Histories project*, supported by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and in particular by the Department of Humanities, accomplished this goal.

1.1 *Matronae* podcast: a Public History project

Whenever someone thinks about ancient Roman history, the first suggestion which leaps to mind concerns those heroic acts of leaders and emperors who marked the western world throughout the centuries to come, and the majesty of cities, architectures, and infrastructures. Yet, Roman women are frequently ignored within this portrait, even though they were substantial and effective part of the society: this bias stems from a legacy of historiographical literature which traditionally kept them out of the chronicles. Although restricted in their opportunities and bound to domestic and religious lives, Roman *matronae* were able to leave their mark on history as testaments to the human spirit's strength, resilience, and intelligence.

It is imperative to recognise the legacy of these women and to comprehend that the foundations of our society go back to the ancient Roman world. Even if they are in

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letting Brutus' book have the appearance of, let us say, a Renaissance small edition of a classic. At least, I confess I refrained from warning anyone about that. »

[16] See Campanile, D. (2007). Film storici e critici troppo critici. *Studi Classici e Orientali, 53,* 323–362. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24190082 .

embryonic forms, it is possible to identify practices, processes, and mentalities that continue to exist in today's society. Toward these ends, the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2021 launched a new initiative: *Women's Lives, Women's Histories*. The project was initiated thanks to the passionate efforts of professors Francesca Rohr and Alessandra Valentini, experts in Roman history and civilization, and the collaboration of the GIEFFRA (Groupe International d'Etudes sur les Femmes et la Famille dans la Rome Antique) and the VeDPH (Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities). Several students from different degree courses were given the opportunity to participate in the project, contributing with diverse expertise, interests, and perspectives to the cause, and thus allowing the team to address the topic with a more holistic approach.

The project aims to investigate the figures of Roman women documented in ancient sources and to identify the most notable and salient aspects that should be disclosed to a broader audience. A second edition of the workshop was held in the academic year 2022/2023,[17] with the intention of producing a podcast and exploiting the potential of this *media* to support historical research. The podcast *Matronae* explores and showcases the relevance and worth of the speeches given by Roman matrons, speeches which covered issues pertaining to both their private and public lives. Ancient tradition stated that only men who held magistratures and military positions could intervene in public affairs, and women were forbidden to do so. Roman women were forced to emulate *Tacita Muta*, a nymph deprived of her tongue by the god Jupiter for her excessive speaking[18] and known as the goddess of Silence. Not only was her cult the sole prerogative of women, but her experience was also a warning to them all. In the II century B.C, the Latin author Plautus

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[17] First edition of *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* project: https://www.unive.it/pag/47702/.

[18] Ovid., *Fast.,* II, 583-616.

reassessed this concept saying that *«Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens»*.[19] Women were obliged to observe silence not merely as a virtue, but as a real duty. Nevertheless, there were some women who dared speak out in public about private and political matters. Since the late Republic, women began to claim spaces from which they had previously been excluded.[20] As a result, the female component of Roman society increased its opportunities: women became literates as Sulpicia, orators like Hortensia, and influential in politics as Julia and Livia. As the Roman world changed, traditions were subverted. Notwithstanding these increasingly frequent stances, there is very little historical evidence of female discourses in the Roman world, and those few that have been reported and have reached us so far, were written by men and were, therefore, often portrayed from their purely masculinist perspective.

The podcast delves into the histories of these exceptional women who achieved success in a male-dominated world that sought to confine them within their house. This series is presented in six episodes, each lasting approximately fifteen minutes, aimed at narrating the stories of both legendary and historical Roman women who became spokeswomen and representatives of the social and cultural issues of their time. Taking up five female

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[19] Plautus, *Rudens*, 1114: «It is always better to have a silent woman than a talkative one».

[20] In every era, war disrupts social dynamics and alters the traditionally assigned roles of each category. Men are at the front lines, engaged in warfare, leaving women to take up traditional public and political responsibilities. During the late Republic, women not only found themselves in a position to fulfil these roles but also possessed the means to do so. The prosperity resulting from the campaigns in the Hellenistic East provided elite women with access to a refined cultural education, as well as exceptionally rich private libraries. Furthermore, the mindset and experiences of the Hellenistic monarchies, which attributed significant power to women, influenced the thinking of the Roman nobility. Women also gained direct experience in politics, as many gatherings and discussions took place not in institutional settings, which were abandoned by men at war, but rather in their own homes, where women were also present. (See Rohr Vio, F., & Dodd, J. (2022). Matronae and Politics in Republican Rome. In V. Arena, J. Prag, & A. Stiles (Eds.), A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic (pp. 362–373). *Wiley Blackwell.*)

speeches made in private and public settings and reported in ancient sources, the episodes of the podcast centre on the significance of rhetoric in Roman society. The first episode commences with the legendary story of the Abduction of the Sabine Women by the Roman army led by Romulus. Notably, it was the women's desperate plea for peace between the two armies that brought an end to the conflict[21]. Even though legendary, this story would become an *exemplum* for the *matronae* during the republican era. As the civil wars unfolded, women began to take a greater interest in matters that were previously reserved for men and became part of the *res publica*. In line with traditional female conduct, some interventions remained confined to domestic boundaries. This is the case of Porcia Catonis, who asked her husband Brutus about his political ambitions and strategies. By showing the wound she procured to herself, Porcia demonstrated to her husband that she was physically and psychologically capable of withstanding torture if she were to be taken captive[22]. Porcia was the only woman who knew the Ides of March plans. Even more compelling is the story of Servilia, who invited senators to her own house to discuss political affairs[23]. While some women remained in their homes, other ventured to the *forum*, the *nucleus* of Roman politics. There, they openly questioned the political decisions made by the state officials. The stories of Julia and Hortensia are centred on their public orations regarding political issues during the first centuries BC: the former to save her own family, the latter to protect Roman women's *dignitas*. In front of the entire *forum*, Julia spoke to her son: the triumvir Marcus Antonius, one of the triumvir who issued the proscription lists. She implored the "commander"[24] to spare her

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[21] Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1, 9-11.

[22] Plut. *Brut*. 13.5-11; Val. Max. III 2.14-15¸Dio XLIV 13.4.

[23] Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 10-11.

[24] The ancient Greek historian and author, Appian of Alexandria, reported the case of Julia. In her public speech she does not recognize Marcus Antonius as her son, but rather as αὐτοκράτωρ, "commander". She emphasized his representative role and political responsibilities.

brother Lucius, who has been condemned to death by the proscription lists, or to take her own life too by trying[25]. During this same period, Hortensia served as an advocate for all Roman *matronae*. She addressed the triumviri, calling for the dissolution of a law that would threaten women's *dignitas* and jeopardized their *status symbol*.[26] Hortensia demanded respect to the gender distinctions which had been part of the society for centuries and argued that women should not be held accountable for their husbands' actions. As they defended their personhood, rank, and interests, the *matronae* boldly raised their voices.

The name of the podcast precisely reflects the assertiveness, lucidity, and tenacity of these women: the *matronae*. Matrons, in fact, belong to a distinct social category:[27] as members of senatorial and equestrian rank families, matrons represent the women of the elite. They are granted greater opportunities and roles compared to other female members of society. Through their families' ties, these women became vital and integral parts of Roman society. And their stories, narrated within the *Matronae* podcast, shall not be forgotten.

By using the Latin term *matronae*, large room is left for the podcast expansion in terms of topics and language. This season's female speeches with political content may lead to new seasons devoted to other aspects of their lives. Additionally, since the podcast is produced by GIEFFRA, an international organization, these episodes may be part of a long multilingual series. A Latin term can be an opportunity to bring together under one project various languages. Though, in order to make the language of the content immediately clear to the listen and to clarify the topics of the episodes, an Italian subtitle

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[25] Appian, *De bellis civilibus*, IV, CLVI-CLVII.

[26] Appian, *Bell. Civ.*, *IV*, 32-33.

[27] The ancient Roman historian Valerius Maximums referred to this social class as "*ordo matronarum*".

was also included: "*Voci di donne dall'antica Roma*". Eventually, this can be modified in accordance with the project's needs.

It is imperative that these stories receive due recognition and are disseminated to the broader public. Eva Cantarella, a historian and professor of ancient Greek and Roman law, states that we are closer to Roman history than we realize.[28] Despite centuries of progress, certain behaviours and roles towards women persist in Western society. Women have yet to attain parity with men, especially in politics, with respect to the amplification of their voices.

Podcasts featuring Roman women's speeches can be of considerable interest and benefit to the audience. Audio formats provide an alternative method of learning history, as they deepen an understanding of historical periods that are not studied in school for their role in women's history. This particular interest has led the project to discuss gender studies,[29] investigating gender inequality within society. In ancient Roman society, men and women occupied distinct roles, and the podcast can guide listeners through how these responsibilities were defined, reinforced, and modified over time. From the female perspective, we can appreciate the challenges these women faced, living in a society where the *mos maiorum* was unbreakable and their opportunities ended at the boarders of the domestic sphere. The podcast delves into a transformative period when women, limited in their freedom, struggled to make their voice heard, and saw their role recognised by the society. These women should serve as a source of inspiration for

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[28] Cantarella E. (2021). *Passato prossimo, Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, p. 146.

[29] See Giorcelli Bersani, S. (2016). Donne romane: storie "di genere" vere, possibili, improbabili. Donne, istituzioni e società fra tardo antico e alto medioevo (pp. 405–430), *Pensa*. p. 414-415.

contemporary women today, as the ability to express one's opinion is an essential freedom, and no one should be forced to remain silent.

1.2 The collaborative nature of the humanities

As the protagonists of *Matronae,* the team members are also exclusively female. Digital and public humanities are known for being collaborative and heterogeneous disciplines, with each member bringing their unique perspective and skills to a project. *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* does not differ. Furthermore, their engagement was granted by the support of two major international agencies: VeDPH (Venice Centre for Digital Humanities) and GIEFFRA (Groupe International d'Etudes sur les Femmes et la Famille dans la Rome Antique).

As part of the Department of Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the VeDPH[30] promotes access to humanistic disciplines and their dissemination according to innovative and various approaches.[31] A wide range of tools have been developed[32] for a variety of purposes, from the production of manuscripts' digital editions and network analysis to digital mapping and visualisation of archaeological sites and objects. Public engagement is considered to be an integral aspect of every research project, either because people directly participate in research activities or because they benefit from the

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[30] VeDPH (Venice Centre for Digital Humanities) website: https://www.unive.it/pag/39287/

[31] See Fischer, F., Boschetti, F., Del Grosso A. M., Montefusco, A., Mancinelli, T., Macchiarelli, A., di Maro, M., Merola, V., & Nocita, T. (2023). Sinergie fra VeDPH e CNR-ILC in termini di condivisione della conoscenza e sostenibilità dei progetti digitali. In *Digital Humanities 2022. Per un confronto interdisciplinare tra saperi umanistici a 30 anni dalla nascita del World Wide Web* (Vol. 7, Ser. Filologia classica e medievale, pp. 113–133). *«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER*.

[32] Ibidem.

knowledge that is produced. Hence, each study area within the centre investigates tools and methodologies that are suitable for public consumption at different levels. Digitisation and making cultural heritage accessible are a service to both academia and the public, in principle. The question is how to communicate these contents. The digitisation of ancient manuscripts is an example of research within Digital and Public History that is more academically oriented. Others, however, leverage new media platforms, such as videos and podcasts, to communicate with the general public. As a result, the centre serves as a bridge between the academic world and the public, promoting cultural inclusivity and accessibility.

GIEFFRA,[33] the official home of the *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* podcast, has established itself as an international research network and aims to foster collaboration between scholars who use ancient documentation to examine family histories and women's roles from the republican period to the late Roman antiquity. Analysing historical sources allows to gain an understanding of the connections between Roman families, as well as the role of women in Roman politics, families, religion, and society. As for these themes, the organisation hosts international conferences and publishes scholarly articles, all of which are presented and stored on the GIEFFRA website, run by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Additionally, GIEFFRA promotes Public History initiatives, in collaboration with and supported by the VeDPH collaboration. In 2021, the project *Roman women, between ancient history and contemporary times* [34] took shape. When considering the experiences Roman women endured at their time, recurring

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[33] GIEFFRA (Groupe International d'Etudes sur les Femmes et la Famille dans la Rome Antique) website: https://sites.google.com/unive.it/gieffra/home?authuser=0

[34] *Roman women, between ancient history and contemporary times* web page: https://sites.google.com/unive.it/gieffra/progetti-di-ricerca-e-attivit%C3%A0-di-public-history/roma-al-femminile-tra-storia-antica-e-presente?authuser=0

motives can still be identified today. The history of women's rights can be traced back to ancient times, when women in ancient Rome were regarded as inferior to men and were relegated to the roles of wives and mothers. Eventually, with time, some of them achieved fame and prestige in the fields of politics and culture. Yet just a small and rare portion of them was deemed to be worthy of such recognition. As the late republic progressed, women began to participate in the political life: many of them entering the assembly and voicing their opinions on the magistrates' actions;[35] the most determined, however, became influential political personalities. The most noteworthy case is the rise of Livia Drusilla to the position of *Augusta*.[36] As for literature, the role of women as muses evolved into that of literati and poetesses, like Sulpicia. However, at the time, the idea of a woman writing poetry was deemed unthinkable, particularly if her verses were focused on amorous topics.   In truth, the figure of Sulpicia had been omitted from history[37] until the late XIX century, when she achieved recognition.

How is it possible that progress in gender equality, which began centuries ago, has moves at such a slow pace? How is it that social marginalization against women persists even today? How can women succeed in a society where they face lower prospects in education, employment, wages, and political representation compared to men?

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[35] Appian, *De bellis civilibus,* 145: «Women took courage, came to the assembly, and called the magistratures to account for their actions. »

[36] Livia Drusilla, in 14 A.D., was granted the imperial title of *Augusta*, as the wife of the Roman emperor Augustus. Women in Roman political system never had personal power of their own; this depended solely on the men to whom they were related. As mothers, wives, or daughters of noble families, they were allowed to intervene in the public arena.

[37] The disappearance of the figure of Sulpicia from the chronicles is due to the fact that her verses were mistakenly attributed to Tibullus. And as they were considered to be from the hand of the Roman poet, these poems were preserved and transmitted within the *Corpus Tibullianum*. However, it is due to this misattribution that it is possible to read Sulpicia's words today. Words written by a woman would never have survived otherwise.

Creating a space to bring these issues to light and open a dialogue about them is the objective of the project. To achieve this result seminars and in-depth discussions on these subjects were conducted, as well as two workshops to illustrate the achievements of Roman women in fields traditionally dominated by men. In the second workshop, participants worked on the podcast *Matronae*.

In addition to the organizations involved in this work, it is also important to recognise the individuals who contributed to its success. First of all, Professor Francesca Rohr Vio, a notable Italian historian and expert in Roman history. Having earned her PhD in Roman history from Sapienza University of Rome following her undergraduate studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, she returned to Venice to teach. With particular interest in the late republic and high empire, she has devoted her research primarily to politics and to the figures of *homines novi* and *matronae*. In relation to the latter, it is worth mentioning her monograph published in 2019 *Le custodi del potere: donne e politica alla fine della repubblica Romana*, which discusses the *status* of women in a time of changes. For the first time during the civil wars, women took on a prominent and incisive role in public and political life. Politics, warfare, and Roman society began to include and be influenced by women's contributions. Rohr has also led several other research projects that investigate the role of Roman matrons in Roman culture. Her research has earned her numerous awards throughout her career, and she is widely recognised as a leading scholar in Roman history.[38]

Among Professor Rohr's collaborators is Professor Alessandra Valentini, who was also a Ca' Foscari student before working as a teacher and Roman historian. During her studies in Cultural Heritage and Ancient History at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, she became fascinated by the figure of women in ancient times. Later, as a doctoral student at the

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[38] Professor Francesca Rohr Vio: https://www.unive.it/data/persone/5593031.

Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, she pursued an interest in this field. Her research explored the dynamics of women's political participation in Roman society between the III and II centuries BC. In addition to her teaching responsibilities as a high school professor and lecturer at Ca' Foscari, Valentini is also involved in various projects and research related to gender studies and women's empowerment.[39]

The second member of the coordinators' team is Professor Sara Borrello, who is also a Roman historian at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Borrello obtained her PhD in Classics and Ancient History from Newcastle University. Early in her undergraduate studies, she developed an interest in marginal figures in Roman society. She graduated from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan with a bachelor thesis on Servilia and her ties with Brutus and Julius Caesar. Continuing her studies in Ancient Civilisations at Ca' Foscari, she then gained her PhD from the Newcastle University in 2022, with a thesis regarding children in Roman politics and warfare. Now as part of her research, she examinees the dynamics of families and the involvement of women and minors during the late Roman republic.[40]

Students from Ca' Foscari University of Venice were then invited to participate actively in the project. Specifically, five female students responded to the call, each bringing with them unique experiences and expertise, but sharing a common interest in exploring alternative methods of promoting historical research beyond the confines of traditional academic approaches. As in any academic project, the starting points are scientific research and accuracy, but its ultimate outcome was to promote technical innovation and to nurture a sense of social diversity. The production of a podcast involves abilities that go beyond traditional academic skills, and considers technical expertise, media

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[39] Professor Alessandra Valentini: https://www.unive.it/data/persone/48486.

[40] Professor Sara Borrello: https://www.unive.it/data/persone/11686024.

proficiency, and effective communication abilities. Despite its potential, this *medium* is not fully exploited in Italian universities, and projects that intend to use *media* in this manner are hardly known by the public. This is precisely where the project team assumed a vital role, with both students and professors mutually benefiting from each other's interdisciplinary and cross-functional competencies, by creating a stimulating and dynamic atmosphere where there is continuous and constructive collaboration.

A successful team is built on collaboration, but individual responsibilities also play a key role. In this context, due consideration was given each person's unique interests and skills while assigning their respective roles.

As for the pre-production, much research work was done by the three professors to provide students with materials, techniques, and advice for writing the episodes. Drawing from these guidelines, the students composed texts about the selected matrons, which were the carefully reviewed and edited by Professor Rohr. Once finalised, the written episodes were ready for recording. Prior to the recording, a very important contribution was made by Professor Angelo Callipo, who shared his knowledge of diction – valuable inputs for the next part of the project. During the recording process, students and professors shared the materials created and lent their voices to the episodes. To increase listeners' attention, male voices were employed to complement the female narrators. While the women played the narrators or the matrons' speeches, men reported the words of ancient Greek and Roman authors or played the role fathers, husbands, and sons of these women. The technical aspects of the recording were closely supervised by myself and my colleague Valentina Rossi. [41] It was also our responsibility to create digital

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[41] See Chapter 2 "The production of a podcast: from the research to the audio editing.".

graphic environment for the podcast.[42] Although the result is an audio product, an effective logo and cover are also essential to draw listeners to the podcast.

1.3 Podcasting for historic dissemination

An important factor to consider when producing a podcast is the context in which it will be situated. This entails a thorough assessment of whether similar products on the same topic exist, and if so, how they approach the subject matter. It is important to note that podcasts are especially suited to change narrative and perspectives on historical events. If there are already series about Roman history, a shift in perspective is worth to have a new story. Although there are podcasts that talk about Roman history and civilisation, few have focused on the female figure in this period, and none reports the political speeches these women delivered centuries ago. Finding historical podcasts for comparative analysis remains a challenge, as to date no single platform or archive hosts all podcasts.[43] For those interested in learning what the world of podcasts has to offer, a possible solution lies in comparing the rankings of the largest platforms that host this *medium*. From the statistics provided by Buzzsprout, a podcast hosting service, there were over 140 million listening in March 2023 alone. However, such a large number is associated with the success of only two platforms: of these listening, the 37,3% used Apple Music and the 29% Spotify[44]. Therefore, it is possible to look at the 100 Top Charts

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[42] Ibidem.

[43] The largest free audio streaming platforms compete for exclusive rights over the most successful podcasts; other paid services do not allow their audio content to be shared outside their subscribers. The vast number of podcasts produced to date is dispersed among the various competitors, and the user must jump from service to the other to have a general idea of the podcasts in circulation (Scandolin, 2023).

[44] Buzzsprout platform stats: https://www.buzzsprout.com/global_stats?date=2023-03-01

of these two giants to get an overview of how the world perceive the medium. Certainly, this is not the best reliable method, since the rankings are constantly changing over time, however, it allows to assess how historical podcasts rank in a broader audio. A cursory glance at the English and Italian language charts reveals that historical content often struggles to reach a wider audience. In addition, the few podcasts that do appear in the rankings typically occupy lower positions – with the only exception of Professor Barbero, which we will discuss later.

As the only historical podcast to have secured a place on the U.S. charts, *The rest is history* debuts at position fifty-two. Launched in 2020 by historians Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbook, the podcast now features more than three hundred episodes.[45] The two scholars talk to each other for nearly an hour about historical facts, drawing connections to contemporary events and personalities. *The rest is history* is an encyclopaedia of human history. Spanning from ancient empires to the Great Wars, and from pop culture to contemporary discussions. Holland and Sandbook present themselves as good interlocutors, with powerful voices and captivating language. They manage to hold the listeners' attention for a long time. There is not specificity of themes, however. One topic may be explored in two or three episodes but then they move on to distant historical periods talking about completely different issues. This variety of themes and length of episodes relate to a very famous Italian case.

Alessandro Barbero's podcasts hold many positions within the top charts of Spotify and Apple Music. He is an Italian historian and writer, specialising in medieval and military history. He contributes to television programs such *Superquark*, *Passato e presente* and

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[45] *The Rest is History* by Goalhanger Podcasts on Spotify:
https://open.spotify.com/show/7Cvsbcjhtur7nplC148TWy.

a.C.d.C., aired on Rai. Beginning in 2010, Barbero gained notoriety on the web through a series of lectures and lessons posted on YouTube, which have now been transformed into audio products. In Italian charts, Barbero's name is linked to two podcasts for Spotify and three podcasts for Apple Music, out of the five positions held by historical content in both platforms. *Podcast di Alessandro Barbero: lezioni e conferenze di storia* is even ranked second within the Apple Music top chart.[46] The podcast covers much of the professor's career: the first lecture by chronological order is dated 2006 and the most recent 2023. Given the conferential nature of the content, the episodes last not less than an hour, and the translation into audio loses all that physicality and interpretation of a visual performance. Although this content was not conceived as a podcast in its origin, it is gaining more and more success and ratings.

Barbero's historical podcast offers an analysis of Middle Ages history, while other podcasts that feature in the Italian top charts mainly delve into Greek and Roman mythology. *Mitologia: le meravigliose storie del mondo antico* by Professor Alessandro Gelain,[47] takes a notably academic approach and employs specialised language. As a teacher of philosophy, psychology, and humanities, Gelain since 2019 has been committed to telling myth as a metaphor for human existence, using ancient stories to understand ourselves more deeply. Gelain refers to myth as a mirror from which to draw inner knowledge. Each episode, which focuses on heroes and their narratives, lasts for up to 20 minutes and is released every Monday. With a completely opposite approach, *Mitologia gettata* is the only podcast in the charts not created by an academic figure. The author Manuela Meloni (*aka* Manume) is an architect and designer who started this

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[46] *Podcast di Alessandro Barbero: lezioni e conferenze di storia* on Apple Podcasts: https://podcasts.apple.com/it/podcast/il-podcast-di-alessandro-barbero-lezioni-e/id1501956064.

[47] *Mitologia: le meravigliose storie del mondo antico* by Professor Alessandro Gelain on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/1SwSIc0wezsIPCek4nyX5B.

project as a hobby.[48] This podcast tells the "tragicomic" stories of Greek and Roman mythology with a large dose of humour. Manume "in the time of a coffee" recounts love, intrigues, misfortunes, and heroic deeds with comic language; often exaggerating in hilarity and sacrificing the seriousness and truthfulness of a historical content. A communication more akin to gossip than scientific reconstruction. While colloquial and light language may be used, it should be underpinned by sources and documentation that authenticate the podcast's historical accuracy.

Social media are having a major impact on how information is collected and disseminated within society. While the literature discusses the public's use of new digital *media*, few studies address how these same tools can benefit academia. This is probably due to the tendency of academic institutions to prioritise the written words of traditional research over the production of digital content. Jason Mittel (2020) in an analysis of the criticism made toward videographic, proposes a view that can be extended to any interaction between digital media and humanities in an academic context:

> «Most scholars are not trained to conceptually engage with moving-image media as a mode of scholarly rhetoric, and academic fields have not reconciled how to position such work as part of systems of research, professional development, and peer-review. »[49]

The hierarchy of academic knowledge tend to distinguish between content created using traditional academic methodologies *versus* content that incorporate tools and methodologies from outside the academic institutions. The first distinction of content is

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[48]   *Mitologia   gettata*   by   Manume   on   Spotify:
https://open.spotify.com/show/0q6XFafImEbql2vbW03fbt#:~:text=Trailer%20%2D%20Mitologia%20ge
ttata,Le%20avventure%20degli&text=Manuela%2C%20in%20arte%20Manume%20%C3%A8,vero%20s
ignificato%20di%20ogni%20storia.

[49] Mittel, J. (2020). What Is Videographic Criticism? in *Scholarship in Sound and Image*. Retrieved March 1, 2023, from http://sites.middlebury.edu/videoworkshop/what-is-videographic-criticism/.

then followed by another of audience. Academic research is often aimed at experts, using a language far from being compelling for a broader audience. This is where the concept between academic historian and public historian comes into play. Compared to the former, the public historian must be able to come up with scholarly content that is within the reach of everyone. The universal language of social media, however, when intertwined with academic content can risk diminishing the historical message it is intended to be deliver. Digital communication must be quick, dynamic, and immediately effective; history, though, is not. A truthful historical reproduction is complex and intricate, it is not reducible to Twitter's two hundred characters or a single Instagram post. Placing to much importance on language at the expense of content may lead to a distortion of historical truth. The task of public historians is indeed to strike a balance between effective communication and accurate historical representation. To do so, they require rethinking both the content of the academic research and the process of producing and disseminating this content.

> «It is not just a matter of the mere quantitative and qualitative increase in generic or specialized audiences: it is a matter languages changes, the materials and objects of communication change, the relations, and the methods of consumption change; all these inevitably condition the "production" of history, the profession of the historian, in fact produces "new professions" of historians. »[50]

The historian can no longer settle for the truthful exposition of facts but must be comfortable around new *media*. Exploiting their potentials makes it possible to convey

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[50] English translation from Mineccia, F., & Tommasini, L. (2009). Introduzione a Media e storia. *Ricerche Storiche*, *2-3*, p. 253. Original version: «Non si tratta solo del semplice aumento quantitativo e qualitativo di pubblici generici o specializzati: si tratta del fatto che cambiano soprattutto i linguaggi, cambiano i materiali e gli oggetti stessi della comunicazione, cambiano i rapporti e le modalità di fruizione; tutto ciò inevitabilmente condiziona la "produzione" di storia, il mestiere dello storico, produce infatti "nuovi mestieri" di storico.»

messages, as well as to communicate knowledge in ways that are fascinating even to a non-expert audience (De Luca, 2004). One opportunity is offered by the audio *medium*. Mack Hagood, sound researcher and associate professor of Media and Communication at Miami University, identifies a type of cultural product that lies at the intersection of digital audio and the academia: the audio academia. Under this name come together those projects that aim to produce and disseminate academic knowledge through audio, which can be in the form of podcasts, audio books, online lectures.

The production of academic content in the form of audio offers a wider set of performative and affective possibilities for the humanities. Certainly, the written word must give way to new modes of communication to rise, yet those who decide to talk about history must refer to written sources.

 A key step for the *Women's Lives, Women's Histories* project was precisely the search for ancient sources and documentation for writing the stories. The speeches delivered by the Roman matrons, are not the product of creative interpretation by the producers but rather derived from original sources of antiquity. Their interpreters, however, did not report these speeches, but rather male authors, historians, and orators. After all, like many of the positions in Roman society, the role of author fell to the male gender. Despite being ancient historians, the events that they recount are much older than them. The Roman playwright and poet Livy Andronicus depicts the myth of the Sabine women in his work *Ad urbe condita*, written between 27 BC and 14 AD. From Rome's origins to his present, Livy covers Roman entire history in one hundred forty-two books. And it is in the very first book that he describes the wars of Romulus and the Rape of the Sabine women, events that occurred six centuries before him. And still, the Roman orator Marcus Fabius Quintilian recalls that in his time, more than a hundred and fifty years after the

facts of 42 BC, Hortensia's speech was still being read and praised.[51] But these are not the only authors, women's speeches were also given space in the works of Greek and Roman historians from the I BC to the III AD. In particular, early authors include the Greek historian Dionysius of Alexandria, followed by Greek and Roman historians such as Plutarch, Appian of Alexandria, Valerius Maximus, and Livy. Moreover, it was not only historians who recognize the quality of the orations, the rationality of the speeches, and the influence of the *matronae*' words, but also lawyers and orators such as Marcus Fabius Quintilian and Marcus Tullius Cicero. In some cases, used as an *exemplum*, in others as a warning to the women of their times, these speeches and their historical reconstruction from the sources are essential to provide reliable and truthful content to the audience.

1.4   Each episode its story

In addition to examining effective strategies for reaching a wide audience, it is equally valuable to study how the structure of a podcast can take full advantage of the benefits of this medium. Identifying different genres and type of podcasts is now easier than ever thanks to the abundance of podcasts on the largest platforms. A variety of topics are discussed, from light-hearted and conversational to rigorous and nuanced explorations of complex issues. Also, choosing the right tone and style for the podcast is crucial for its effectiveness.

Podcast producer Rossella Pivanti within her book "*#Branded podcast produ*cer" identified the structural features that delineate a podcast. Primary to discuss is the form

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[51] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* I, 1,6: «[...] the oration held by Hortensia, daughter of Quintus, before the Triumvirs is still read, and not only as a tribute to sex. »

of the audio content. The format refers to the ways in which the narrative is organised and presented. Among the various types of podcasts, four macro categories are generally identified (Scandolin, 2023). From a single-voice format to a multi-voice format. Moreover, the hierarchy of the interlocutors can vary from a casual discussion between peers to a more rigid dialogue between interviewee and interviewer. As an alternative, the fourth format is characterized by an approach more similar to a documentary. The host reports a cultural content, explaining details attested by research. This involves a lot of pre-production work in which to research, study and verify the information. *Matronae* falls into the latter category. The podcast is committed to bring audiences content that is carefully researched and reflects the historical sources on which the episodes are based. Each episode recounts a specific story, and the pacing is thoughtfully managed to allow for the thorough development of the storyline. Yet, a recurring question in the podcast world seems to look for the perfect number of minutes for an episode. Certainly, the length depends more or less directly on the content ad frequency of publication. Recent research shows that the Barbero phenomenon, with podcasts exceeding the hour per episode, is gradually going down. With this reduction, the average for an episode is thirty-seven minutes (Rephonic, 2023). Thirty minutes of audio content is more than enough to develop a topic. In our particular case, we deemed it excessive to create lengthy episodes due to factors such as content, language, and listener attention.

Unfortunately, the political discourses of Roman women in historical documentations are few and brief. In order to give voice to these testimonies, a lot of reference was made to the content: the episodes explain the reasons why these women had to speak and challenge the male counterpart. Academic texts can be challenging for lay audiences to follow and comprehend, which prompted us to craft content that would captivate and sustain the interest of listeners by adhering to the linguistic requirements of the *medium*. Using social

media as a communication tool complements a more academic approach to the content. Consequently, it was decided to deliver episodes that were approximately fifteen minutes in duration as we believed this duration would be more efficacious. Currently, the podcast features six episodes.

Another factor considered is the timing and frequency of publication. Most podcast studies explain how posting episodes on a regular basis - whether weekly or monthly - allows listener loyalty growth. After careful consideration among the team, it was concluded that this practice could not be respected. As the project ends with the academic year, it is not feasible to publish episodes on a weekly basis. *Matronae* has been published entirely on the official website of GIEFFRA and on Spotify. A very similar approach to Netflix, which allows access to an entire season at the same time. We hope that our podcast can also achieve the binge-watching effect for which the streaming platform is so well known. This lack of publication is also due to the podcast is in its first season and much time has been focused on its structuring and production. Once a solid foundation has been established, a second season will not have to care about these organisational aspects and can devote itself to the realisation of much more content. At that point it is possible to consider regular publications.

2. The production of a podcast: from the research to the audio editing.

When purchasing a book, we rely on various factors such as the cover, back cover, introduction, and reviews. Similarly, the success of online content on social media is often determined by the number of views and likes it receives. In contrast, podcasts heavily depend on their ability to attract listeners through their inner features, such as the quality of their audio, their cover, their narrations, and their sound effects.

This chapter examines the different stages of *Matronae's* production. This includes writing the episodes, creating the cover, recording, and editing. Our goal is to appeal to as many people as possible and ensure that our podcast stands out amidst the vast array of online content.

2.1 Are podcasts scripted?

Upon examining the Italian podcast rankings on platforms such as Spotify or Apple Podcasts, it is evident that "chatty" podcasts are frequently the highest ranked. Each episode explores a specific topic or features an interviewee, but there is always time for casual talks. The narrative style is informal and conversational, with the interactions appearing unscripted and genuine. The intent of such contents is to create a narrative in which the listener can also feel directly involved in the conversation, as if they were listening to their friends chatting at the bar. However, a seamless approach faces difficult application when the aim is not only to entertain but also to educate the audience. In these instances, words cannot be left to the host's stream of consciousness; they must be thought out and pondered. In addition, it is essential that the information being told be verified ad

reliable. This implies not only extensive research and study, but also attentive writing of the single episodes. Nothing must be left to chance, especially given the hybrid nature of academic and new media language employed in such productions. *Matronae* belongs precisely to the class of these scripted podcasts, which are distinguished from their improvised and conversational counterparts by their organised framework and characters. These podcasts, also, require significant post-production efforts to include music and sound effects that enhance the listener's overall experience. An approach that is perhaps not so widely used, but which has its advantages. Scripting before recording can be additional and accessory content to the podcast. To publish the written texts next to the audio episodes means to give the opportunity for hypo-hearing or hearing-impaired people to enjoy these stories as well. It breaks down what might be seen as a barrier and thus expands the audience's breadth. In addition, making the final script of an episode accessible allows the search engines themselves to index the content more correctly. This results in easier findability and chances to appear in users' searches. For narrative and documentary podcasts - such as *Matronae* - script writing is a foundational part of the process of making specific episodes. Stories must be able to accurately report references to ancient authors and sources while maintaining effortless language. This cannot be improvised.

Considering these factors and conducting an in-depth analysis of the sources, the script of the episode begins. The process involved a team effort and persistent editing until the ultimate outcome was achieved. The episodes are characterised by plain yet significant terminology and citation sources that verify the credibility of the narratives. The Italian and English transcriptions of the episodes is now available on GIEFFRA website. As previously mentioned, each team member was responsible for one or two episodes. During this phase, I collaborated with Valentina Rossi to write the episode about the

Sabine women, and then I continued the writing of the Julia episode, initiated by Alice Scaparra. Moreover, once the Italian episodes were finished, I worked to make their transcription into English as well. The English transcriptions of the text will be given here, with the original Italian version in footnotes.

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Introduction.

Author: Chiara Valeri

Voices: Theme song and credits (Elena Missaggia), Narrator (Chiara Valeri), Sophocles (Luca Brollo), Plautus (Professor Alessandro Rucco), Eva Cantarella (Professor Sarah Borrello) and Sara Pomeroy (Letizia Nuscis)

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome.[52]

Narrator. In the ancient world the *Ars dicendi* - the art of speech - was an exclusively male prerogative and the use of speech in public was strongly forbidden for women. The roots of this ban go back to the Greek world. Sophocles, one of the three famous V B.C. tragedians, wrote:[53]

Sophocles. *«γύναι, γυναιξί κόσμον ἡ σιγή φέρει»* (Sof., *Aj.*, 293). "Women, silence is ornament for women!"[54]

Narrator. Three centuries later, in Rome, the Latin playwright Plautus, in one of his plays, wrote a line that seems almost a cast of the expression used by Sophocles:[55]

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[52] Original text. *«Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae. Il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma.»*

[53] Original text. *«Narratore. Nel mondo antico l'ars dicendi, ovvero l'arte della parola, era una prerogativa esclusivamente maschile, e, in particolare, l'uso della parola in pubblico era proibito alle donne. Le radici di questo divieto risalgono al mondo greco, Sofocle, uno dei tre celebri tragediografi del V sec. a.C., scriveva:»*

[54] Original text. *«Sofocle. "γύναι, γυναιξί κόσμον ἡ σιγή φέρει" (Sof., Aj., 293). "Donne, il silenzio è ornamento per le donne!"»*

[55] Original text. *«Narratore. Tre secoli dopo, a Roma, il commediografo latino Plauto, in una delle sue opere, scrive un verso che sembra quasi un calco dell'espressione usata da Sofocle*:»

Plautus. "*Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens*." (Plaut., *Rud*., 1114). "It is always better a silent woman than a talkative one."[56]

Narrator. For women, in fact, keeping silent was not only a virtue but, above all, a duty. Precisely for this reason, Roman women had to turn to the experience of Tacita Muta, a nymph who, because of her excessive talking, is deprived of her tongue by the god Jupiter (Ovid., Fast., 583 – 616). Hence, becoming the goddess *par excellence* of Silence, an object of exclusively female worship, while men precisely celebrated the god of the voice, Aio Locutius. However, ancient sources testify to a reality often far removed from this: there are stories of women who used their voices to intervene in family and political matters, even appropriating those forms of communication and spaces from which they were traditionally excluded.

This takes place in a period, that of the civil wars, of deep and enduring crisis, a time when the *mores*, the ancient traditions on which the entire Roman society was based, are subverted because of the political emergency. Men are far away, on the run, killed in street fights, leading armies, deserting the usual institutional activities, and in politics women act. They do not hold magistracies or participate in assemblies, but they do politics in private venues, in their own homes, at political meetings and dinners, but also in public places, such as the streets of Rome and the forum. To this purpose they employ women's own communicative tools, such as crying, gestures, and visual communication, as specific clothing, but they also resort to the communicative tools of politics, which until now have been exclusively reserved to male. There are very few records of female speech in the Roman world, and what is more, those we have are reported from male sources, which often condemned women's resourcefulness.

A careful analysis of ancient sources allows us to understand the modalities and goals of such initiatives, even with an awareness of the stereotypes that distort portrayals of women.

As Eva Cantarella states:[57]

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[56] Original text. *«Plauto. "Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens" (Plaut., Rud., 1114). "È sempre meglio una donna silenziosa che chiacchierona".»*

[57] Original text. *«Narrator. Per le donne, infatti, tacere non era solo una virtù ma, soprattutto, un dovere. Proprio per questo motivo le donne romane dovevano far testo all'esperienza di Tacita Muta, una ninfa che, a causa del suo troppo parlare, viene privata della lingua dal dio Giove divenendo la divinità per eccellenza del Silenzio, oggetto di culto esclusivamente femminile, mentre gli uomini celebravano proprio la divinità della voce, Aio Locuzio. Tuttavia, le fonti antiche testimoniano una realtà spesso distante da questa: sono note storie di donne che usarono la propria voce per intervenire in questioni familiari e politiche, appropriandosi anche di quelle forme di comunicazione e di quegli spazi da cui erano tradizionalmente escluse.*
Ciò si verifica in un periodo, quello delle guerre civili, di profonda e duratura crisi, un periodo in cui i mores, le antiche tradizioni su cui si basava l'intera società romana, vengono sovvertiti a causa dell'emergenza.

Eva Cantarella. «The history of Roman women deserves special attention. Unlike the history of Greek and other ancient women, it is not a distant past. It is our near past. And perhaps, to some extent, it is also a part of our present. » (Cantarella E., *Passato prossimo, Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 2001, p. 146)[58]

Narrator. And as Sarah Pomeroy says:[59]

Sarah Pomeroy. «It is extremely important to note the persistence with which certain attitudes toward women and their role in Western society have persisted through the centuries. » (Pomeroy S.B., *Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma*. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)[60]

Narrator. Indeed, if we are shocked at the absence of ancient sources written by women, with very limited exceptions, and criticize the fact that they could not speak in public or act in politics, we must first ask ourselves whether today, more than 2,000 years after the events we will recount, things have really changed. According to AgCom, the Communications Guarantee Authority, in Italy the politicians who spoke in the news - giving a political speech - as of December 2022 are 66% men and only 34% women; if we then exclude Prime Minister Meloni, the male prevalence in the position of rhetor reaches 81 percent.

This is one of the many reasons why it is necessary to study the history of women in the ancient world.

Gli uomini sono lontani, in fuga, uccisi negli scontri di piazza, a capo degli eserciti, disertano le consuete attività istituzionali e in politica agiscono le donne. Non ricoprono magistrature né partecipano alle assemblee, ma fanno politica in sedi private, nelle proprie abitazioni in occasione di incontri e cene politiche, ma anche in luoghi pubblici, come le strade di Roma e il foro. A questo scopo si avvalgono di strumenti comunicativi propri delle donne, come i pianti, la gestualità, la comunicazione visiva, come la scelta di un abbigliamento specifico, ma ricorrono anche agli strumenti comunicativi della politica, fino ad ora esclusivamente maschile. Sono pochissime le attestazioni di discorsi femminili nel mondo romano e, per di più, quelli che abbiamo sono riportati da fonti maschili, che spesso condannavano l'intraprendenza delle donne. Un'analisi attenta delle fonti antiche consente di comprendere modalità e obiettivi di tali iniziative, anche nella consapevolezza degli stereotipi che distorcono i ritratti femminili. Come afferma Eva Cantarella:»

[58] Original text. «*Eva Cantarella. "la storia delle donne romane merita particolare attenzione. A differenza della storia delle donne greche e delle altre donne antiche non è un passato remoto. È il nostro passato prossimo. E forse, in qualche misura, è anche una parte del nostro presente." (Cantarella E., Passato prossimo, Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 2001, p. 146)*»

[59] Original text. «*Narratore. E come dice Sarah Pomeroy:*»

[60] Original text. «*Sarah Pomeroy. "è estremamente importante notare la persistenza con cui alcuni atteggiamenti verso le donne e il ruolo di queste nella società occidentale si sono protratte attraverso i secoli." (Pomeroy S.B., Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)*»

As Sarah Pomeroy said: [61]

Sarah Pomeroy. «The past illuminates contemporary problems in the relations between women and men. » (Pomeroy S.B., *Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma*. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)[62]

Narrator. And it is up to us to know it, so that we can improve our present, in the hope of a future in which women are no longer *tacitae*.[63]

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[64]

Episode 1. Sabine

Authors: Valentina Rossi, Elena Missaggia

Voices: Narrator (Valentina Rossi), Livio (Professor Alessandro Rucco), Dionigi (Alvise Merelli), Sabine (all female participants)

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome. In this episode we will discuss the myth of the Sabine women, the brave women who saved Rome early in its history.[65]

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[61] Original text. «*Narratore. Se infatti, ci scandalizziamo di fronte all'assenza di fonti antiche scritte da donne, con limitatissime eccezioni, e critichiamo il fatto che queste non potessero parlare in pubblico o agire in politica, dobbiamo innanzitutto chiederci se oggi, più di 2000 anni dopo gli eventi che racconteremo, le cose sono davvero cambiate.*
Secondo AgCom, l'Autorità per le garanzie nelle Comunicazioni, in Italia gli esponenti politici che a dicembre 2022 hanno parlato ai telegiornali - tenendo un discorso politico - sono per il 66% uomini e solo per il 34% donne; se poi si esclude la premier Meloni, la prevalenza maschile nella posizione di retore raggiunge l'81%.
Questo è uno dei tanti motivi per cui è necessario studiare la storia delle donne del mondo antico.
Come ha detto Sarah Pomeroy:»

[62] Original text. «*Sarah Pomeroy. "Il passato illumina problemi contemporanei nei rapporti tra donne e uomini".» (Pomeroy S.B., Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)*»

[63] Original text. «*Narratore. E sta a noi conoscerlo per poter migliorare il nostro presente, nella speranza di un futuro in cui le donne non siano più tacitae.*»

[64] Original text. «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

[65] Original text. «*Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae, il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma. In questo episodio parleremo del mito delle Sabine, le coraggiose donne che hanno salvato Roma all'inizio della sua storia.*»

Narrator. Rome, 753-751 BC. The Romans and Sabines fiercely fight what we remember as the Battle of Lake Curtius (no, it is not a lake, but a ditch in the Forum of Rome). In the accounts of Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and later retellings by Ovid and Plutarch, the clanging of swords is interrupted by the legendary bravery of a group of women, the Sabines**.** By the time Livy is first writing about this myth, the Roman Republic is a memory. Emperor Augustus has just enacted laws that reduce husbands' power over their wives' dowries, increasing matrons' economic and public freedom. Women are no longer relegated to the domestic sphere: they are now merchants, entrepreneurs like Livia Drusilla, and literate women like Sulpicia. Most importantly, from the late republic they also engaged in politics: behaviour extra mores, that is, beyond the normal code of Roman society. Indeed, the use of public speech was precluded to them from the beginning, as was the intervention in the affairs of the state. That is the reason for this legend, that is where the myth of the Sabine women came from, precisely to legitimize the new habits of late Republican women. A legend created so that this freedom would no longer make such a fuss because, for the Romans, everything ancient was legitimate.

But let us go back to the Battle of Curtius Lake and rewind the tape of history. What is the cause of this bloody war? We all know the legend that attributes the founding of Rome to twins, Romulus, and Remus, who were nursed by a she-wolf after being abandoned while still in swaddling clothes. But behind the legend, there are more complex dynamics. In the 8th century B.C., Latium is an important trading hub for merchants and sailors, its waters are often sailed by Phoenician ships and to the north lies the powerful Etruscan empire. The area of Rome is swampy, but fortunately, there are seven small hills that make it possible to build huts and live dry. Rome grows and in a short time fortifies itself: there is only one, single problem.

As reported by Livy.[66]

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[66] Original text. «*Narratore. Roma, 753-751 a.C. I Romani e i Sabini combattono ferocemente quella che ricordiamo come Battaglia del lago Curzio (no, non si tratta di un lago, ma di un'infossatura del Foro di Roma). Nei racconti di Livio, Dionigi di Alicarnasso, e nelle successive rielaborazioni di Ovidio e Plutarco, il fragore delle spade viene interrotto dal leggendario coraggio di un gruppo di donne, le Sabine.*
Quando Livio per primo scrive di questo mito, la Repubblica romana è ormai un ricordo. L'imperatore Augusto ha appena emanato delle leggi che riducono il potere dei mariti sulle doti delle mogli, aumentando la libertà economica e pubblica delle matrone. Le donne non sono più relegate alla sola dimensione domestica: ora sono commercianti, imprenditrici come Livia Drusilla e letterate come Sulpicia. Ma soprattutto, dalla tarda repubblica si occupano anche di politica: un comportamento extra mores, ovvero al di là del normale costume della società romana. L'uso della parola pubblica era loro, infatti, precluso sin dalle origini, così come l'intervento nelle questioni dello stato. Ecco il perché di questa leggenda, ecco da dove nasce il mito delle Sabine, intessuto proprio per legittimare le nuove abitudini delle donne tardo repubblicane. Una leggenda creata perché questa libertà non facesse più tanto scalpore, perché per i Romani, tutto ciò che era antico era legittimo. Il mito delle Sabine viene intessuto proprio per legittimare le nuove abitudini delle donne coeve. Una leggenda creata perché questa nuova libertà non facesse più tanto scalpore, sostenuta da un exemplum antico. Come sempre, infatti, il mos maiorum - il recupero dei valori degli antenati - era un riferimento imprescindibile per i Romani.
Ma torniamo alla battaglia del Lago Curzio e riavvolgiamo il nastro della storia. Qual è la causa di questa sanguinosa guerra? Conosciamo tutti la leggenda che attribuisce la fondazione di Roma a due gemelli, Romolo e Remo, allattati da una lupa dopo essere stati abbandonati ancora in fasce. Ma dietro alla leggenda, ci sono dinamiche più complesse. Nell'VIII secolo a.C., il Lazio è un importante snodo commerciale per mercanti e marinai, le sue acque sono spesso solcate da navi fenicie e a Nord si trova il potente impero etrusco. La zona di Roma è paludosa, ma fortunatamente ci sono sette piccoli colli che

Livy. "The Roman state had now become so strong that it was a possible enemy to its neighbors, but its greatness threatened to last only for a generation because due to the absence of women, there was no hope of offspring, and there was no right of marriage with neighbors." (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1, 9.)[67]

Narrator. Romulus reaches out to the surrounding peoples to forge alliances, but the response is not the warmest - in fact, quite the opposite. In ancient sources, here myth merges with reality and the solution found is devious and cruel. Romulus invites the neighboring peoples to the Consualia, the solemn games in honor of the god Conso. After taking their places in the crowd, at the appointed signal the Romans draw their swords and kidnap the daughters of the Sabines. The fathers flee, in confusion and shock, not before, however, vowing revenge. As reported by Livy.[68]

Livy. "(The Sabine women) would have lived in honorable marriage and shared property and civil rights and would have been mothers of free men." (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1, 9.)[69]

Narrator. Although Romulus seems to grant the Sabine women the power of choice, the control of their bodies actually lies to the man who had chosen them. Romulus himself marries one: Ersilia.
Violence calls for more violence: the king of the Sabines, Titus Tatius, calls on his men to wage war against Rome in order to bring home his kidnapped daughters. Thanks to the complicity of the young Tarpea, bribed with gold, they manage to enter the city and begin to fight against the Romans. The two enemies deploy their armies at the foot of the Palatine: the Roman hills surround the battlefield, preventing any escape routes. Fight or die.
It is here that we return to the battle of Lake Curtius: when the Romans seem to have the better over the Sabines and the fighting is at its height, Livy and Ovid tell us about a disruptive gesture. The Sabines, with their children in their arms, their hair disheveled and their clothes torn, tragically burst onto the battlefield.
As reported by Livy,[70]

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permettono di costruire delle capanne e di vivere all'asciutto. Roma cresce e in poco tempo si fortifica: c'è un solo, unico, problema. Come riportato da Livio:»

[67] Original text. «*Livio. "Lo Stato romano era ormai diventato così forte da costituire un possibile nemico per i suoi vicini, ma la sua grandezza minacciava di durare solo per una generazione perché a causa dell'assenza di donne non c'era speranza di discendenza, e non c'era diritto di matrimonio con i vicini" (Livio, Ab urbe condita 1, 9.)»*

[68] Original text. «*Narratore. Romolo si rivolge alle popolazioni circostanti per stringere alleanze, ma l'accoglienza non è delle più calorose - anzi, tutto il contrario. Nelle fonti antiche, qui il mito si fonde con la realtà e la soluzione trovata è subdola e crudele. Romolo invita le popolazioni vicine ai Consualia, i giochi solenni in onore del dio Conso. Dopo aver preso posto tra la folla, al segnale stabilito i Romani estraggono le spade e rapiscono le figlie dei Sabini. I padri fuggono, in preda alla confusione e allo shock, non prima, però, di aver giurato vendetta. Come riportato da Livio.»*

[69] Original text. «*Livio. "(Le Sabine) avrebbero vissuto in onorevole matrimonio e condiviso le proprietà e i diritti civili, e sarebbero state madri di uomini liberi." (Livio, Ab urbe condita 1, 9.)»*

[70] Original text. «*Narratore. Sebbene apparentemente Romolo conceda alle Sabine la facoltà di scegliere, il controllo del loro corpo risiede in realtà nell'assegnazione casuale all'uomo che le aveva scelte. Romolo stesso ne sposa una: Ersilia. La violenza chiama altra violenza: il re dei Sabini, Tito Tazio, invita i propri uomini a muovere guerra contro Roma per riportare a casa le figlie rapite. Grazie alla complicità della giovane Tarpea, corrotta con dell'oro, riescono a entrare nella città e iniziano a combattere contro i Romani. I due nemici schierano i propri eserciti ai piedi del Palatino: i colli romani circondano il campo di battaglia, impedendo eventuali vie di fuga. Combattere o morire.*

Livy. "It was at that moment that the Sabine women, whose abduction had triggered the ongoing war, with their hair in the wind and their clothes in tatters, let the present misfortunes get the better of their timidity as women and did not hesitate to throw themselves under a shower of darts and burst in from the sides between the opposing factions to divide the contenders and appease their wrath. They pleaded with their husbands on one side and their fathers on the other. They implored them not to commit a horrendous crime by staining themselves with the blood of a father-in-law or son-in-law and not to leave the mark of patricide in the creatures they would bring into the world, children for the one and grandchildren for the other." (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1, 13.)[71]

Narrator. The fact moves the men as much as the military leaders: suddenly silence falls.[72]

[*silence*]

Narrator. In Livy to speak are all the Sabine women, collectively. Their voice is the voice of the group, moved by grief and despair. The speech exudes pathos: they speak of blood, murder, and a nefarious future:[73]

Sabine women. "If you are bothered by mutual relatedness, by marriage, turn your rage on us: we are the cause of war, we are the cause of the wounds and death of (our) husbands and (our) fathers, better for us will be to die than to live as orphans or widows, without one or the other of you." (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1, 13.)[74]

Narrator. Theirs is the last, desperate attempt to reconcile fathers with husbands, save their families from hatred, and lay the groundwork for peaceful coexistence.
In Dionysius of Halicarnassus, on the other hand, the spokesperson for the Sabine women is Ersilia: the narrative is more static than Livy's, and the woman is portrayed as inscrutable, frozen and with no connection to the Sabine women themselves.[75]

È qui che torniamo alla battaglia del lago Curzio: quando i Romani sembrano avere la meglio sui Sabini e il combattimento è all'apice della tensione, Livio e Ovidio ci raccontano di un gesto dirompente. Le Sabine, con i figli in braccio, i capelli spettinati e i vestiti strappati, irrompono tragicamente sul campo di battaglia. Come riportato da Livio:»

[71] Original text. «*Livio. "Fu in quel momento che le donne sabine, il cui rapimento aveva scatenato la guerra in corso, con le chiome al vento e i vestiti a brandelli, lasciarono che le disgrazie presenti avessero la meglio sulla loro timidezza di donne e non esitarono a buttarsi sotto una pioggia di proiettili e a irrompere dai lati tra le opposte fazioni per dividere i contendenti e placarne la collera. Da una parte supplicavano i mariti e dall'altra i padri. Li imploravano di non commettere un crimine orrendo macchiandosi del sangue di un suocero o di un genero e di non lasciare il marchio del parricidio nelle creature che esse avrebbero messo al mondo, figli per gli uni e nipoti per gli altri." (Livio, Ab urbe condita 1, 13.)*»

[72] Original text. «*Narratore. Il fatto commuove tanto gli uomini quanto i capi militari: d'un tratto cala il silenzio.*»

[73] Original text. «*Narratore. In Livio a parlare sono tutte le donne Sabine, collettivamente. La loro voce è la voce del gruppo, mossa dal dolore e dalla disperazione. Il discorso trasuda pathos: parlano di sangue, di omicidi e di un futuro nefasto:*»

[74] Original text. «*Sabine. "Se vi infastidisce la parentela reciproca, il matrimonio, rivolgete su di noi la vostra ira: noi siamo la causa della guerra, noi la causa delle ferite e della morte dei (nostri) mariti e dei (nostri) padri, meglio per noi sarà morire che vivere come orfane o vedove, senza gli uni o gli altri di voi." (Livio, Ab urbe condita 1, 13.)*»

[75] Original text. «*Narratore. Il loro è l'ultimo, disperato tentativo di riconciliare i padri con i mariti, di salvare le proprie famiglie dall'odio, di gettare le premesse per una convivenza pacifica. In Dionigi di*

Dionysius. "Ersilia made a long exposition: she demanded that peace be granted to them, who interceded for their husbands, to them for whom, she thought, war had been declared: that the leaders come together to discuss among themselves on what fair terms peace might arise, keeping in mind the good of both sides." (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2,26-45; 3,1.)[76]

Narrator. The cold rationality allows Ersilia to propose a balanced agreement for both sides. As Livy's constructed discourse unravels in a crescendo of emotional tension, Dionysius gradually fades the pathos of Ersilia's words until he arrives at the mediation proposal.
At first glance, we might think that Ersilia's behaviour is natural and justified. In reality, however, Roman readers may have found her interference disturbing, if not out of place: a woman, moved by the complaints of other kidnapped women, having the audacity to intrude into a military context. This is certainly a strong narrative choice. Ersilia's coldness is in open contradiction to the scene that follows her words.
As reported by Dionysius of Halicarnassus:[77]

Dionysius. "Having said these words, they all threw themselves at the king's feet with their children and remained prostrate until those present made them stand up from the ground and promised that they would do all that was right and possible." (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquitates Romanae* 2,26-45; 3,1)[78]

Narrator. By using the participle "said these words" in the plural form, Dionysius creates a close synergy between Ersilia's speech and the Sabine women. Her speech becomes theirs, their actions become hers.
The courageous gesture of the Sabine women results in the reunion of the two populations: their families obtain the right to move into Roman territory. Their speech brings harmony back to Roman society and enables prosperity in what will become the empire of empires.[79]

Alicarnasso, invece, a ergersi portavoce delle Sabine è Ersilia: la narrazione è più statica rispetto a quella di Livio e la donna viene dipinta come imperscrutabile, congelata e senza alcun legame con le Sabine stesse.»

[76] Original text. «*Dionigi. "Ersilia fece una lunga e patetica esposizione: chiedeva che si accordasse la pace a loro, che intercedevano per i mariti, a loro per cui, ella pensava, era stata dichiarata la guerra: che i capi si riunissero per discutere tra di loro a quali giuste condizioni potesse nascere la pace, tenendo presente il bene di entrambe le parti." (Dionigi di Alicarnasso, Antiquitates Romanae 2,26-45; 3,1.)»*

[77] Original text. «*Narratore. La fredda razionalità consente a Ersilia di proporre un accordo equilibrato per entrambe le parti. Mentre il discorso costruito da Livio si disvela in un crescendo di tensione emotiva, Dionigi affievolisce gradualmente il pathos delle parole di Ersilia, fino ad arrivare alla proposta di mediazione. A prima vista, potremmo pensare che il comportamento di Ersilia sia naturale e giustificato. In realtà, però, i lettori romani potrebbero aver trovato la sua interferenza disturbante, se non addirittura fuori luogo: una donna, mossa dalle lamentele di altre donne rapite, che ha l'ardire di intromettersi in un contesto militare. Si tratta certamente di una scelta narrativa forte. La freddezza di Ersilia è in aperta contraddizione con la scena che segue le sue parole. Come riportato da Dionigi di Alicarnasso:»*

[78] Original text. «*Dionigi. "Dette queste parole, tutte si gettarono ai piedi del re con i loro bambini e rimasero prostrate finché i presenti (gli uomini) non le fecero alzare da terra e non promisero che avrebbero fatto tutto ciò che era giusto e possibile." (Dionigi di Alicarnasso, Antiquitates Romanae 2,26-45; 3,1)»*

[79] Original text. «*Narratore. Usando il participio "detto questo (dette queste parole)" al plurale, Dionigi crea una stretta sinergia tra il discorso di Ersilia e le Sabine. Il suo discorso diventa il loro, le loro azioni diventano le sue. Il coraggioso gesto delle donne Sabine ha come esito il ricongiungimento delle due*

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[80]

Episode 2. Porcia

Author: Letizia Nuscis

Voices: Theme song and credits (Elena Missaggia), Narrator (Letizia Nuscis), Plutarco (Professor Alessandro Rucco), Brutus (Professor Alvise Merelli), Porcia (Chiara Valeri)

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome. In this episode we will talk about Porcia, the only woman who knew about the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar.[81]

Narrator. Rome, 1st century BC.

Civil wars between the conservative and 'progressive' factions are disrupting the Republic, threatening its survival. But how did it get to this point of no return?

For some time now, Roman power has been weakened by problems that erode it from within. The agrarian and army crisis, the management of allies and slaves, and the administration of the provinces undermine the stability of the Republic like woodworms. The institutional set-up is also continually challenged and bent to the personal needs of the potentates.

[background noise: excited voices, as in assembly]

With divergent political goals, two opposing factions mature in the senatorial aristocracy. These factions look to their leaders in the *viri militares*, the warlords. Marius and Sulla, Caesar, and Pompey, bolstered by the support of the army and their own clienteles, bathe Rome in the blood of civil wars to bring their faction to victory and rule the Republic.

[background noises: battlefield (shouts, sound of clashing weapons, footsteps, screams of pain, ...)]

On August 9, 48 BC, Pompey the Great's forces are defeated by Julius Caesar. After the battle, the Pompeiians are forced to surrender to Caesar or flee to Spain and Africa. With the civil war concluded in 44 BC. Caesar is appointed dictator for life, a position that definitively proves his total control over Rome. These circumstances lead a group of Roman politicians, led by Marcus Junius Brutus, to hatch a conspiracy against Caesar.

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popolazioni: le loro famiglie ottengono il diritto di trasferirsi nel territorio romano. Il loro discorso riporta la concordia nella società romana e permette il prosperare in quello che diventerà l'impero degli imperi.»

[80] Original text. «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

[81] Original text. «*Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae, il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma. In questo episodio parleremo di Porcia, l'unica donna a sapere della congiura per assassinare Cesare.*»

Brutus is nephew and son-in-law of Cato the Younger, a leading member of the conservative faction who committed suicide after Caesar came to power. In 45 BC. Brutus takes on his uncle's political and ideological legacy through his marriage to Cato's daughter Porcia.

[background noise: party, banquet music, and cheerful voices]

Marriage in ancient Rome is quite different from marriage in the present day. People do not marry for love, but for political ends, economic interests, judicial needs. It is the fathers who decide on the union of daughters, valuable pawns to be moved in the network of relationships between powerful families. Roman marriages are monogamous, but, in the time of Brutus and Porcia, divorce and remarriage are recurrent practices, and one can ask for the hand of one's spouse even when one or both parties are still married. After divorce or the death of a husband, women were expected to remarry quickly to take advantage of their fertility.

According to Roman tradition, since the archaic age, politics, and the use of speech in public are an exclusively male prerogative. Women, on the other hand, must follow a behavior that excludes them from the exercise of politics and confines their existence to the two roles of wife and mother. The matron's sphere of competence is the family: the *domus*, or home, shows the physical and ideological perimeter of women's activities.

[background noise: battlefield (shouts, sound of clashing weapons, footsteps, screams of pain...)]

The civil wars that hit Rome in the first century B.C. and removed its traditional protagonists from the political scene. Numerous members of the ruling class lose their lives on the battlefields. Many others remain far from the *Urbe* for a long time because they command armies or are engaged in the management of the provinces. Countless are the fugitives. This situation allows new individuals to establish themselves on the political scene. Among them are also matrons. Thus, women could now make their voices heard and intervene in politics to protect the interests of their families, both in public places and in domestic settings.

[background noise: whispered voices, footsteps, doors opening and closing]

Porcia, too, sheds her feminine fragility to take on masculine tasks and responsibilities. While her husband is secretly and through infinite fears and uncertainties organizing the assassination of Caesar, Porcia grasps his disquiet and works to gain his trust and be brought into his plans.

As Plutarch recounts:[82]

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[82] Original text. «*Narratore. Roma, I secolo a.C. Le guerre civili tra la fazione conservatrice e quella 'progressista' stanno sconvolgendo la Repubblica, minacciandone la sopravvivenza. Ma come si è arrivati a questo punto di non ritorno?*
Già da diverso tempo la potenza romana è indebolita da difficoltà che la erodono dal suo interno. La crisi agraria e dell'esercito, la gestione degli alleati e degli schiavi, e l'amministrazione delle province minano come tarli la stabilità della Repubblica. Anche l'assetto istituzionale è continuamente messo in discussione e piegato alle esigenze personali dei potentati. Nell'aristocrazia senatoria maturano due schieramenti contrapposti, con obiettivi politici divergenti. Queste fazioni cercano i propri leader nei viri militares, i signori della guerra. Mario e Silla, Cesare e Pompeo, forti dell'appoggio dell'esercito e delle proprie clientele, bagnano Roma col sangue delle guerre civili per portare alla vittoria la propria fazione e governare la Repubblica. Il 9 agosto del 48 a.C. le forze di Pompeo Magno vengono sconfitte da Giulio

[background noise: footsteps, hands rummaging, pocketknife unsheathed, blade cutting into flesh, and stifled groan of pain]

Plutarch. "Porcia wants to put herself to the test. Dismissing the handmaids, she remains alone in the bedroom and, with a small knife of the kind barbers use to cut nails, she cuts her thigh deep into herself. Much blood gushes from the wound. After a while, violent pains and shivers of fever run through her body. Brutus is agitated and worried. Porcia, in the most acute stage of pain, urges him on:" (Plut. Brut. 13.5-11)[83]

Porcia. "Brutus, I, Cato's daughter, entered your house certainly not to become simply a concubine with whom to share your bed and table, but to participate also in your joys and sorrows. Of course, you are an irreproachable husband, but, for my part, what concrete proof of my love and gratitude can I give you, if I am not allowed to share your secret anxieties and

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Cesare. Dopo la battaglia, i pompeiani sono costretti a consegnarsi a Cesare o a fuggire in Spagna e in Africa. Conclusa la guerra civile, nel 44 a.C. Cesare viene nominato dittatore a vita, carica che sancisce definitivamente il suo totale controllo su Roma.

Queste circostanze inducono un gruppo composto di politici romani, guidati da Marco Giunio Bruto, a ordire la congiura contro Cesare. Bruto è nipote e genero di Catone Uticense, uno tra gli esponenti di punta della fazione conservatrice, suicida dopo l'affermazione al potere di Cesare. Nel 45 a.C. Bruto assume l'eredità politica e ideologica dello zio, tramite le nozze con la figlia di Catone, Porcia.

Il matrimonio nell'antica Roma è molto diverso da quello dei giorni nostri. Non ci si sposa per amore, ma per fini politici, interessi economici, esigenze giudiziarie. Sono i padri a decidere dell'unione delle figlie, preziose pedine da muovere nella rete di relazioni fra le potenti famiglie. I matrimoni romani sono monogamici, ma, al tempo di Bruto e Porcia, divorziare e risposarsi sono pratiche ricorrenti e si può chiedere la mano della consorte anche quando una o entrambe le parti sono ancora sposate. Dopo il divorzio o la morte del marito, ci si aspetta che le donne si risposino rapidamente per sfruttare la propria fertilità.

Secondo la tradizione romana, fin dall'età arcaica, la politica e l'uso della parola in pubblica sede sono una prerogativa esclusivamente maschile. Le donne, invece, devono seguire un comportamento che le esclude dall'esercizio della politica e confina la loro esistenza nei due ruoli di moglie e madre. L'ambito di competenza della matrona è la famiglia: la domus, ossia la casa, identifica il perimetro fisico e ideologico delle attività femminili.

Le guerre civili che colpiscono Roma nel I secolo a.C. allontanano dalla scena politica i suoi tradizionali protagonisti. Numerosi esponenti della classe dirigente perdono la vita sui campi di battaglia. Molti altri rimangono per lungo tempo lontani dall'Urbe, perché al comando di eserciti o impegnati nella gestione delle province. Innumerevoli sono i fuggiaschi. Questa situazione permette a nuovi soggetti di affermarsi sulla scena politica. Tra di essi vi sono anche le matrone. Così le donne possono ora far sentire la propria voce e intervenire nella politica a tutela degli interessi dei propri familiari, sia in luoghi pubblici, sia nei contesti domestici.

Anche Porcia si spoglia della fragilità femminile per assumere compiti e responsabilità maschili. Mentre il marito sta organizzando in segreto e tra infiniti timori e incertezze l'uccisione di Cesare, Porcia ne coglie l'inquietudine e si adopera per guadagnarne la fiducia ed essere messa a parte dei suoi progetti.

Come racconta Plutarco:»

[83] Original text «*Plutarco. "Porcia vuole mettere sé stessa alla prova. Congedate le ancelle, rimane sola nella stanza da letto e, con un coltellino di quelli che i barbieri usano per tagliare le unghie, si incide la coscia in profondità. Dalla ferita sgorga molto sangue. Dopo un po' di tempo, violenti dolori e brividi di febbre le attraversano il corpo. Bruto è agitato e preoccupato. Porcia, nella fase più acuta del dolore, lo incalza:"* (Plut. Brut. 13.5-11)»

concerns that should prompt you to confide in me? I know well that feminine nature may appear too weak to keep a secret. But there are, Brutus, women of strong character, women who have received a strict upbringing and are accustomed to entertaining with people of rank. I am Cato's daughter and Brutus' wife: so far I attached no importance to it, now I know with certainty that I can tolerate pain." (Plut. Brut. 13.5-11)[84]

Plutarch. "So, saying, she shows him the wound and tells him of the test she underwent." (Plut.)[85]

[background noise: robes being moved]

Narrator. Porcia is a revolutionary matron defending the republican tradition. The ruling Roman oligarchy rests on hereditary *virtutes*. Fathers pass on to their male sons not only the genetic heritage, but also virtues, qualities, skills, and the abilities necessary to be a good politician and military man. Porcia differs from the traditional Roman matron, devoted to the home and the loom. Exceptionally, like a male child, Porcia declares herself to be the political and ideological heir of her father. "I, daughter of Cato". Cato's *virtutes* survive in her. Valerius Maximus confirms Plutarch, attributing these words to Porcia:[86]

Porcia. "This was not accidental (...) but a sure proof of my love for you in this situation of ours: yes, I wanted to experience how serenely I would have killed myself, if your project had failed" (Val. Max. III 2.14-15)[87]

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[84] Original text «*Porcia. "Bruto, io, figlia di Catone, sono entrata nella tua casa non certo per diventare semplicemente una concubina con cui dividere il letto e la tavola, ma per partecipare anche alle tue gioie e ai tuoi dolori. Certo, sei un marito irreprensibile, ma, da parte mia, quale prova concreta del mio amore e della mia gratitudine posso darti, se non mi è consentito condividere le tue ansie segrete e le inquietudini che dovrebbero spingerti a confidarti con me? So bene che la natura femminile può apparire troppo debole per serbare un segreto. Ma vi sono, Bruto, donne dal carattere forte, donne che hanno ricevuto un'educazione rigorosa e sono abituate ad intrattenersi con persone di livello. Io sono figlia di Catone / e moglie di Bruto: sinora non vi davo importanza, ora so con certezza di saper tollerare il dolore". (Plut. Brut. 13.5-11)*»

[85] Original text «*Plutarco. "Così dicendo, gli mostra la ferita e gli racconta della prova cui si è sottoposta." (Plut.)*»

[86] Original text «*Narratore. Porcia è una matrona rivoluzionaria a difesa della tradizione repubblicana. L'oligarchia romana al potere si regge su virtutes ereditarie. I padri trasmettono ai figli maschi non solo il patrimonio genetico, ma anche virtù, qualità, competenze, capacità necessarie per essere un buon politico e militare. Porcia si differenzia dalla tradizionale matrona romana, dedita alla casa e al telaio. Eccezionalmente, al pari di un figlio maschio, Porcia si dichiara erede politico e ideologico del padre. Io, figlia di Catone. Le virtutes di Catone sopravvivono in lei. Valerio Massimo conferma Plutarco, attribuendo queste parole a Porcia:*»

[87] Original text «*Porcia. "Questo non è stato un fatto accidentale (...) ma una prova sicura del mio amore per te in questa nostra situazione: sì, ho voluto sperimentare con quanta serenità mi sarei uccisa, se il tuo progetto fosse fallito" (Val. Max. III 2.14-15)*»

Narrator. In the testimony of Cassius Dione, Porcia continues:[88]

Porcia. "Tell me therefore with full confidence all your secret, for neither fire, nor whip, nor goads will be able to force me to reveal anything: you see that about torture I am not a woman. If you continue not to trust me, then it is better for me to die than to live, or no one will believe me to be Cato's daughter or your bride anymore." (Dio XLIV 13.4)[89]

[background noise: excited footsteps and voices, raised robes, unsheathed daggers, and screams of surprise and pain]

Narrator. On the Ides of March in 44 B.C., what Brutus and the defenders of the Republic had been plotting is conducted in Pompey's curia. Caesar is pierced by twenty-three stab wounds, distraught at having been betrayed by Brutus as well. Brutus and the other conspirators flee to the East. Porcia remains in Rome. The separation is painful, but it is the best choice: Brutus is now in a dangerous position. Their marriage will end only in death: a few years later, in 42 B.C., Brutus commits suicide after being defeated by Antony and Octavian, Caesar's heir.
Before leaving Rome and his wife forever, Brutus had said of Porcia:[90]

Brutus. "The female nature does not allow her to perform manly actions, but her feelings for her country will lead her to distinguish herself as we men do." (Plut., *Brut*., 23.7)[91]

Narrator. Upon hearing the news of Brutus' death, Porcia does not want to survive him, loyal to the last to her husband and the republican political ideal. Hers is also a political suicide: Porcia takes her own life by ingesting the coals of the domestic hearth, a symbol of the Roman matron of tradition. Ancient sources describe the coals that give her death as "chaste." *Castitas*, marital fidelity, is a virtue of the ideal model of the Roman matron.

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[88] Original text «*Narratore. Nella testimonianza di Cassio Dione, Porcia prosegue*:»

[89] Original text «*Porcia. "Dimmi dunque con piena fiducia tutto il tuo segreto, perché né il fuoco, né la frusta, né i pungoli mi potranno costringere a rivelare qualcosa: vedi che riguardo alla tortura io non sono una donna. Se continui a non fidarti di me, allora per me è meglio morire che vivere, oppure nessuno mi creda più figlia di Catone o tua sposa." (Dio XLIV 13.4)*»

[90] Original text «*Narratore. Alle Idi di marzo del 44 a.C., nella curia di Pompeo si compie ciò che Bruto e i difensori della Repubblica hanno tramato. Cesare viene trafitto da ventitré pugnalate, sconvolto dall'essere stato tradito anche da Bruto. Bruto e gli altri congiurati fuggono in Oriente. Porcia rimane a Roma. La separazione è dolorosa, ma è la scelta migliore: ora Bruto si trova in una posizione pericolosa. Il loro matrimonio si concluderà solo con la morte: qualche anno dopo, nel 42 a.C., Bruto si suicida dopo essere stato sconfitto da Antonio e Ottaviano, l'erede di Cesare.
Prima di lasciare per sempre Roma e la moglie, Bruto aveva detto di Porcia:*»

[91] Original text «*Bruto. "La natura femminile non le permette di compiere azioni virili, ma i suoi sentimenti per la patria la porteranno a distinguersi come noi uomini." (Plut., Brut., 23.7)*»

The memory of Porcia and her deeds will survive through the centuries. The matron, daughter of Cato and wife of Brutus, will become a figure of strong symbolic value, representing with Brutus an ideal diptych.[92]

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[93]

Episode 3. Servilia

Author: Professor Sara Borrello

Voices: Theme song and end credits (Elena Missaggia), Narrator (Elena Missaggia), Cicero (Professor Alessandro Rucco), Brutus (Professor Alvise Merelli), Cassius (Luca Brollo), Suetonius (Giorgio Boem), Servilia (Professor Sara Borrello).

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome. In this episode we will discuss Servilia, Caesar's lover and mother of his murderer.[94]

Narrator. Rome, March 15, 44 B.C., Curia of Pompey.
[background noises: confusion, shouting, chaos].
During a meeting of the Senate, twenty-three stab wounds end the life of Julius Caesar, consul, and perpetual dictator. Inflicting them is a group of conspirators who, for various reasons, oppose Caesar's policies. Three men head the conspiracy: Cassius Longinus, Decimus Brutus, and, above all, Marcus Brutus.
Turbulent days, weeks, and months follow Caesar's assassination.
This murder opens one of the most troubled periods in Roman history. These were years of civil wars, of bloody clashes between Roman citizens who sided with the killers or Caesar's political heirs.
Octavian, the deceased's adopted son, and Mark Antony, his right-hand man, imposed themselves on the scene as leaders of the Caesarian side along with the nobleman (M. Aemilius) Lepidus, opposed to the Republican side led by Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius.

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[92] Original text «*Narratore. Alla notizia della morte di Bruto, Porcia non vuole sopravvivergli, fedele fino all'ultimo al marito e all'ideale politico repubblicano. Anche il suo è un suicidio politico: Porcia si toglie la vita ingerendo i carboni ardenti del focolare domestico, simbolo della matrona romana della tradizione. Le fonti antiche definiscono ''castissimi'' i carboni che le danno la morte. La castitas, la fedeltà coniugale, è una virtù del modello ideale della matrona romana. La memoria di Porcia e delle sue gesta sopravviverà nei secoli. La matrona figlia di Catone e sposa di Bruto, diventerà una figura dal forte valore simbolico, rappresentando con Bruto un dittico ideale.*»

[93] Original text «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

[94] Original text. «*Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae, il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma. In questo episodio parleremo di Servilia, amante di Cesare e madre del suo assassino.*»

After the Caesaricide, an amnesty saves the lives of the conspirators. However, at Caesar's funeral, the speech given by Antony unleashes the crowd against Cassius, Brutus, and the other conspirators. Dangerous riots put their lives in serious danger. It is now clear to Brutus and Cassius that Rome is no longer a safe place.

Cicero, a prominent politician and intellectual, is a direct witness to those troubled moments and a valuable informant in reconstructing events. His letters inform us about the movements of Brutus, his close friend. We know that in April 44 BC. Brutus left Rome to move to his residences in southern Latium. Staying in Italy, however, is almost as dangerous as staying in Rome.

Brutus and Cassius ponder leaving overseas but are undecided. The two send frequent letters to Cicero: they want advice on what is best to do. In early June of that year, they decide to meet with some of their supporters at Anzio, in a villa belonging to Brutus. Aristocratic residences often host political meetings. This practice is especially common at the time of civil wars, when many men are on the run or in hiding or leading armies, and political discourse moves from public venues to private places. In the *domus* new alliances are born, old alliances are reconfirmed or dissolved, and political strategies are established.

Cicero, who is present, offers a detailed account of that meeting in one of his letters to his friend Atticus.[95]

Cicero. "I arrived in Anzio, well before noon. Brutus, who had requested my presence, comes to meet me glad to see me. There are many of us who have been summoned: there are also some women, including Servilia, Brutus's mother; Tertulla, Brutus's sister and Cassius's wife; and Porcia, Brutus's cousin, and wife. All were aware of what had happened a few days ago:

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[95] Original text. «Narratore. *Roma, 15 marzo 44 a.C., Curia di Pompeo. Durante una riunione del Senato, ventitré pugnalate mettono fine alla vita di Giulio Cesare, console e dittatore perpetuo. Ad infliggerle è un gruppo di congiurati che, per varie ragioni, si oppone alla politica di Cesare. Tre sono gli uomini a capo della congiura: Cassio Longino, Decimo Bruto, e, soprattutto, Marco Bruto.*

Giorni, settimane, mesi turbolenti seguono l'omicidio di Cesare. Questo assassinio apre uno dei periodi più tormentati della storia di Roma. Sono anni di guerre civili, di sanguinosi scontri tra cittadini romani che parteggiavano per gli uccisori o per gli eredi politici di Cesare.

Ottaviano, figlio adottivo del defunto, e Marco Antonio, suo braccio destro, si impongono sulla scena come leader della parte cesariana insieme al nobile (M. Emilio) Lepido, opposta a quella repubblicana guidata da Marco Bruto e Gaio Cassio.

Dopo il cesaricidio, un'amnistia salva le vite dei congiurati. Tuttavia, ai funerali di Cesare, il discorso tenuto da Antonio scatena la folla contro Cassio, Bruto e gli altri congiurati. Pericolosi tumulti mettono in serio pericolo le loro vite. A Bruto e Cassio è ormai chiaro che Roma non è più un luogo sicuro.

Cicerone, politico e intellettuale di spicco, è testimone diretto di quei travagliati momenti e prezioso informatore per ricostruire gli eventi. Le sue lettere ci informano sugli spostamenti di Bruto, suo caro amico. Sappiamo che nell'aprile del 44 a.C. Bruto lascia Roma per spostarsi nelle sue residenze del Lazio meridionale. Rimanere in Italia è però pericoloso quasi quanto restare a Roma.

Bruto e Cassio meditano di partire oltremare, ma sono indecisi. I due inviano frequenti lettere a Cicerone: vogliono avere consiglio su cosa sia meglio fare. A inizio giugno dello stesso anno stabiliscono di incontrarsi con alcuni loro sostenitori ad Anzio, in una villa di Bruto. Le residenze aristocratiche spesso ospitano riunioni politiche. Questa pratica è particolarmente diffusa al tempo delle guerre civili, quando molti uomini sono in fuga o nascosti o a capo di eserciti, e la dialettica politica si sposta dalle sedi pubbliche a luoghi privati. Nelle domus nuove alleanze nascono, vecchie alleanze sono riconfermate o si sciolgono, si stabiliscono strategie politiche.

Cicerone, che è presente, offre una cronaca dettagliata di quell'incontro in una delle sue lettere destinate all'amico Attico.»

the senate had decreed that Brutus and Cassius should leave for Asia and Sicily to buy grain for Rome. Brutus asked me:" (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[96]

Brutus. "Cicero, should I accept or reject this charge of such little importance?" (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[97]

Cicero. "During my journey I gave much thought to the matter and came to the conclusion that yes, Brutus should accept this task as an excuse to stay away from Rome. And here is Cassius. Proud as he is, he refuses to accept this task." (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[98]

Cassius. "Should I accept an insult as if it were an honour?" (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[99]

Cicero. "He asks me with a fiery gaze. 'And so, what do you intend to do?' " (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[100]

Cassius. "Going away to Greece." (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[101]

Cicero. "Cassius replies. 'What about you, Brutus?' I ask him. Brutus answers me:" (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[102]

Brutus. "I would like to return to Rome, if you think that is a good idea." (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1)[103]

Cicero. " 'It doesn't seem so to me because you won't be safe,' I point out to him. (...) So I hazarded a proposal: get Antony, who is still consul, out of the way, summon the senate, stir up the people in favour of Brutus and Cassius, and seize republican power! And here I am abruptly interrupted by that friend of yours, Servilia, who has not allowed me to add anything more." (Cic., *ad Att*. XV, 11, 1-2)[104]

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[96] Original text. «Cicerone. *"Sono arrivato ad Anzio, ben prima di mezzogiorno. Bruto, che aveva richiesto la mia presenza, mi viene incontro contento di vedermi. Siamo in molti ad essere stati convocati: ci sono anche alcune donne, tra cui Servilia, madre di Bruto, Tertulla, sorella di Bruto e moglie di Cassio, e Porcia, cugina e moglie di Bruto. Tutti erano al corrente di quello che era accaduto qualche giorno fa: il senato ha stabilito che Bruto e Cassio partissero per l'Asia e la Sicilia per acquistare del grano per Roma. Bruto mi ha chiesto:"* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[97] Original text. «Bruto. *"Cicerone, dovrei accettare o rifiutare questo incarico di così poco conto?"* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[98] Original text. «Cicerone. *"Durante il mio viaggio ho riflettuto molto sulla questione e sono giunto alla conclusione che sì, Bruto debba accettare questo compito come pretesto per stare lontano da Roma. Ed ecco Cassio. Orgoglioso come è, si rifiuta di accettare questa mansione."* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[99] Original text. «Cassio. *"Dovrei forse accettare un insulto come se fosse un onore?"* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[100] Original text. «Cicerone. *"Mi domanda con sguardo infuocato. 'E quindi, cosa intendi fare?'"* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[101] Original text. «Cassio. *"Andarmene in Grecia."* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[102] Original text. «Cicerone. *"Risponde Cassio. 'E tu, Bruto?' gli chiedo. Bruto mi risponde:"* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[103] Original text. «Bruto. *"Io vorrei tornare a Roma, se pensi che sia una buona idea".* (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1)»

[104] Original text. «Cicerone. *"'A me non lo sembra, perché non sarai al sicuro gli faccio notare. (...) Quindi, ho azzardato una proposta: togliere di mezzo Antonio, che è ancora console, convocare il senato, aizzare il popolo a favore di Bruto e Cassio e impadronirsi del potere repubblicano! Ed ecco che vengo*

Servilia. "*Hoc vero neminem umquam audivi*!" This, indeed, I have never heard anyone say. (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 2)[105]

Narrator. In fact, Cicero was proposing to Brutus and Cassius that they return to Rome to carry out a coup d'état, a proposal that Servilia could never agree to it would inevitably expose her son to too great a risk, endangering his own life. Servilia has long played a key role in the decisions of her Caesarian counterpart, to whom she is related. In previous months she had regularly informed Cicero of Brutus and Cassius' intentions, when they were still pondering whether to leave Italy. Only through her intervention did they decide, at least for now, not to leave the peninsula. As Cicero himself noted: [106]

Cicero. "Brutus is obsequious to his mother's advice and even prayers: how can I stand in the way?" (Cic*., ad Att.* XV, 10)[107]

Narrator. In one of his letters, Cicero thus admitted that Brutus listens to Servilia above all others. Again, thanks to Cicero we can know more about Servilia's actions at this precise moment in history. By removing from the Senate decree any reference to this task attributed to Brutus and Cassius, the two men would have been free to go overseas without the constraint of the assignment they considered so degrading.
But you may ask, how could a woman ever have an assignment established even by Senate decree eliminated?
Servilia was a Roman matron of ancient and noble lineage and lived at the centre of a dense network of kinship and important connections. She was the mother of Brutus, Caesar's most notorious assassin; mother-in-law of Cassius, another leader of the conspiracy; and also of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, one of the most loyal men to the dictator. But, above all, she was known in her time for being Julius Caesar's most intimate and enduring mistress.[108]

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bruscamente interrotto da quella tua amica, Servilia, che non mi ha permesso di aggiungere altro." (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 1-2)»

[105] Original text. «Servilia*. "Hoc vero neminem umquam audivi!" Questo, davvero, non l'ho mai sentito dire da nessuno. (Cic., ad Att. XV, 11, 2)»*

[106] Original text. «Narratore*. Di fatto, Cicerone stava proponendo a Bruto e Cassio di tornare a Roma per compiere un colpo di stato, una proposta che Servilia non avrebbe mai potuto condividere: avrebbe inevitabilmente esposto suo figlio a dei rischi troppo grandi, mettendo in pericolo la sua stessa vita. Servilia ha da tempo un ruolo chiave nelle decisioni della parte cesaricida, a cui è imparentata. Nei mesi precedenti aveva regolarmente informato Cicerone sulle intenzioni di Bruto e Cassio, quando ancora meditavano se lasciare l'Italia. Solo grazie al suo intervento hanno deciso, almeno per ora, di non lasciare la penisola. Come lo stesso Cicerone ha constatato,»*

[107] Original text. «Cicerone*. "Bruto è ossequiente ai consigli e anche alle preghiere della madre: come posso mettermi in mezzo?" (Cic., ad Att. XV, 10)»*

[108] Original text. «Narratore*. In una delle sue lettere, Cicerone ha quindi ammesso che Bruto ascolta Servilia al di sopra di ogni altra persona. Sempre grazie a Cicerone possiamo sapere di più circa le azioni di Servilia in questo preciso momento storico. Togliendo dal decreto del Senato ogni riferimento a questa mansione attribuita a Bruto e Cassio, i due uomini sarebbero stati liberi di andare oltremare senza il vincolo di questo incarico da loro ritenuto degradante. Ma, vi chiederete, come potrà mai una donna far eliminare un incarico stabilito addirittura per decreto del Senato? Servilia fu una matrona romana di antica e nobile stirpe e visse al centro di una fitta rete di parentele e di conoscenze importanti. Fu madre di Bruto, il più noto assassino di Cesare, suocera di Cassio, altro capo della congiura, ma anche di Marco Emilio Lepido, uno dei cesariani più fedeli al dittatore. Ma, soprattutto, fu nota al suo tempo per essere stata la più intima e duratura amante di Giulio Cesare.»*

Suetonius. "*Sed ante alias dilexit Marci Bruti matrem, Serviliam.*" Most of all he loved Servilia, mother of Marcus Brutus. (Suet., *De vita Caesarum*, I, 50)[109]

Narrator. Thus Suetonius, Caesar's biographer, will say of her. The relationship between Caesar and Servilia was not only physical or amorous: with Caesar the matron shared a common political line. She also tried to guide Brutus toward Caesar and the political orientation he represented, but, unfortunately, with little result. It was precisely her enduring relationship with Caesar that allowed her to get to know his supporters and affiliates. Because of this knowledge and the respect these men give her Servilia knows that she can act behind the scenes and influence policy decisions.
Thus, thanks to Servilia's resourcefulness, Brutus and Cassius were able to depart freely for the East. Between Greece, Syria, and Egypt they enlisted soldiers and prepared for a showdown with the Caesareans.
Meanwhile, in Rome, matrons – the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of Roman politicians and commanders – play an increasingly vital role. Caesar's murder has opened a new season of civil wars, in which members of the same families fight on opposing sides.[110]

Cicero. "*Prudentissima et diligentissima femina*". Very prudent and careful woman. (Cic., *ad Brut*. I 18,1)[111]

Narrator. as Cicero called her in a letter addressed to Brutus, by then in the East for a year.
As Brutus's mother, in July 43 B.C., Servilia called for a meeting in her own house to discuss a specific issue: should she follow up on her son's demands, who was insistent that he be allowed to return to Rome, or have him remain in Greece, a safer place for him? Again, Cicero, who will report part of this meeting in a letter to Brutus, has a different opinion from that of Servilia: in fact, he wants Brutus to return to Italy. The matron, however, fears the consequences of this return, which she considers dangerous to her son's safety.
Pietas, devotion, and maternal love for her son lead her, to do all she can to keep him from taking risks. What interests her more than anything else is to make the choice that will keep Brutus safest.
To this end, she summons and presides over this meeting, of which she will be the only woman to attend, sets the agenda, and having heard the opinions of Brutus' supporters, she will make the final call.
Although the sources do not report the conclusion of the meeting, neither Brutus nor Cassius ever returned from the East. Servilia's will have to prevail. Her son and son-in-law would die

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[109] Original text. «Svetonio. *"Sed ante alias dilexit Marci Bruti matrem, Serviliam". Più di tutte amò Servilia, madre di Marco Bruto. (Svet., De vita Caesarum, I, 50)*»
[110] Original text. «Narratore. *Così dirà di lei Svetonio, biografo di Cesare. La relazione tra Cesare e Servilia non è stata solamente fisica o amorosa: con Cesare la matrona ha condiviso una stessa linea politica. Ha anche cercato di indirizzare Bruto verso Cesare e verso l'orientamento politico che lui ha rappresentato, ma, purtroppo, con scarsi risultati. Proprio la sua duratura relazione con Cesare le ha permesso di conoscere i suoi sostenitori e affiliati. Grazie a queste conoscenze e al rispetto che questi uomini le portano Servilia sa di poter agire dietro le quinte e di influenzare le decisioni della politica. Così, grazie all'intraprendenza di Servilia, Bruto e Cassio poterono partire liberamente alla volta dell'Oriente. Tra Grecia, Siria ed Egitto arruolano soldati e si preparano alla resa dei conti con i cesariani. Intanto, a Roma, le matrone – madri, mogli, sorelle e figlie dei politici e comandanti romani– giocano un ruolo sempre più fondamentale. L'omicidio di Cesare ha aperto una nuova stagione di guerre civili, in cui membri delle stesse famiglie combattono su fronti opposti.*»
[111] Original text. «Cicerone. *"Prudentissima et diligentissima femina". Donna molto prudente e attenta. (Cic., a Brut. I 18,1)*»

more than a year after these events, in October 42 B.C., during the two battles of Philippi, where they fought against Antony and Octavian.

Servilia's actions show that although matrons were traditionally excluded from political office, they were in fact able to act to influence the political dynamics of their times.

Although Servilia's voice has come down to us through a single sentence, her few words spoken in private contexts but with strong political significance and her decisive opinion significantly affected the fate of the late Roman Republic.[112]

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[113]

Episode 4. Hortensia

Authors: Chiara Valeri

Voices: Theme song and end credit (Elena Missaggia), Narrator (Chiara Valeri), Quintilian (Professor Alvise Merelli), Valerius Maximus (Luca Borrello), Hortense (Letizia Nuscis), Appian (Professor Alessandro Rucco).

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome. In this episode we will discuss Hortensia, who publicly confronted the triumvirs to defend the rights of all Roman women.[114]

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[112] Original text. «Narratore. *così l'ha definita Cicerone in una lettera destinata a Bruto, ormai in Oriente da un anno. In quanto madre di Bruto, nel luglio del 43 a.C., Servilia convoca una riunione nella propria casa per discutere una specifica questione: dare seguito alle richieste del figlio, che chiede con insistenza di poter tornare a Roma, oppure farlo rimanere in Grecia, luogo più sicuro per lui?*

Di nuovo, Cicerone, che riferirà in una lettera a Bruto una parte di questo incontro, ha un'opinione diversa da quella di Servilia: vuole infatti che Bruto torni in Italia. La matrona, però, teme le conseguenze di questo rientro, che ritiene pericoloso per l'incolumità del figlio.

La pietas, la devozione, e l'amore materno verso il figlio, la portano, a fare tutto quel che può per non fargli correre rischi. Ciò che le interessa più di ogni altro è fare la scelta che tenga Bruto più al sicuro.

A tal fine convoca e presiede questo incontro, di cui sarà l'unica donna a partecipare, ne stabilisce l'ordine del giorno e, ascoltate le opinioni dei sostenitori di Bruto, sarà lei a prendere la decisione finale.

Sebbene le fonti non riferiscano la conclusione della riunione, né Bruto né Cassio fecero mai ritorno dall'Oriente. La volontà di Servilia dovette prevalere. Suo figlio e suo genero moriranno oltre un anno dopo queste vicende, nell'ottobre del 42 a.C., durante le due battaglie di Filippi, dove combatteranno contro Antonio e Ottaviano.

Le azioni di cui Servilia fu protagonista dimostrano che, nonostante le matrone fossero tradizionalmente escluse dalle cariche politiche, di fatto furono in grado di agire per influenzare le dinamiche politiche dei loro tempi. Anche se la voce di Servilia ci è pervenuta attraverso una sola frase, le sue poche parole pronunciate in contesti privati ma dal forte significato politico e la sua decisiva opinione hanno inciso significativamente nel destino della tarda Repubblica romana.»

[113] Original text. «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

[114] Original text. «*Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae, il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma. In questo episodio parleremo di Ortensia, che ha affrontato pubblicamente i triumviri per difendere i diritti delle donne romane.*»

[background noise: clashes]

Narrator. Rome, early 42 B.C.

The state for about a year has been ruled by the political heirs of Julius Caesar. The triumvirs-Mark Antony, Aemilius Lepidus, and the young Octavian-are fighting against the pro-republicans, the murderers of Julius Caesar.

By the end of 43 B.C., they had enacted the proscription lists, which legitimized the killing of anyone mentioned as an enemy and the confiscation of his property. The triumvirs needed money for the war against the Caesaricides in the East; so, in early 42 B.C. they issued an extraordinary measure requiring one thousand four hundred matrons to quantify their property and pay a tax proportional to it.

The taxation also responds to the goal of weakening the families of political opponents, the caesaricides who were the fathers, husbands, and brothers of those women.

In an attempt to have the measure withdrawn, the one thousand four hundred matrons initially decided to take the route of family mediation, more appropriate to the female dimension, by soliciting the intervention of women close to the triumvirs: Octavia - Octavian's sister - and Julia - Antony's mother - listened to them, but Fulvia - Antony's wife - refused to receive them. Women who related to women and not, inappropriately, to men who are not their family members. It is Fulvia's refusal that leads the matrons to come to the forum to speak directly with the triumvirs. Their spokesperson is Hortensia, daughter of the late celebrated orator Quintus Hortensius Hortalus. To justify her presence at the triumvirs' tribunal in the forum, she begins her oratio by reiterating that the legitimate and traditional way was precluded to women and, as Valerius Maximus writes, that[115]

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[115] Original text. «*Narratore. Roma, inizi del 42 a.C. Lo stato da circa un anno è governato dagli eredi politici di Giulio Cesare. I triumviri - Marco Antonio, Emilio Lepido e il giovane Ottaviano - combattono contro i filo repubblicani, gli assassini di Giulio Cesare. Alla fine del 43 a.C. avevano emanato le liste di proscrizione, che legittimavano l'uccisione di chiunque fosse menzionato come nemico e la confisca del suo patrimonio. I triumviri avevano bisogno di denaro per la guerra contro i cesaricidi in Oriente; per questo agli inizi del 42 a.C. emanano un provvedimento straordinario che obbliga millequattrocento matrone a quantificare i propri beni e pagare una tassa proporzionale ad essi. L'esazione risponde anche all'obiettivo di indebolire le famiglie degli avversari politici, dei cesaricidi che di quelle donne erano padri, mariti e fratelli. Nel tentativo di far ritirare il provvedimento, le millequattrocento matrone decidono inizialmente di percorrere la via della mediazione familiare, più consona alla dimensione femminile, sollecitando l'intervento delle donne vicine ai triumviri: Ottavia - sorella di Ottaviano - e Giulia - madre di Antonio - le ascoltano, ma Fulvia - la moglie di Antonio - si rifiuta di riceverle. Donne che si relazionavano con donne e no, in modo inappropriato, con uomini che non sono loro familiari. É proprio il rifiuto di Fulvia a spingere le matrone a presentarsi nel foro per parlare direttamente con i triumviri. La loro portavoce è Ortensia, figlia del defunto celebre oratore Quinto Ortensio Ortalo. Per giustificare la sua presenza presso il tribunale dei triumviri nel foro, inizia la sua oratio ribadendo che la via legittima e tradizionale è stata preclusa alle donne e, come scrive Valerio Massimo, che*»

Valerius Maximus. "No man had dared to sponsor them." (Valerius Maximus, *Fact. et dict. mem., VIII*, 3,3)[116]

Narrator. The historian Appian of Alexandria reports in direct form the speech given by Hortense. The quality of the oration, although delivered by a woman, was praised enough to be preserved over time. One hundred and fifty years after the events of 42 B.C., the Latin rhetorician Quintilian records that Hortense's speech was still read in his day:[117]

Quintilian. "[...] the oration held by Hortensia, daughter of Quintus, before the Triumvirs is still read, and not only as a tribute to sex." (Quintilian, *Instiutio Oratoria*, I, 1,6)[118]

[Background noises: people talking]

Appian. "Not tolerating the affront [the matrons] took themselves into the forum, by the tribune of the magistrates, while the people and lictors opened to their passage. Hortense, chosen for this task, said:" (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV*, 32, 136 - 139)[119]

Hortensia. "As befitting women of our rank who needed you, we turned to your women; but having received from Fulvia an affront we would not have thought, by her compelled we present ourselves in the forum. You have already taken from us parents and children, husbands, and brothers whom you blame for wrongs done to you; if now you also take away our wealth, you will bring us to a condition unworthy of our birth, of our way of life, of the female sex. If you say you have been treated as badly by us as by our men, proscribe us, too, as well as them." (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV*, 32, 136 - 139)[120]

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[116] Original text. «*Valerio Massimo. "nessun uomo aveva osato patrocinarle". (Valerio Massimo, Fact. et dict. mem., VIII, 3,3)*»

[117] Original text. «*Narratore. Lo storico Appiano di Alessandria riporta in forma diretta il discorso tenuto da Ortensia. La qualità dell'orazione, sebbene pronunciata da una donna, fu elogiata tanto da venir conservata nel tempo. Centocinquant'anni dopo gli avvenimenti del 42 a.C. il retore latino Quintiliano ricorda che il discorso di Ortensia era ancora letto ai suoi giorni:*»

[118] Original text. «*Quintiliano. "[...] l'orazione tenuta da Ortensia, figlia di Quinto, davanti ai Triumviri si legge ancora, e non solo per omaggio al sesso". (Quintiliano, Instiutio Oratoria, I, 1,6)*»

[119] Original text. «*Appiano. "Non sopportando l'affronto [le matrone] si portarono nel foro, presso la tribuna dei magistrati, mentre popolo e littori si aprivano al loro passaggio. Ortensia, prescelta per questa incombenza, disse:" (Appiano, Bell. Civ., IV, 32, 136 – 139)*»

[120] Original text. «*Ortensia. "Come si addiceva a donne del nostro rango che avevano bisogno di voi, ci siamo rivolte alle vostre donne; ma avendo ricevuto da Fulvia un affronto che non avremmo pensato, da lei costrette ci presentiamo nel foro. Voi ci <u>avete</u> già tolto genitori e figli, mariti e fratelli che incolpate di avervi fatto dei torti; se ora ci togliete anche il patrimonio, ci porterete ad una condizione indegna della nostra nascita, del nostro modo di vivere, del sesso femminile. Se voi dite di essere <u>stati</u> <u>trattati</u> male da noi come dai nostri uomini, proscrivete anche noi, come loro." (Appiano, Bell. Civ., IV, 32, 136 – 139)*»

Narrator. The triumvirs' measure against the matrons is presented as a punitive act: the idea that dominates the first part of the speech is not so much the denunciation of unjust taxation as that of unjustified overpowering, motivated by the political hatred that arose among the men. Hortensia argues that the matrons had not been responsible for those actions that had caused their men to be proscribed.

By exonerating them Hortensia shows how they did not deserve a measure that would have deprived them of their own *dignitas* (i.e., authority). It derived from noble birth and was embodied in a lifestyle for which ample financial resources were necessary. Hortensia also emphasizes one fact: the role of women in the community is different from that of men. No egalitarian or emancipatory claim is present. On the contrary, the theme of role diversity is exploited here to demand diversity of treatment as well: women are excluded from politics, so they do not have to contribute economically.

Hortensia continues her speech with a series of rhetorical questions: [121]

[Background noises: people talking]

Hortensia. "But if we women have not declared any of you a public enemy, nor destroyed your house, or bribed your army, or enlisted another army, or prevented you from attaining public office or any honour. Why must we share the punishments if we have not cooperated in wronging you? Why should we, who are not partakers of public offices, honours, military commands, in short, political life, which you contend for with such unhappy results? Why, as you say, is there war? What about when there were no wars? And when have women paid tribute?" (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV*, 32, 139 - 33, 140)[122]

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[121] Original text. «*Narratore. Il provvedimento dei triumviri nei confronti delle matrone viene presentato come un atto punitivo: l'idea che domina la prima parte del discorso non è tanto la denuncia di una tassazione ingiusta, quanto quella di una sopraffazione ingiustificata, motivata dall'odio politico nato tra gli uomini. Ortensia sostiene che le matrone non si erano rese responsabili di quelle azioni che avevano fatto proscrivere i loro uomini. Scagionandole Ortensia dimostra come non meritino un provvedimento che le avrebbe private della loro stessa dignitas (ovvero della loro autorevolezza). Essa derivava dalla nascita nobile e si concretizzava in uno stile di vita per il quale era necessario disporre di ampie disponibilità finanziarie. Ortensia inoltre mette l'accento su un dato: il ruolo delle donne nella comunità è diverso da quello degli uomini. Non è presente nessuna rivendicazione egualitaria o di emancipazione. Anzi, il tema della diversità dei ruoli è qui sfruttato per pretendere anche una diversità di trattamento: le donne sono escluse dalla politica, dunque non devono contribuire economicamente. Ortensia prosegue il suo discorso con una serie di domande retoriche:*»

[122] Original text. «*Ortensia. "Ma se noi donne non abbiamo dichiarato nessuno di voi nemico pubblico, né vi abbiamo distrutto la casa, o corrotto l'esercito, o arruolato un altro esercito, o vi abbiamo impedito di conseguire una carica pubblica o un onore qualunque. Perché dobbiamo condividere le punizioni se non abbiamo collaborato a farvi dei torti? Perché dobbiamo pagare noi, che non siamo partecipi di cariche pubbliche, di onori, di comandi militari, insomma di vita politica, che voi vi contendete con risultati così infelici? Perché, come dite voi, c'è la guerra? E quando non ci sono state guerre? E quando le donne hanno pagato tributi?" (Appiano, Bell. Civ., IV, 32, 139 – 33, 140)*»

Narrator. With these questions, on the one hand, she positively highlights women's lack of political participation, which, according to Hortense, is reason enough not to pay taxes, and on the other hand, she negatively highlights the behaviour of the men who imposed the tribute on them.[123]

[Background noises: people talking]

Hortensia. "Among all people their condition [as women] exempts them [from paying taxes], [...] our mothers, against their condition, paid only once: when you were in danger of losing all power and the whole city was under pressure from the Carthaginians. [...]. What fear now do you have for power and for the homeland? Let the war of the Celts or Parthians come, and we will not be less than our mothers for the salvation of the city. But for civil wars never let us contribute, nor cooperate in exciting one against the other!" (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV*, 33, 141 - 143)[124]

Narrator. Hortense asserts that "among all peoples" tax exemption is inherent in the natural condition of women. She also uses a recurring rhetorical tool: supporting the assumption by evoking examples from the past. The technique is effective in a society where tradition is the code of reference for public and private conduct. Indeed, Hortensia cites similar instances in which Roman matrons donated their jewelry to the homeland. For external wars, therefore, matrons can contribute, but not for civil wars, in which citizens fight against citizens.[125]

[Background noises: people talking]

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[123] Original text. «*Narratore. Con queste domande, da un lato, sottolinea positivamente la mancanza di partecipazione politica delle donne, che, secondo Ortensia, è motivo sufficiente per non pagare le tasse e dall'altro, evidenzia negativamente il comportamento degli uomini che hanno imposto loro il tributo.*»

[124] Original text. «*Ortensia. "Presso tutte le genti la loro condizione [di donne] le esenta [dal pagamento delle tasse], [...] le nostre madri, contro la loro condizione, pagarono una sola volta: quando rischiavate di perdere ogni potere e l'intera città era sotto la pressione dei Cartaginesi. [...]. Che paura ora avete per il potere e per la patria? Venga pure la guerra dei Celti o dei Parti, e non saremo da meno delle nostre madri per la salvezza della città. Ma per le guerre civili mai noi si contribuisca, né si cooperi ad eccitarvi l'uno contro l'altro!" (Appiano, Bell. Civ., IV, 33, 141 – 143)*»

[125] Original text. «*Narratore. Ortensia afferma che "presso tutte le genti" l'esenzione fiscale è insita nella condizione naturale della donna. Usa inoltre uno strumento retorico ricorrente: sostenere l'assunto rievocando esempi del passato. La tecnica è efficace in una società in cui la tradizione rappresenta il codice di riferimento per la condotta pubblica e privata. Ortensia, infatti, cita casi analoghi in cui le matrone romane donarono alla patria i propri gioielli. Per guerre esterne le matrone dunque possono contribuire, ma non per le guerre civili, in cui cittadini combattono contro cittadini.*»

Hortensia. "We did not contribute to the time of Caesar and Pompey, and they did not force us to pay either Marius, or Cinna, or Sulla, who was a tyrant of the fatherland; you, then, say that you intend to put the state back on its feet!" (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV*, 33, 144)[126]

Narrator. Finally, Hortense does not miss the opportunity to criticize, in a sarcastic tone, the politics of her time and reproaches the triumvirs that not even a tyrant like Sulla had imposed any tax burden on women.
As Appian of Alexandria records:[127]

[Background noises: people talking]

Appian. "At these words of Hortensia the three became irritated because, while the men did not move, the women took courage, came to the assembly, asked the magistrates for an account of their actions, and while the men went to war they did not even pay tribute; then they ordered the public servants to remove them from the tribune, but a roar arose from the people standing around there; the messengers suspended their action and the magistrates said that they were postponing the discussion until the following day. The next day they ruled that only four hundred women, and not one thousand four hundred, should present an estimate of their wealth [...]." (Appian, *Bell. Civ. IV,* 34, 145 - 146)[128]

Narrator. Following Hortense's intervention, the measure was withdrawn and replaced by a taxation involving only four hundred matrons.
Interestingly, Hortensia throughout her speech uses the first-person plural, "we," and never the first-person singular. This is because, at least by the third century B.C., women in the Roman world constituted the *ordo matronarum*, "the social class of matrons," as it is defined by Valerius Maximus. Indeed, women only if they acted collectively were able to make their voices heard on political issues.
Quoting Eva Cantarella, we can use the expression "No taxation without representation" to summarize the main argument brought by Hortensia in support of her demand. There is,

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[126] Original text. «*Ortensia. "Non abbiamo contribuito al tempo di Cesare e di Pompeo, e non ci costrinsero a pagare né Mario, né Cinna, né Silla, che fu tiranno della patria; voi, poi, dite che intendete rimettere in sesto lo stato!" (Appiano, Bell. Civ., IV, 33, 144)*»

[127] Original text. «*Narratore. Ortensia, infine, non si lascia sfuggire la possibilità di criticare, con tono sarcastico, la politica del suo tempo e rimprovera ai triumviri che nemmeno un tiranno come Silla aveva imposto alcun onere fiscale alle donne. Come ricorda Appiano di Alessandria*:»

[128] Original text. «*Appiano. "A queste parole di Ortensia i tre si irritarono perché, mentre gli uomini non si muovevano, le donne prendevano coraggio, venivano in assemblea, chiedevano conto ai magistrati delle loro azioni, e mentre gli uomini andavano alla guerra esse neppure pagavano il tributo; allora ordinarono ai servi pubblici di allontanarle dalla tribuna, ma si levò un boato dalla gente che stava lì attorno; i messi sospesero la loro azione e i magistrati dissero che rimandavano la discussione al giorno seguente. Il giorno dopo stabilirono che soltanto quattrocento donne, e non millequattrocento, presentassero una stima del loro patrimonio [...]." (Appiano, Bell. Civ. IV, 34, 145 – 146)*»

however, a not insignificant difference between what the English settlers living in America in the 18th century demanded and the Roman women. The matrons in fact did not ask for the right of representation, but only not to pay taxes. And as many as a thousand women got what they wanted.

Moreover, although Hortense spoke in public on this occasion her behaviour and speech should not be interpreted as a vindication of women's rights or an attempt at women's emancipation. In fact, it is quite the opposite: the matrons were demanding respect for the differences that existed between women and men. They were asking to be allowed to continue to maintain those privileges of rank that belonged to them and guaranteed their role in society. Hortensia's action was in fact dictated by the fact that the drastic reduction in the matrons' economic dispositions would entail the radical questioning of their status symbol. Deprived of their clothes, jewellery, and money, they would not be able to communicate their family's social and economic status to the outside world, and, after all, that was all they could have.[129]

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[130]

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[129] Original text. «*Narratore. In seguito all'intervento di Ortensia il provvedimento viene ritirato e sostituito da una tassazione che coinvolgeva solo quattrocento matrone. È interessante notare come Ortensia durante tutto il suo discorso utilizzi la prima persona plurale, il "noi", e mai la prima persona singolare. Questo perchè, almeno dal III sec. a.C., le donne del mondo romano costituirono l'ordo matronarum, "la classe sociale delle matrone", come viene definito da Valerio Massimo. Infatti, le donne solo se agiscono collettivamente riescono a far sentire la propria voce su questioni di carattere politico. Citando Eva Cantarella, possiamo utilizzare l'espressione No taxation without representation ("Nessuna tassazione senza rappresentanza") per sintetizzare l'argomentazione principale portata da Ortensia a supporto della sua richiesta. C'è però una differenza non trascurabile tra quanto chiedevano i coloni inglesi che abitavano in America nel XVIII secolo e le donne romane. Le matrone, infatti, non chiedevano diritto di rappresentanza, ma solo di non pagare le tasse. E ben mille donne ottennero ciò che volevano. Inoltre, nonostante Ortensia in questa occasione abbia parlato in pubblico il suo comportamento e il suo discorso non devono essere interpretati come una rivendicazione dei diritti delle donne o come un tentativo di emancipazione femminile. Anzi è proprio il contrario: le matrone chiedevano il rispetto delle differenze esistenti tra donne e uomini. Chiedevano di poter continuare a mantenere quei privilegi di rango che appartenevano loro e che ne garantivano il ruolo nella società. L'azione di Ortensia era infatti dettata dal fatto che la riduzione drastica delle disponibilità economiche delle matrone avrebbe comportato la radicale messa in discussione del loro status symbol. Private dei loro abiti, dei loro gioielli e del loro denaro non avrebbero potuto comunicare all'esterno il livello sociale ed economico della loro famiglia, e, dopotutto, era tutto ciò che potevano avere.*»

[130] Original text. «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

Episode 5. Giulia

Authors: Elena Missaggia, Alice Scaparra

Voices: Theme song and end credits (Elena Missaggia), Narrator (Elena Missaggia), Plutarch (Evaristo Missaggia), Antonius (Professor Alessandro Rucco), Giulia (Letizia Nuscis), Appiano (Professor Alvise Merelli).

Theme song. Welcome, this is *Matronae*. The podcast that restores the voice to the women of ancient Rome. In this episode we will talk about Julia, who goes out into the streets to defend her family's political causes.[131]

Narrator. Women have always had a model to follow. In Roman times, this model was dictated by the *mos maiorum*: a set of virtues, values, and behaviours that outlined the profile of the perfect woman. This paradigm, born in the archaic age, limited female life exclusively within the domestic and private dimensions. The typical matron did not participate in public life but had to manage the domus and the family, having no aspirations beyond the household walls. These restrictions, on the status of women, begin to fall away in the late republic, when with the civil wars, the old values go into crisis. Women now have the opportunity for greater political activism. However, this is a tool to protect rights and social position, not female emancipation. Among the examples of the more ligious and conventional Roman matrons, we find Julia. Described by Plutarch as:[132]

Plutarch. "Not inferior to any woman of the time in nobility and temperance." (Plutarch, *Antonius*, II, I.)[133]

Narrator. and referred to by Cicero, political opponent of his son Antony, as *femina lectissima* (Cicerone, *L. Catilinae orationes*, IV, XIII.).

And yet Julia, from that model as virtuous as it is rigid, has departed several times. She speaks in public; she talks about political issues without fear of consequences. So, what drives her

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[131] Original text. «*Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è Matronae, il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma. In questo episodio parleremo di Giulia, che esce nelle strade per difendere le cause politiche della propria famiglia.*»

[132] Original text. «*Narratore. Le donne hanno avuto, da sempre, un modello da seguire. In epoca romana, questo modello era dettato dal mos maiorum: un insieme di virtù, valori e comportamenti che delineavano il profilo della donna perfetta. Tale paradigma, nato in età arcaica, relegava la vita femminile esclusivamente all'interno della dimensione domestica e privata. La matrona ideale non prendeva parte alla vita pubblica, ma doveva occuparsi della domus e della famiglia, senza avere aspirazioni al di là delle mura domestiche. Queste restrizioni, alla condizione femminile, iniziano a venire meno nella tarda repubblica, quando con le guerre civili, gli antichi valori entrano in crisi. Le donne hanno ora l'opportunità di un maggiore attivismo politico. Tuttavia, questo è strumento per tutelare diritti e posizione sociale e non una reale emancipazione femminile. Tra gli esempi delle matrone romane più ligie e convenzionali, troviamo Giulia. Descritta dallo scrittore greco Plutarco come:*»

[133] Original text. «*Plutarco. "non inferiore a nessuna donna del tempo in nobiltà e temperanza" (Plutarco, Antonius, II, I)*»

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to take such actions? And with what authority does she speak about politics? Both matters are settled within the family dimension: Julia speaks for the family, because of the family.

Julia was born into a patrician family and married twice. The first with Mark Antony, from whose union born Antony, later Caesarian, and triumvir. The second with Lentulus. This is also an unfortunate marriage. Lentulus involved in the Catiline conspiracy is killed without trial in 63 BC.

Fearing a political repercussion from Lentulus' comrades, the Senate withholds the conspirator's body to prevent his funeral ceremonies. Julia finds herself in a poor position: on the one hand, she cannot interfere with political decisions; on the other hand, she must fulfil her duties as matron, she must attend to the funeral. The matron then does the only thing she is allowed to do. As it is reported by Plutarch, the widow goes to Terence, wife of Cicero, asking her to intercede with her husband so that the body may be returned to her. Julia follows the path thought by the tradition: she does not directly address Cicero, a man and external to family relations, but relies on another woman. However, the request, while in line with Julia's duties could have political consequences, and female intervention in matters of state is not permitted.

But this political interference by Julia would not be the last. In 44 BC. Caesar is assassinated. The situation is critical, and Antony, Julia's son, finds himself involved on the front lines. Loyal to Caesar, Antony is deeply disappointed when the deceased's will is opened. Caesar has entrusted him with neither the role of heir nor control of Cisalpine Gaul. Antony, filled with disappointment, decides it is time to take military action. However, this attempt of his is soon stopped by the armies of the Senate and Octavian, Caesar's rightful heir. Antony is declared a public enemy, he will then lose his status as a Roman citizen and with that, his wealth and political position.

Here Julia enters the scene again. It is the historian Appian who describes the night before the Senate decision.[134]

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[134] Original text. «Narratore. *È definita dall'oratore romano Cicerone, avversario del figlio Antonio, femina lectissima. Eppure, Giulia, da quel modello tanto virtuoso quanto rigido, si è allontanata più volte. Ella parla in pubblico, parla di questioni politiche senza temere le conseguenze. Ma cosa la spinge a compiere tali azioni? E con quale autorità si permette di parlare di politica? Entrambe le questioni sembrano risolversi all'interno della dimensione familiare: Giulia parla per la famiglia, grazie alla famiglia. Giulia, nata da una famiglia patrizia, si sposa due volte. La prima con Marco Antonio, dalla cui unione nasce Antonio, poi noto come cesariano e triumviro. La seconda con Lentulo. Anche questo è un matrimonio sfortunato. Lentulo coinvolto nella congiura di Catilina viene ucciso senza processo nel 63 a.C. Per paura di una ripercussione politica da parte dei compagni di Lentulo, il Senato trattiene il corpo del congiurato per impedirne i riti funebri. Giulia si trova in bilico: da una parte non può interferire con le decisioni politiche, dall'altra deve adempiere ai suoi doveri di matrona, deve occuparsi del funerale. La matrona allora fa l'unica cosa che le è concessa. Così come è riportato da Plutarco, la vedova si reca da Terenzia, moglie di Cicerone, chiedendole di intercedere presso il marito affinché le venga restituito il corpo. Giulia segue il percorso pensato dalla tradizione: non si rivolge direttamente a Cicerone, uomo ed esterno alle relazioni famigliari, ma si affida a un'altra donna. Tuttavia, la richiesta, seppur in linea con i doveri di Giulia poteva avere conseguenze politiche e l'intervento femminile in questioni di stato non è ammesso. Ma questa intromissione politica da parte di Giulia non sarà l'ultima. Nel 44 a.C. Cesare viene assassinato. La situazione è critica e Antonio, il figlio di Giulia, si trova coinvolto in prima linea. Fedelissimo di Cesare,*

Appian. "Antony's mother, wife, his young son and other family members and friends all night long ran to the houses of the powerful, uttering prayers to their address, and the next morning they approached them on their way to the Senate, throwing themselves at their feet with groans and moans and shouting before their doors in their robes of mourning. Some senators were moved by those voices, by that spectacle, and by the change that had suddenly occurred." (Appian, *De bellis civilibus*, III, CCXI-CCXII)[135]

Narrator. The family begs for the decision to be reversed. Once again, poor Julia's efforts prove in vain.

Julia's intervention deviates from what tradition dictates. The matron steps out of the private realm and goes into the streets, in public - and even worse, she does so to defend a political cause. Despite this, however, her interests are anything but political, but only personal. Her family is in danger.

Antony is eventually saved. In 43 BC. Octavian took power in a coup d'état and revoked Antony's public enemy status to forge an alliance with Caesarian leaders. The triumvirate takes shape. Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus pledge to avenge Caesar's death through the proscription lists. These indicate the names of those politicians whom the triumvirs would have liked to see killed, in exchange for a substantial reward.

Antony's uncle, Lucius Julius Caesar, brother of Julia, is also among the proscribed. He had voted in favour of declaring Antony ad *hostis publicus* and now, his nephew wants him dead.

Lucius, hunted by assassins, decides to take refuge at his sister's. Julia is in a very dangerous situation because those who help the proscribed come to find themselves in the same condition as them.

But the matron has no doubts: she welcomes her brother into the house and hides him inside her own room. When the assassins attempt to force entry, Plutarch says that the woman

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Antonio rimane profondamente deluso all'apertura del testamento del defunto. Cesare non gli ha affidato né il ruolo di erede, né il controllo della Gallia Cisalpina. Antonio, preso dal disappunto, decide che è tempo di passare alle armi. Tuttavia, questo suo tentativo militare viene presto fermato dagli eserciti del Senato e di Ottaviano, il legittimo erede di Cesare. Antonio viene dichiarato nemico pubblico, perderà quindi la sua condizione di cittadino romano e con questa, patrimonio e posizione politica. Ecco che Giulia entra nuovamente in scena. è lo storico Appiano a descrivere la notte prima della decisione del Senato.»

[135] Original text. «*Appiano. "La madre, la moglie, il figlio ancora bambino di Antonio e gli altri familiari e amici per tutta la notte corsero alle case dei potenti formulando preghiere al loro indirizzo, e la mattina seguente li avvicinavano mentre si recavano in Senato, gettandosi ai loro piedi con lamenti e gemiti e gridando dinanzi alle loro porte con le vesti del lutto. Alcuni senatori furono commossi da quelle voci, da quello spettacolo e da quel mutamento che si era verificato improvvisamente." (Appiano, De bellis civilibus, III, CCXI-CCXII)*»

physically stands between them and the door, and spreading her arms without any fear, shouts:[136]

Julia. "You will not kill Lucius Caesar unless you first kill me, the mother of your commander." (Plutarch, *Antonius*, XX, II.)[137]

Narrator. Giulia's words save, at least at first, her brother. As Appian reports:[138]

Appian. "For a long time, the centurions respected her, because she was the mother of the triumvir." (Appian, *De bellis civilibus*, IV, CLVI-CLVII)[139]

Narrator. But the standoff cannot last too long, and the soldiers are ready to use force. Julia knows that to secure Lucius' safety she must speak to her son. So she goes to the forum, where Antony is carrying out his duties as a magistrate, and addresses him directly:[140]

[*Background noise: crowd*]

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[136] Original text. «Narratore. *La famiglia implora affinché la decisione venga revocata. Ancora una volta, gli sforzi della povera Giulia risultano vani. L'intervento di Giulia si discosta da quello che prevede la tradizione. La matrona esce dal mondo privato e si reca nelle strade, in pubblico - e ancor peggio, lo fa per difendere una causa politica. Nonostante ciò, però, i suoi interessi sono tutt'altro che politici, ma solo e soltanto personali. La sua famiglia è in pericolo. Alla fine, Antonio si salva. Nel 43 a.C. Ottaviano prende il potere con un colpo di stato e revoca la condizione di nemico pubblico di Antonio per stringere un'alleanza con i leader cesariani. Il triumvirato prende forma. Ottaviano, Antonio e Lepido si impegnano a vendicare la morte di Cesare attraverso le liste di proscrizione. Queste indicano i nomi di quei politici che i triumviri avrebbero voluto vedere uccisi, in cambio di un cospicuo premio. Tra i proscritti risulta anche lo zio di Antonio, Lucio Giulio Cesare, il fratello di Giulia. Aveva votato a favore della dichiarazione ad hostis publicus di Antonio e ora, il nipote lo vuole morto. Lucio, braccato dai sicari, decide di rifugiarsi dalla sorella. Giulia si trova quindi in una situazione molto pericolosa, perchè la stessa condanna è riservata per i proscritti e per coloro che li aiutano. Ma la matrona non ha esitazioni: accoglie il fratello in casa e lo nasconde all'interno della propria camera. Quando i sicari tentano di forzare l'ingresso, Plutarco racconta che la donna si frappone fisicamente tra loro e la porta, e allargando le braccia senza alcun timore, grida:*»

[137] Original text. «Giulia. *"Non ucciderete Lucio Cesare, se prima non avrete ucciso me, la genitrice del vostro comandante." (Plutarco, Antonius, XX, II.)*»

[138] Original text. «Narratore. *Le parole di Giulia salvano, almeno in un primo momento, il fratello. Come riporta Appiano:*»

[139] Original text. «Appiano. *"a lungo i centurioni rispettarono anche lei, perchè madre del triumviro." (Appiano, De bellis civilibus, IV, CLVI-CLVII)*»

[140] Original text. «Narratore. *Ma lo stallo non può durare troppo e i soldati sono pronti a usare le maniere forti. Giulia sa che per ottenere la salvezza di Lucio deve parlare con il figlio. Si reca così nel foro, dove Antonio sta svolgendo le proprie funzioni di magistrato, e gli si rivolge direttamente:*»

Julia. "I accuse myself, O commander, of taking in Lucius and keeping him still, and I will keep him until you have killed us both since equal punishments are appointed in the ban for those who take in proscribed people." (Appian, *De bellis civilibus*, IV, CLVI-CLVII)[141]

Narrator. Antony is bound to the obedience of his own mother, in the name of pietas. This is precisely why the matron chooses a public rather than a private confrontation.[142]

Antony. "You are a good sister, but not a wise mother. You should not have saved Lucius now but held him back earlier when he declared your son an enemy of the state by his vote. However, Lucius will be reinstated." (Appian, *De bellis civilibus*, IV, CLVI-CLVII)[143]

Narrator. At first, Julia acts within her own domestic world respecting female conduct. But when she realizes that this is not enough to save her brother, she leaves her home and makes a speech with political content, in public.

As reported by Appian, Julia refers to Antony as *αὐτοκράτωρ*, commander. This title shows how the matron does not want to speak to her son, but to the public and political figure, whom he himself represents. Julia is fully aware of the political weight of her gesture: her own self-accusation and reference to the proscription edict show that she is ready to accept even a death sentence. Once again, however, the essence of her speech is personal: she is there to save her brother, and she interferes in politics to protect her own family.

Julia is moved by the awareness of her own power. A woman's authority is a reflection of that of the men around her. The matron knows that the power she derives from her son, allows her certain freedoms that would otherwise be quickly suppressed. In the late republican age, matrons learn to exploit these opportunities for their own ends, in Julia's case for family motives. When her own family is in danger, Julia is ready to claim and emphasize all her power because, as she tells the soldiers, she is "the mother of their commander."[144]

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[141] Original text. «*Giulia. "Mi autoaccuso, o comandante, di aver accolto Lucio e di tenerlo ancora in casa, e lo terrò fino a quando non ci avrai uccisi tutti e due, visto che nel bando sono fissate uguali pene per chi accoglie i proscritti." (Appiano, De bellis civilibus, IV, CLVI-CLVII)*»

[142] Original text. «*Narratore. Antonio è tenuto all'obbedienza della propria madre, in nome della pietas. Proprio per questo la matrona sceglie un confronto pubblico e non privato.*»

[143] Original text. «*Antonio. "Sei una buona sorella, ma non una saggia madre. Non ora dovevi salvare Lucio, ma tenerlo a freno prima, quando con il voto dichiarava tuo figlio nemico dello Stato. Tuttavia, Lucio sarà reintegrate." (Appiano, De bellis civilibus, IV, CLVI-CLVII)*»

[144] Original text. «*Narratore. Inizialmente Giulia agisce all'interno del proprio mondo domestico nel rispetto della condotta femminile. Ma quando comprende che questo non è sufficiente a salvare il fratello esce dalla propria casa e pronuncia un discorso di contenuto politico, in pubblico.*

Come riportato da Appiano, Giulia si rivolge ad Antonio chiamandolo con il termine greco αὐτοκράτωρ, comandante. Questo appellativo dimostra come la matrona non voglia parlare con suo figlio, ma con la figura politica e pubblica, che egli stesso rappresenta. Giulia è pienamente consapevole del peso politico del proprio gesto: la propria autoaccusa e il riferimento all'editto di proscrizione dimostrano che è pronta ad accettare anche una condanna a morte. Ancora una volta, però, il contenuto del suo discorso è personale: è lì per salvare il fratello, interferisce nella politica per proteggere la propria famiglia. Giulia è mossa dalla consapevolezza del proprio potere. L'autorevolezza di una donna è il riflesso di quella degli

End credits. Podcast produced by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH.[145]

2.2 Designing covers art for *Matronae*

The initial impression that a podcast's cover art generates, plays a pivotal role in attracting new listeners to the podcast, as mentioned previously. Research promoted in 2022 by Buzzsprout[146], a podcast hosting platform, found that 62% of new listeners were drawn to a podcast precisely because they liked the cover. Cover arts should clearly communicate the subject according to an appealing aesthetic that is interesting to the potential audience. Pivanti in her book highlights some of the features that must be imperative for a successful cover art:

− Few shades and flat but contrasting colours.

− Showcase only the title of the podcast large and prominent, without the authors' names, which should be included in the description.

− Adding brands or organizations' logos is up to the production team (Pivanti, 2021).

It is crucial to consider that the listener is likely to view the podcast's cover art on a small screen, such as a smartphone. Therefore, the main elements to emphasize must be few, large and clear. However, the production team must not only consider the listener's

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uomini che la circondano. La matrona sa, che il potere che le deriva dal figlio, le permette determinate libertà che altrimenti verrebbero velocemente represse. In età tardo repubblicana, le matrone imparano a sfruttare queste opportunità per i propri fini, nel caso di Giulia per motivazioni familiari. Quando la propria famiglia è in pericolo, Giulia è pronta a rivendicare e sottolineare tutto il suo potere, perché, come dice ai soldati, lei è "la madre del loro comandante."»

[145] Original text. «*Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.*»

[146] How to Design Podcast Cover art (Buzzsprout, 2022): https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/10-tips-create-awesome-podcast-artwork

perspective, but also comply with the standards imposed by hosting platforms to ensure the podcast's success. Platforms as Spotify, Apple Music, and Google Podcast analyse covers based on certain metrics and reward the most conformant ones by placing them in evidence. This results in higher visibility and consequently higher ratings.

Therefore, cover art is not only an aesthetic and artistic factor, but it has also to meet specific parameters related to the podcast hosting platform. Below (*Table 1*) it is shown the most common parameters reported by Pivanti and next those required by Spotify. [147]

Parameters common to most hosting platforms (Pivanti, 2021).	Parameters required by Spotify.
– Shape: square. – Size: 1400x1400 to 3000x3000. – File weight: < 4 Mb. – Formats: .jpg, .png, .gif	– 1:1 aspect ratio. – At least 640px wide and tall. – The highest resolution available. – TIFF, PNG, or JPG format using lossless encoding[148].

Table 1. Cover art parametres of hosting platforms. Sources: Pivanti R. (2022), *#Bradend podcast prodcer*; Spotify cover art requirements (https://artists.spotify.com/en/help/article/cover-art-requirements?category=managing-your-music)

In line with these principles the team designed the cover art for *Matronae*. Given the content of the podcast, it was deemed appropriate to give visual relevance to the main subject of the episodes, a Roman matron. In the same way that Hortensia and Ersilia became spokeswomen for their communities, one figure stands on the cover representing all Roman women. Yet, creating a representation true to historical reality is not an easy

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[147] The focus on Spotify's parameters over those of other platforms is since *Matronae* was released on this very platform.

[148] The term lossless encoding refers to a class of data compression that preserves the original data without loss of information during the reconstruction (Scandolin, 2023).

task. There were only a small number of women who could be publicly portrayed, and these were members of imperial families, thus making their depictions more political messages than actual representation of Roman female figures. Women, whose power was inherent from male relatives, were expected to embody the values of the *mos maiorum*, and even a portrait of them could not deviated from the ideal of the Roman matrons. After all, to the Romans everything was a reason to perpetuate the *topoi* of the traditions and an instrument for the political propaganda of fathers and husbands. Therefore, due to limited iconographic resources and an art style far from what could be effective in a digital platform, the team employed Artificial Intelligence (AI).

As of early 2022, generative Artificial Intelligence (genAI) have become increasingly popular, as a technology that falls between Artificial General Intelligence[149] (AGI) and Machine Learning[150] (ML). These platforms start with a request – a "prompt" – formulated in natural language by the user, and based on dataset tied to the system, texts or images are generated. With hyper-realistic outcomes, capable of mimicking human creativity, these tools find wide application in entertainment sectors such as gaming and social media, or web and graphic design. As for image generation through AI, three platforms have achieved a lot of success in a very short amount of time. Stable Diffusion, DALL-E 2, MidJourney were all launched in 2022. But it is MidJourney that has found the favour of the public: the creative and realistic aesthetic of the images is what made the success of this software. Hence, the team decided to experiment with this new technology to create the cover art of the podcast.

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[149] The term Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) refers to a system – developed by AI companies such as Open AI – which can learn to replicate any intellectual human task and surpass human capabilities.

[150] Machine Learning (ML) is a field devoted to studying and developing methods that allow machines to analyse training data and make predictions and decisions without being explicitly programmed. The applications are numerous and range from medicine to speech recognition to computer vision to agriculture.

After a quick registration on Discord[151], it is possible to use MidJourney's APIs through the browser. Once inside the platform the user can start creating its pictures through the "newcomer rooms" pages; here there is a bar in which to enter one's prompt. In the case of image creation, the first command to be given is "/imagine" to which follows the textual description – or link to an image – of the desired graphic and a series of parameters useful to change the ratio of the image (--ar) or to indicate elements that you do not want in the result (--no) and many others. While using a digital reconstruction, the team tried to place great importance on the historical fidelity of the image created. By analysing historiographical descriptions and pictorial and statuary depictions, the aim was to recreate an image as close as possible to a hypothetical woman of the late Republic.

The prompt sent to MidJourney was:

```
/imagine make a hyper realistic young ancient Roman woman with
long wavy brown hair, light eyes, with gold jewellery and
dressed in a peplos.
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[151] Discord is primarily an instant messaging social platform but are its servers that most interest MidJourney. When creating new images from the prompts, MidJourney uses Discord servers to store and analyse the results for future renderings.

From this initial description, the platform made four images (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1. MidJourey result: four women with long wavy hair, light eyes, gold jewellery, dressed in peplos.

Once the images are generated, MidJourney allows the user to upscale or bring variations to the images through controls placed below the produced images. In our case, we wanted to bring more detail to the first image in the upper left corner and therefore the command "U1" was selected. The result of this operation (*Figure 2*) shows an even more precise and detailed representation than the one proposed earlier.
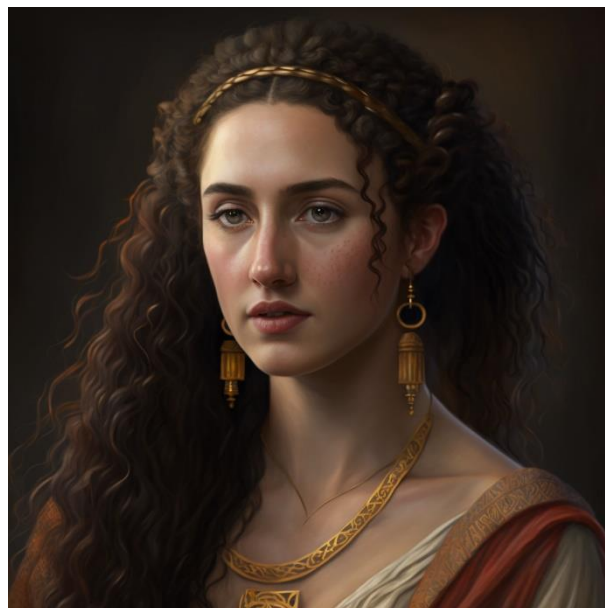
Figure 2. MidJourney result from the upscale of Figure 1.

Once a satisfactory image for the protagonist of the cover was obtained, the production team proceeded to work on the background of the cover art. The idea was to enrich the picture by including elements that alluded to the Roman context. Do to changes in MidJourney's operating systems, the second phase of the graphic was carried out by DALL-E. This, too, is an AI that provides a digital representation of a textual prompt. In this case the following prompt was given:

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dark artistic and realistic background of ancient Rome with
columns
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The result (*Figure 3*) shows an ancient scenery, depicting columns and a temple.
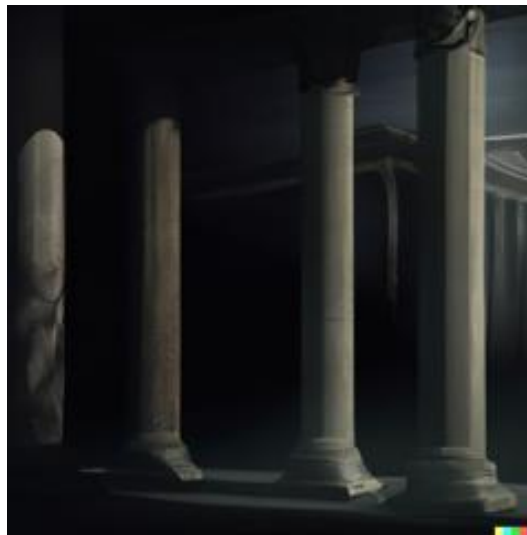
Figure 3. DALL-E result.

After creating the main image and background, they were uploaded to Canva, a graphic design platform. Here, further work was done on graphical rendering of the image. The advantage of Canva is that not only does it provide numerous templates for the various required platform formats, but it has endless archives of impressive and very useful graphics and photos for all kinds of projects. Among these formats it is also possible to make podcast covers. Thus, thanks to this tool it was possible to combine the two images and add text and logos. The fonts were chosen according to criteria of readability and

accessibility. As mentioned earlier, the cover art must be clear even at a small size. However, an eye was kept on the aesthetics of these fonts to maintain a motif of consistency and continuity with the typographic style as well. For these reasons, the choice fell on "Libre Baskerville," elegant and with graces for the podcast title "*Matronae*"; and "League Spartan" for the subtitle "*Voci di donne dall'antica Roma*". The white lettering is thus contrasted with the dark background of the cover.

Finally, the logos of the three institutions that made this project possible, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GIEFFRA, and VeDPH, have been added in the lower right corner.

The result (*Figures 4*) depicts a young woman with features and clothing reminiscent of the Rome of the late Republic. Behind her, columns and a temple recall the ancient buildings that filled the ancient forums. Added to this are the representative elements of the podcast: the title and institutional logos.

Figure 4. Matronae cover art.

Having created the matron who would represent the entire podcast, it was deemed appropriate to give each episode its own matron (*Figure 5*). MidJourney once again assisted with this task.
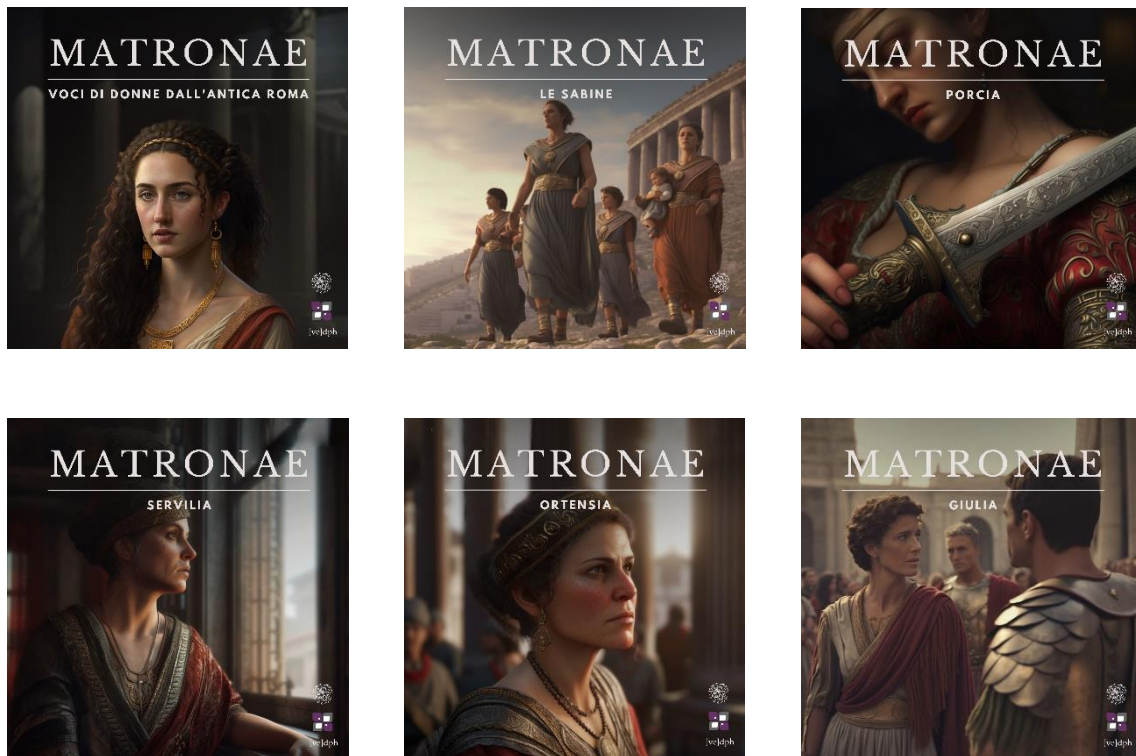
Figure 5. All cover art for the six episodes of Matronae. From top left to bottom right: Introduction, The Sabine women, Porcia, Servilia, Hortensia, Julia.

2.3   Mic up: microphones for podcasting

In contrast to podcasts that tend to meander on a subject with limited preparation, scripted podcasts demand skilled individuals who can proficiently and persuasively render the written material for the listeners. Being able to read well is not an innate skill. Studies in diction and drama exist precisely to develop these aspects. Since no one within the *Matronae* team has such a background, meetings were arranged with Professor Angelo Callipo. A theatre professor, who lent his knowledge in diction: from how to breathe, to how to place emphasis on specific words to highlight their importance. While a few lessons with a professor cannot make one an expert in this field, the discussions

around vocal techniques facilitated reflection on the potential of the sound element and how it can be exercised for the purpose of engaging communication. The goal is to entertain the listeners, while at the same time trying to teach and have them discover something new.

In the past, producing a podcast required massive and expensive equipment; nowadays, though, the scenario has changed, as the means have become smaller in size and price. Three items are sufficient to record a podcast: a sound card, a microphone, and a software. The quality of the sound produced plays a significant role in determining the success of a podcast, making the selection of instruments a critical choice.

When it comes to novice podcasters, choosing the right microphone can be a challenging undertaking. The abundance of options available makes it difficult to make an informed decision. Individuals may mistakenly believe that a higher price equates to superior sound quality and subsequently invest in costly microphones. However, this is not always the case, because incorrect use can lead to unsatisfactory results. As we shall see, even relatively affordable and user-friendly microphones can produce outstanding results.

In general, there are two types of microphones commonly used in podcasts: Dynamic microphones and condenser microphones. Dynamic microphones are the most popular choice, mainly because of their inexpensiveness, low maintenance and strong structure that makes them adaptable to any environment. The operating principle of dynamic microphones is based on electromagnetic induction: the transducer generates electric current in response to sound waves, producing a voltage that is then transformed into an audio signal by a mixer or sound card (Venturi, 2006). Because of their characteristics, dynamic microphones are ideal for podcasts on the move or in noisy environments. Condenser microphones, on the other hand, because of their larger size and fragility are more commonly used in studios, professional environments, and soundproof facilities for

podcast recording. Their sensitivity and ability to capture sound details allow for higher and more faithful sound quality than dynamic microphones. In fact, they can reproduce a human warmth that will give podcasts personality and character (Scandolin, 2023). Their operation is based on the electrostatic principle: a capacitor[152], consisting of two plates, one fixed and the other sensitive to sound pressure and movable, is polarised with the help of a power supply[153]. The capacitor is charged when the movable plate changes position, and this charge generates a voltage that is converted into an audio signal (Venturi, 2006).

When choosing a microphone, it is critical to consider not only its type, but also its placement relative to the speaker's mouth. A microphone placed too far away can produce unclear and weak audio, while, if too close can experience unwanted noise or distortion. Their best placement is also determined by the microphone's "polar pattern," which indicates the direction in which it is most sensitive to sound. Specifically, microphones are distinguished by their direction and polar pattern (*Figures 6*). Depending on the directions from which they capture sounds, microphones can be omnidirectional or directional. As the name already implies, omnidirectional microphones have a 360° sensitivity to sound, capable of recording from all directions around them. However, this implies the possible recording not only of the voice, but also of background noises such as computer fans, voices in the street, etc. Lavalier microphones, for example, are of this type: these are those microphones that are seen attached to the clothing of figures on television and because of which their proximity to the interlocutor's mouth allows for

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[152] The capacitor is a common element in electrical circuits, used to block, filter, and store electrical energy. In the context of microphones, it can convert sound energy into electrical energy.

[153] A power supply is a source of electrical power. In the context of microphones, it is used to polarize the condenser, that is, to create a potential difference between the two plates of the microphone, which is necessary for the microphone to operate. The power supply can be integrated within the microphone itself or be a separate unit, connected to the microphone via a cable.

good performance, without overly picking up ambient noises. These are often used in combination with other types of microphones, such as directional ones, to balance the sounds from different sound sources. Directional microphones are effective for recording the single voice, since their sensitivity is aimed at a specific direction-usually the one closest to the interlocutor's mouth-thus reducing sounds coming from other sources in the environment. Directional microphones can be cardioid, hyper-cardioid and bi-directional. Cardioid microphones are the most common type of directional microphone. their name comes from their heart-shaped polar pattern, which can record sound coming from the front of the microphone and reduce noise coming from the sides or back. Like the cardioid shape, the hyper-cardioid -known for its mushroom shape- is more sensitive to sounds coming from its front, but with a narrower detecting capability than the cardioid, and a more pronounced rejection zone at the sides and back. Finally, the bi-directional microphone, with a shape of 8, has sensitivity to sounds coming from the front and back of the microphone, while cancelling out noises coming from the sides. This microphone is useful when recording is between two interlocutors facing each other.
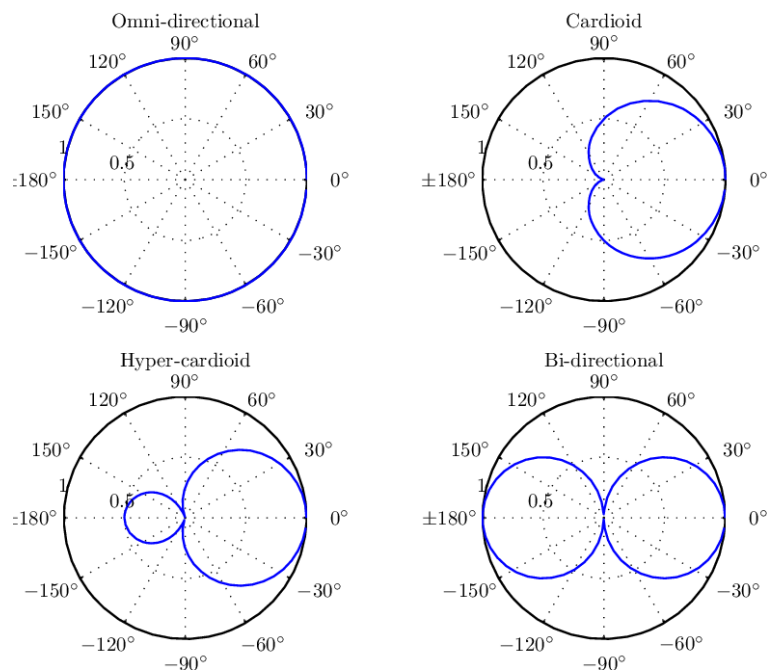
Figure 6. Polar plots of four different microphon polar patterns: omni-directional, cardioid, hyper-cardioid, bi-directional. Source: Habets, E. (2006). *Room Impulse Response Generetor.*

Returning to the *Matronae* case study. Although great attention was paid to all the particularities previously explained - type of microphone, polar figures, directions; however, due to budgetary constraints, it has been opted to leverage the resources available to the team, adapting already possessed devices to suit the needs of the podcast in resourceful ways.

Two microphones were used in the three days of recording. A Fifine K669-K559B, a unidirectional condenser microphone, to give warmth to the theme song and the narrators' voices. And a DayDup, a Lavalier microphone, for the speeches of authors and historical figures. For a novice podcaster, these microphones are a great choice since they are affordable and user-friendly.

This distinction was intended to create different effects in the narration phases. The voices of the narrators recorded with a condenser microphone create a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which the listener feels welcomed and involved in the narration; while the Lavalier microphone places a slight veil over the voices of the ancients, reminding the listeners that their words have survived for centuries. The microphones were then connected with a cable or wirelessly to the computer, where simple recording software already on the device was used.

In addition, to optimise the recording equipment in the best possible way, certain measures have been implemented to endure the most suitable environment for podcast recording. Despite not having access to a soundproof studio, we used the Laboratory of Roman Epigraphy at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Primarily, we created two recording areas: one area, away from the windows, was reserved for the person who was to play a narrator or character; a second, more distant area, in which to place computers and other equipment to keep unwanted noise, such as computer fans, away from the microphone. A cloth was placed on the table in front of the interpreter. This served to

decrease the contact noises between the person or objects with the table surface and to absorb the sound waves of the voices. On this cloth, the microphone, and a tablet from which to read the texts were then placed. We preferred to use digital devices for reading so that the rustling of papers could not be captured by the microphone. Finally, although the microphones were able to mute outside noises quite well when we heard too loud sounds-such as doors, or works -that could therefore disturb the recording, we stopped and resumed recording when silence returned. For this same reason, the scripts were divided into sections of up to ten lines; so that in the case of loud noises the narrator did not have to repeat an entire page but only few lines. Fortunately, the area of the building where we were was quiet enough and it was not necessary to record the same part several times for outside noises.

By adapting these arrangements, it was possible to improve the quality of the recording and achieve cleaner and more professional audio.

Obviously, much more would have been possible with better microphones and conditions, but the result shows how a good product can be created even on a limited budget. The crucial aspects at the recording stage, therefore, are knowledge of these tools and the ability to use them to the best advantage. Achieving high-quality and distinct audio during the recording phase also allows for even more outstanding results after editing and final creation of the episodes. To this end, numerous audio editing platforms and software come to the rescue.

2.4   Creating a professional podcast through audio editing

After the recording phase, our team focused on the intricate and time-consuming process of audio editing. This stage of production is of immense importance, as it enhances the value of a podcast. The goal is not only to improve the quality of the audio, but also to create a welcoming atmosphere that keeps listeners engaged for a long time, through effects, music, and background sounds. In today's market, several audio editing software programs are available,[154] recognised for their professionalism, competence, and affordability. For *Matronae*, the team has opted for Audacity, a well-known and powerful software in the audio editing industry that is cross-platform and, most importantly, open-source.

Upon opening the audio editing platform, we faced an initial challenge: the recordings saved in the .m4a format were incompatible with Audacity. Fortunately, the solution was quickly found. Through some platforms available online, the .m4a files have been converted to .WAV, a format accepted by Audacity. This took some time, but within a few hours it was possible to get back to editing. Audacity offers many options and settings for audio, and this was essential to have a professional and satisfactory result. Among the platform's suggestions, Valentina Rossi and I agreed on the various steps to follow to make the different episodes homogeneous.

The foremost step in our audio editing process was to reduce the background noise. This task serves as the foundation of any type of audio editing, regardless of whether it is

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[154] In the film and music industry, professionals rely on specialized but high-cost software such as Adobe Audition and Pro Tools. For those on a tighter budget, Hindenburg, can be an excellent option, designed especially for journalists and storytellers who place more importance on words than music. Alternatively, Audacity is a free software that boasts considerable capabilities and is often the tool of choice for podcasting.

conducted by novice or professional podcasters: noise elimination is essential to achieve clear, good-quality audio.

Therefore, even though we adopted tools and techniques to minimise unwanted noises during the recordings, we also adopted this process. Obviously, there are different types of noises, and for each one there is a solution-or at least a method to reduce it as much as possible. The easiest noises to deal with are constant noises, such as computer fans or air from an air conditioner. In such instances, a sample of the background noise is selected from the audio file for analysis by Audacity, and subsequently removed from the entire track. For this reason, it is always recommended to leave a few seconds before and after the spoken intervention in the recording, which will later be eliminated. However, this process is effective only in moments of silence, under one's voice noises could still be audible. If this happens, there is not much that can be done as too aggressive noise reduction intervention could ruin the entire track. In contrast, for sudden and unexpected noises, such as a door slamming or a doorbell, there are two case scenarios. If the noises occur during an intervention, again, there is nothing to be done; the noise is retained.

If, on the other hand, these noises occur during a moment of silence, the section where the disturbance is audible can be can and selected (using `Control + I`), and subsequently deleted (using `canc`). This procedure is also useful for uncertainties in voice, breaths, and mouth noises. It is not always easy to find the right frequencies to delete, but it is a job that certainly makes the audio clearer and cleaner for the listener. Another useful step to reduce noise in listening is "noise gate." Compared to noise reduction, which eliminates sounds based on a sample of a few seconds, noise gate eliminates all sounds below a certain threshold. In our case, we used the threshold already set by Audacity.

After cleaning the track of these noises, we moved on to the most impactful step for audio quality: compression. This deals with maintaining the volume of the voice as constant as possible. Basically, the higher frequencies are brought closer to the lower ones, resulting in a smoother and balanced audio. This process is mainly based on threshold and ratio values. The threshold sets the upper limit beyond which we do not want the frequencies of our podcast to reach. In our case, the threshold has been set to -30 dB, which means that sound waves arriving at that level will be automatically lowered. The ratio, on the other hand, indicates the ratio between the amount of volume that attempts to exceed the threshold and the amount that exceeds it. A ratio of 4:1 implies an aggressive compression, but one that was adopted to achieve a warm and balanced voice for all tracks. This was required by the difference in tones and volumes in the different tracks. To further adjust the volume level, the audio tracks have been normalised. In this way, the created product is uniform and suitable for broadcasting on different devices and platforms.

As a final measure, we downloaded the De-Esser plug-in within Audacity. This allows us to attenuate the sibilant and fricative sounds, caused by "s" or "f" consonants, to make the audio more pleasant to listen to.

To provide further clarity, here are the steps involved in editing audio with Audacity.

```
Noise reduction
1.  Select   a   sample   of   "silence"   from   the   audio   track
    (preferably the first few seconds before the voice).
2.  Effects > noise removal and repair > noise reduction >
    process noise profile.
3.  Select the entire audio track.
4.  Effects > noise removal and repair > noise reduction > ok.
```
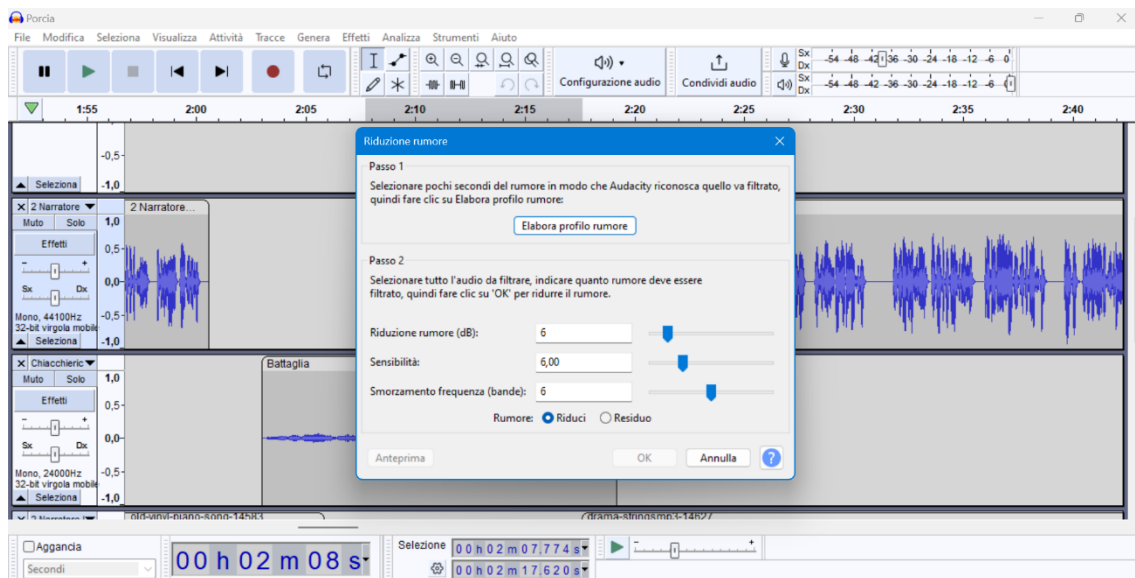

Figure 7. Noise reduction steps by Audacity.

```
Noise gate
5.  Select the entire audio track.
6.  Steve Daulton > Noise gate > ok.
```
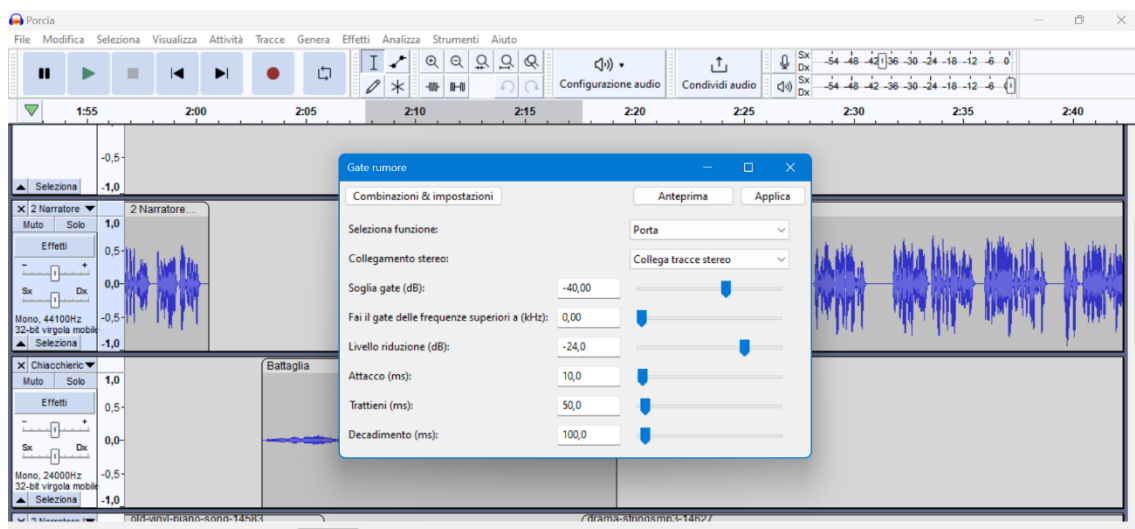

Figure 8. Noise gate stept by Audacity.

Compression

7. Select the entire audio track.

8. Effects > volume and compression > compression.

9. Set threshold to -30 dB and ratio to 4:1.

10. Apply.
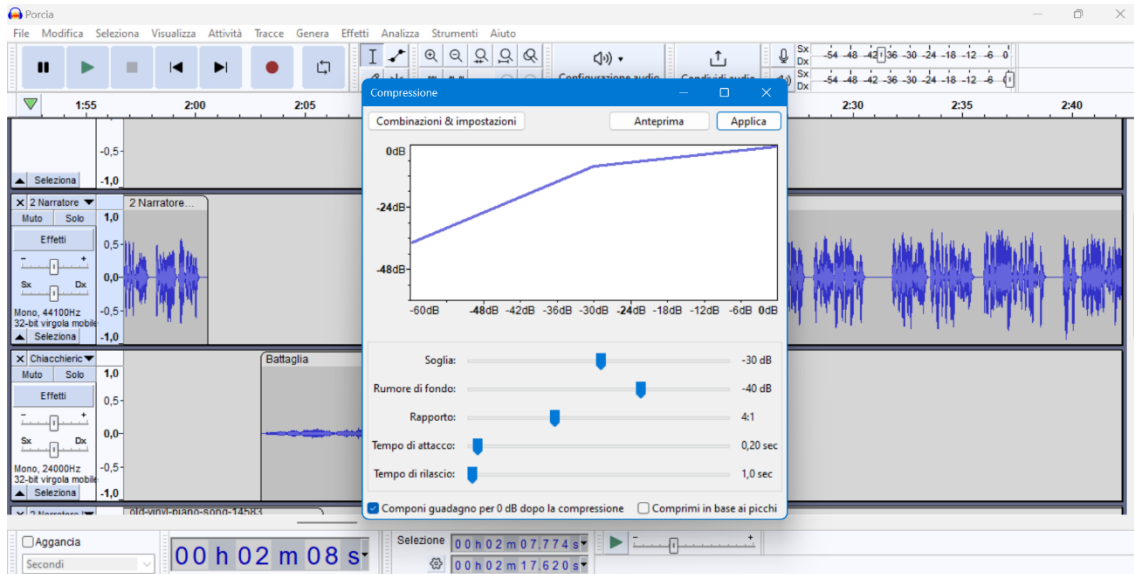
Figure 9. Compression steps by Audacity.

Normalization

11. Select the entire audio track.

12. Effects > volume and compression > sound normalization.

13. Set "perceived sonority" to -14 LUFS.

14. Apply.
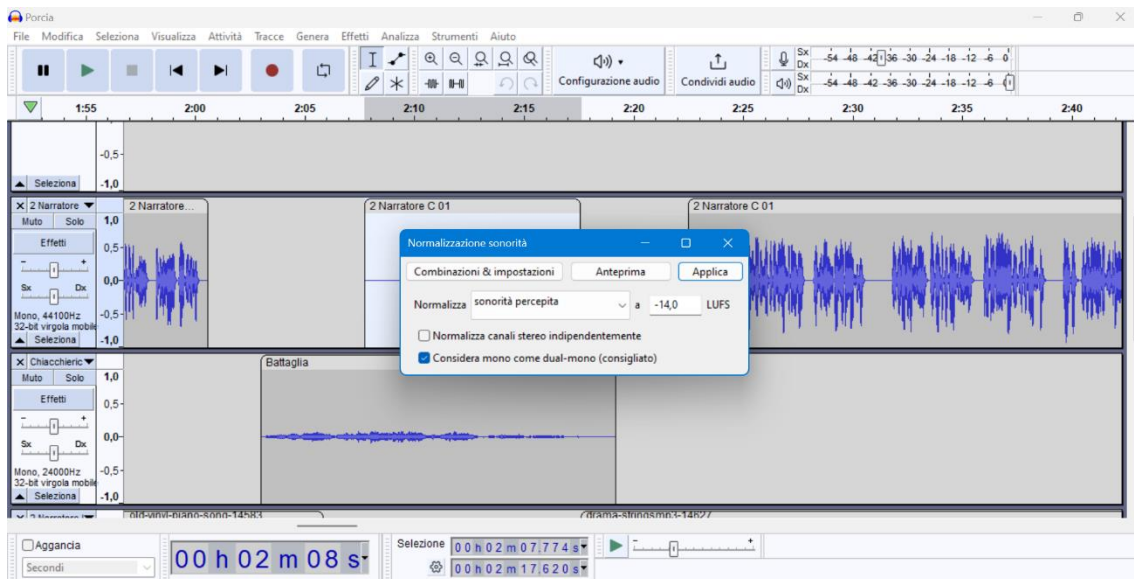
Figure 10. Normalization steps by Audacity.

Once the audio tracks had been cleaned, sounds and music were inserted to create an immersive environment. It was ensured that all tracks included in the recorded audio were copyright-free. When editing, it is important to pay close attention to this step. Numerous platforms and services are available that provide these types of audio tracks for free. While these tools facilitate the work of amateur podcasters, it is still important to read the usage requirements and comply with them in order to avoid having your podcast removed from podcasting platforms.

For the *Matronae* podcast, *Pixabay* was used.[155] It provides the podcasters and audio creators with a variety of music tracks as well as useful noises and sounds that enhance the realism and immersion of each episode: the chattering of a forum, the swords encountered during a battle, the wailing of women, or even the cut Porcia is inflicted with on her leg. During the playback of an episode, these effects reinforce the ongoing storytelling process. A person's voice is essential for creating a bond with his or her listener, but music and sound also can make a significant impact on how the listener feels.

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[155] Pixabay: https://pixabay.com/.

3. Dissemination of audio: from publication to publicity

As soon as an episode's final version is ready for publication, it takes a new route to reach a wider audience. The episode must first be uploaded to a hosting platform such as Spreaker, Spotify For Podcasters, or Buzzsprout where it will find its permanent online home. From the information inserted by the podcasters within these hosting services, RSS feeds are generated. RSS feeds are XML files, containing the fundamental information for a podcast for be distributed to the podcatcher apps. Then, the distribution process is categorised into first and second level distribution: the former involves getting the podcasts to major platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts; while the latter target smaller podcatcher platforms. Both are necessary for the global distribution of a podcast.

This chapter delves into the different platforms and services *Matronae* used for its global distribution, from Spreaker uploads to the major podcasting platforms to GIEFFRA website.

3.1 Podcast hosting platforms: how to find an online home for the show.

The first step when publishing a podcast on the largest podcasting platforms – such as the above-mentioned Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts – is to create an account within one of the podcast hosting services. As the term implies, the main function of these platforms is to "host", within their servers, the information and audio files of a podcast. From this data, they are able to generate an RSS feed that is specific to the

podcast itself. Then, this file will be sent to the podcasting applications with which the account is associated: every podcaster is free to choose the distribution channels to broadcast the show. These kinds of services are thus designed specifically for publishing podcasts: both simplifying the publishing process and providing secure storage for the files. In fact, a personal server, such as a website's may be, does not create the RSS feeds necessary for disseminating the content to the various platforms and then the audience would be limited to the website traffic only. Publishing a podcast within the producer's website alone could not be an appropriate strategy for the success of a series: the episodes will only be listened to by those who already know and use that web page, thus losing an entire potential audience found in podcasting platforms. Thanks to these hosting services, the audience that can be reached is much broader and more heterogeneous, since it is an overall distribution, and therefore they allow to achieve greater notoriety more simply.

Again, the market offers a wide choice of hosting platforms: some more expensive, some cheaper, some with more functionalities than others. However, the most widely used in the Italian territory are undoubtedly Spreaker and Spotify For Podcasters.

Spreaker is a service born from an Italian idea, later acquired by the worldwide company iHeartMedia, owner in the United States of more than 850 radio stations. The hosting service offers different usage plans depending on the user's needs: from free plans to paid plans which, of course, provide more features (*Figures 11*). Despite the considerable offerings of the pro plans, even a free plan can be a great product for a novice podcaster. Under the name "Free speech," this service offers unlimited publication of a single podcast,[156] directly on the platforms of iHeartRadio, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts, and

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[156] This means that an account can be associated with only one podcast. This dynamic may suit those for whom working on a single product is sufficient. Those, however, who need to have multiple series associated to the same account will then need to turn to paid plans to have this additional functionality.

from these it derives data for creating statistics. It also offers the possibility of recording episodes from the service's internal Studio app or making live broadcasts. Another very important feature of this service is monetisation. This, via advertisements, permits the user to earn through the publication of the content. This free plan can then be expanded, if needed, with paid subscriptions with significant improvements in data analysis or monetisation strategies.
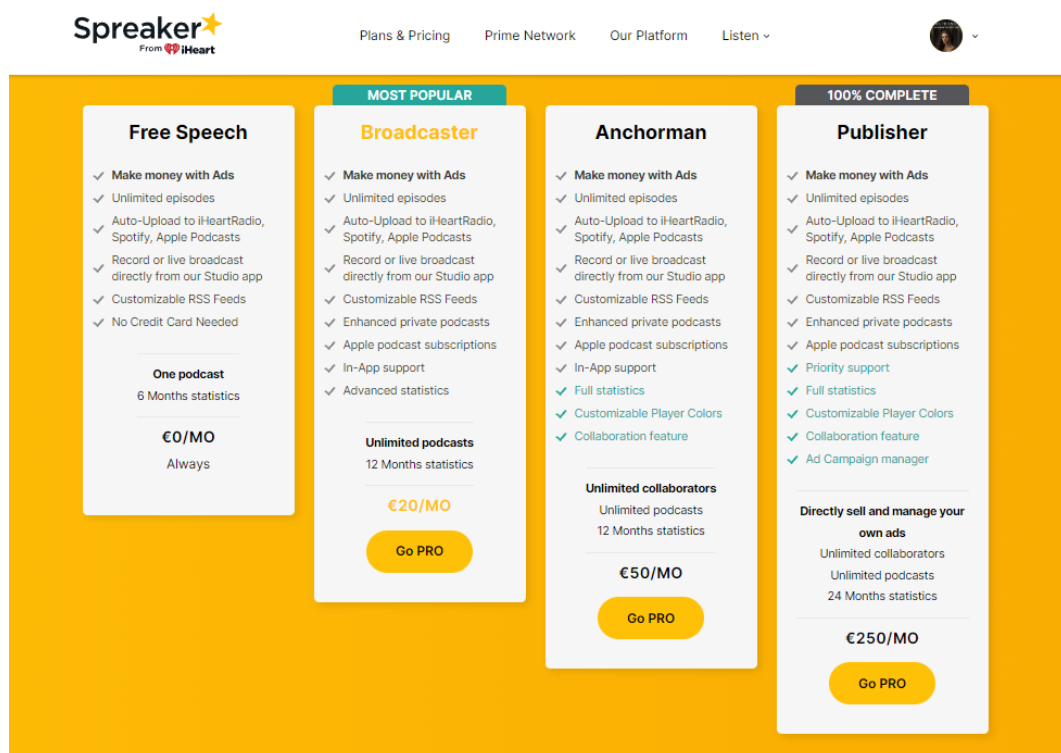

Figure 11. Plan and pricing. Source: Spreaker web site retrieved in May 2023 (https://www.spreaker.com/plans?sp_source=www%2Fheader%2Fplans)

The other major hosting platform is Anchor, acquired by Spotify in 2021 and renamed Spotify for Podcasters. Spotify's acquisition was due to a desire to integrate a hosting service within its platform; in order to reduce the distance between the user and the company, and thus also the publishing time. From Spotify for Podcast is in fact possible

to publish directly to Spotify, and only then to the other platforms.[157] Unlike Spreaker, which offers multiple services to choose from, Spotify For Podcasters offers a single free plan. Like Spreaker's Free Speech (*Figure 11*), the free plan offers the ability to create a single podcast associated with one account, but without the possibility to expand the account with paid subscriptions. From this it follows that all backend information, such as statistics, will also be broken down by account, making comparative analysis difficult in the case of a producer of multiple podcasts. Again, it is possible to use the service only to upload one's own already recorded and edited episodes, or to work with the features offered by the platform to record voices, add theme songs and background music. Another difference with Spreaker is the issue of monetisation: while Spreaker offers various strategic levels for monetisation of episodes, up to and including actual advertising campaigns; Spotify For Podcasters is just working on this service.

In an attempt to minimize Matronae's production costs, the team analysed the free plans of both platforms (*Table 2*) to decide on which hosting to set up their account.

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[157] The goal is to publish audio content on the major podcasting platforms-Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Amazon Music. Spotify for Podcasters has a direct link to Spotify, but Spreaker also enables broadcasting to all major apps.

	Spreaker: Free Speech plan	Spotify for Podcasters
Number of podcasts that can be associated to one account.	1	1
Distribution to main podcasting platforms	Immediately on Spreaker and iHeartRadio; then on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music/ Audible, Castbox, Deezer, Podcast Addict, Podchaser, JioSaavan.	Immediately on Spotify; then on other major platforms.[158]
Recording and editing services.	✓	✓
Monetization	✓	✗
Video podcast[159]	✗	✓

Table 2. Comparison between the free plans of Spreaker and Spotify for Podcasters. Sources: Spreaker, Spotify for Podcasters.

Having carefully considered all options, it was decided to publish the *Matronae* podcast using Spreaker.

Spotify for Podcasters is an excellent product for novice podcasters who wish to publish a single podcast on a limited budget. The platform also offers software for recording and editing episodes in addition to publishing on Spotify. Due to these same factors, *Matronae* initially made the decision to use Spotify for Podcasters as their host: it provides more than enough services for a fledgling podcast.

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[158] Spotify for Podcasters, on its website, does not clearly indicate in which other podcasting platforms it can distribute the podcast - besides Spotify. Nevertheless, resources, explaining how to use Spotify's main hosting service to distribute your podcast on the other main platforms, can be easily found on the Web.

[159] Video podcast give the possibility to upload not only audio but also video files. Video podcasting is a recent phenomenon, but one that is having a lot of success in Italy thanks to the large numbers of Muschio Selvaggio, to give an example. More information can be found in Pivanti, R. (2021). #Branded podcast producer: Narrazioni Audio Per brand Capaci di Farsi ascoltare. *Angeli*. e Venturi, A. (2006). Come Si Fa Un podcast. *Tecniche nuove*.

Nonetheless, in light of the future prospects of the project, we ultimately decided to upload our episodes to Spreaker. With a free plan, you are able to take advantage of many of the same services as those offered by Spotify's hosting (*Table 2*). However, paid subscriptions provide a much more effective and advanced hosting service. First of all, multiple podcasts can be uploaded to one account. The feature appears to be very useful with the objective of creating other podcasts as part of the GIEFFRA-sponsored project. As previously explained, GIEFFRA is an international organization, and it is the hope of participating institutions to create podcasts in a variety of languages. Therefore, by creating a GIEFFRA account on a paid subscription, it will be possible to consolidate different podcasts under one name and continue the *Matronae* story across international borders.

Additionally, a particular focus was also placed on the opportunities offered by monetisation. Nevertheless, we chose not to include advertising in the episodes, since they last less than fifteen minutes. As of now, it was decided not to interrupt the listener's experience with any form of advertising so that they may fully appreciate the stories and experiences of these Roman women. However, our intention was to leave open the possibility of monetising the podcast in the future.

Ultimately, Spreaker proved to be a useful tool during the process of publishing the podcast on GIEFFRA's website, as we will see below. Indeed, the hosting platform made it possible to share the episode and place it within the webpage dedicated to it. As a result, the widget provides a more convenient and immediate user experience for the user.

For these reasons, the process of setting up a Spreaker account for GIEFFRA was continued. The registration process is quite simple and intuitive. As a first step, the platform asks for the account name and an e-mail address. Then, the access to the dashboard, from which it possible to create the podcast, is available within a few clicks.

During the creation process, the hosting platform asks for details such as the name of the series, a brief description, as well as the type of podcast and the order in which the episodes will be shown in the podcasting platforms.[160] Upon entering these details, the podcast can be published on Spreaker. In this manner, a dedicated web page is created within the hosting account. Although no episodes have been uploaded at this point, users can look at the description and learn about the podcast's launch on the platform.

Secondly, individual episodes can be uploaded by the podcaster account via a special section of the platform titled "upload episodes". In this section, you can enter your audio file - in our case, a file in the .WAV format - and the episode information - name, description, tags for indexing in podcasting platforms. The information has now been uploaded, and you can proceed with publication.

Due to a scheduling limitation, Matronae cannot be a weekly series, however all episodes were uploaded to Spreaker on Sunday, May 21st, 2023.[161] As soon as all episodes have been uploaded to Spreaker, the listener interface will display and allow access to all episodes (*Figure 12*).

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[160] A key aspect of podcast publishing is how users will view and listen to the episodes. It is up to the podcaster to decide whether the interface of podcasting platforms will have the episodes viewed in episodic order, from newest to oldest, or serial, oldest to newest. Based on the content of *Matronae*, it was decided to maintain an episodic format. As a result, the first episode will correspond with the introduction, which is crucial to gaining a first understanding of the topic and the project as a whole. Next, the matrons' stories are presented in order of loading.

[161] In order for the episodes to be ready for distribution on Monday morning of the following week, it was chosen to upload them on Sunday.

Figure 12. Spreaker's user interface. Source: Spreaker (https://www.spreaker.com/show/matronae)

3.2 The distribution of the podcast through the main podcasting platforms.

Following the upload of the first episode of a podcast, it is possible to proceed to its distribution, which refers to its upload to the podcatcher platforms that the author has selected. A podcaster will only need to perform this step once, precisely the first time an episode is uploaded. Subsequently, the podcaster will simply need to upload the episode to its hosting platform, and the RSS feed will automatically be shared on the previously selected platforms. A podcast can be distributed independently on any platform at the time of distribution. Known as manual distribution, this process allows podcasters to send their RSS feed to the individual platform administration screens. As an alternative, automatic distribution can be arranged through the hosting platform: in other words, the hosting provider will handle the distribution to the platforms on the podcaster's behalf. The advantage of automatic distribution is that it saves time and makes the process more convenient. However, it does not allow access to the administration panels of the individual thus making podcast performance statistics unavailable. As a result, the podcaster has no access to any data other than the data provided by the hosting platform. Whereas manual distribution offers the advantage of being able to track the performance of individual episodes, including the number of downloads and listeners.[162] Additionally, it may be possible, in some cases, to enter more categories according to which the podcast should be indexed by the individual podcasting platform when manually entering the RSS feed.

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[162] With a Spreaker paid plan, it is also possible to receive more information regarding podcast ratings, from which geographic area the podcast is most popular, as well as on which platforms and devices the podcast is most frequently listened to.

In terms of podcasting, podcatchers are platforms that can read RSS feeds sent by podcast hosts and display them within their own interfaces. There are several popular and well-known podcatcher platforms available today, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Amazon Music. As a result of the prestige associated with these large platforms, podcasts can not only reach audiences worldwide, but can also be positioned alongside television and radio icons. It immediately enhances the value of the podcast itself: if a podcast is featured on Spotify or Apple Podcasts, then it is perceived as a trustworthy content.

As part of its platform, Spreaker has dedicated a section to distribution. There is a large number of podcasting platform distribution options available, including both large platforms and some smaller, lesser-known ones (*see Table 2*). As soon as an episode is published, it is immediately available for listening on Spreaker's platform. Nevertheless, the *Matronae* team did not intend to stop there, but instead to extend the podcast to the leading podcast platforms as well, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Amazon Music/Audible.

During the past few years, Spotify has gained so much notoriety that it has overtaken Apple as the dominant player in the podcasting industry. Now, when one thinks of a podcast, the thought goes immediately towards Spotify.[163] In view of this, positioning the series within this platform was *Matronae*'s first priority. Using Spreaker's dedicated RSS feed section, it has been possible to send the feed to Spotify. From the time a submission is made to when it actually appears on the platform, it can take up to several hours. though *Matronae* episodes were available on the green platform in a matter of minutes. Pod

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[163] See Scandolin, M. (2020). Podcast. Guida alla creazione, pubblicazione e promozione. *Apogeo.*

episodes can now be listened to on Spotify via both the browser (*Figure 13*) and the application (*Figure 14*).
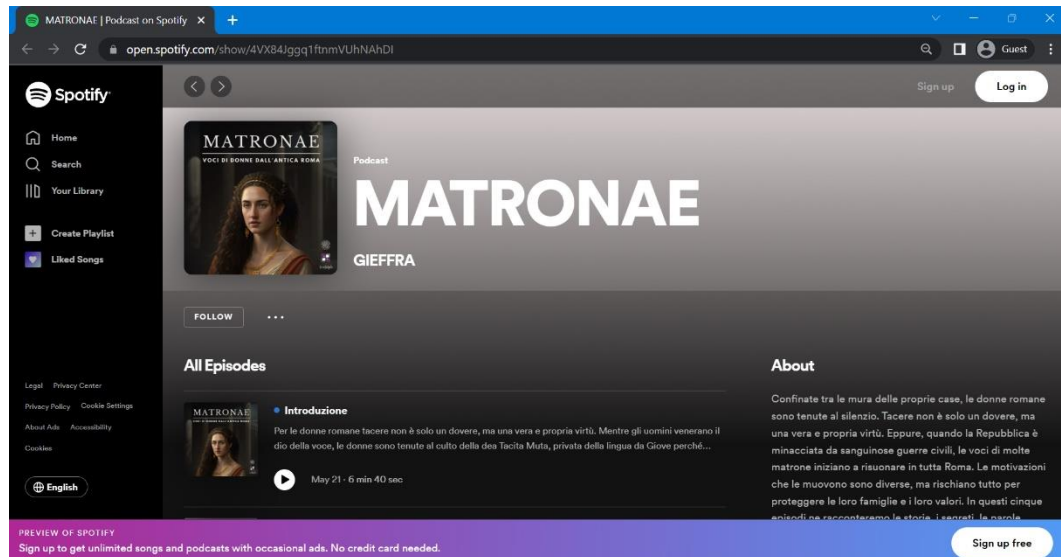

Figure 3. *Matronae* on Spotify browser. Link:
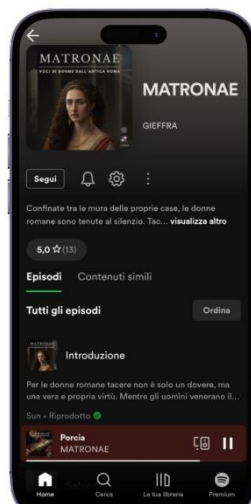https://open.spotify.com/show/4VX84Jggq1ftnmVUhNAhDI

Figure 4. Matronae on Spotify app.

The next step was the distribution of the podcast on the other major podcasting platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Amazon Music. These platforms, however, require a greater amount of time for publication. At present, only the request

submitted to Google Podcasts has been completed.[164] In regard to the other two, we must still wait, but we expect to have the podcast available on all platforms by the end of the summer.

3.3 A website for a podcast

An essential aspect of a podcast's success is its distribution throughout major podcatcher platforms. In spite of this, establishing a dedicated web page for it has a number of advantages. As well as making audio episodes available, it also offers the opportunity to learn more about the project and the subject matter being discussed. Fortunately, Matronae already had a website: GIEFFRA (Groupe International d'Etudes sur les Femmes et la Famille dans la Rome Antique).[165] Throughout the years, the institutional website has been dedicated to promoting its Public History initiatives and seminars, with sections dedicated to specific areas. Therefore, the *Matronae* podcast fits into a broader context of cultural dissemination.

In general, the website conforms to a simple, institutional style. The colours purple and grey are consistently referenced throughout the design, thus ensuring that the brand identity is maintained. An easy-to-use menu on the left side of the page provides easy access to the site's main sections: curricula, participants, projects, editorial news, events, and contacts. In addition, the page is translated into Italian and English simultaneously,

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[164] Matronae podcast on Google Podcasts:
https://www.google.com/podcasts?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc3ByZWFrZXIuY29tL3Nob3cvNTg2NTE3Ny9lcGlzb2Rlcy9mZWVk.

[165] GIEFFRA website: https://sites.google.com/unive.it/gieffra.

making it easy for any user to understand and share the information.[166] There are several sections on Roman and ancient history that aim to popularise this history in a variety of ways, and introduce the user to the people behind these initiatives. This conference aims to foster networking among participating universities and to share ideas and reflections on how to popularize ancient history. By entering the "Research Projects and Public History Activities" section, it is possible to discover more regarding the Roman women's world: from the political actions carried out by these women to the stories of the great matrons of the Roman past. And this is where the *Matronae* podcast fits in.

The web pages dedicated to the podcast are designed not only to allow listening to its episodes but also to discover more information about these women. The main page introduces the objectives and topics of the project, reminding the main features of the following pages, dedicated to the individual episodes.

The following will take as an example the page dedicated to the first episode, the introduction, (*Figure 15*) as the clearest and most complete example of the features available online.[167] Upon entering an episode page, there are two buttons that allow to navigate within the series itself in order to view the previous or next episode. Following that, the page is divided into three sections: audio, transcripts, and additional information. Due to the nature of the podcast, it was thought it would have been appropriate to immediately provide audio files for listening. Users may therefore listen to the story of these women via a Spreaker widget or via a Spotify button that redirects them to the platform in their browser. A particular advantage of the widget is that it allows immediate

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[166] In order to enhance the user experience of the website, it would be beneficial if the language of the website could be selected via a specific menu, rather than having both languages displayed next to each other. The result is not only confusing but can also result in the creation of endless pages, which could be an excuse for an inattentive reader to stop and leave the site.

[167] The other pages were also created following the same criteria.

listening directly from the episode page. However, this is not all. Various icons provide quick access to features such as fast-forwarding or rewinding the recording, leaving a like or feedback,[168] sharing the content on social media,[169] and reading a brief episode description. As a result, the user is immediately able to enjoy the episodes, without having to search for them within the online page. Listed below the audio files there are the names of the project participants, along with a description of the activities they carried out during that particular episode. The team felt it was important to dedicate a small space, albeit one that would serve as an acknowledgement of all contributions, to those who were instrumental in making this project a reality. After describing the episode briefly, it is possible to proceed to the transcripts. A transcript is typically considered to be a text written after an episode has been recorded. However, we are referring here to the articles that were written in preparation and read during the recording process.

Making episodes available in written form can come in response to a variety of user needs: from those unable to listen to audio because they may be in a noisy environment to the hearing-impaired, who could not otherwise enjoy this cultural content. Reading is definitely not the ideal way to enjoy a podcast: one loses the music, the noise, and especially the human relationship with the host's voice. However, it can bring a wider audience to the project and enhance accessibility and inclusivity. Due to the fact that the podcast was created as an educational tool, it was taken into consideration how to adapt it to meet the needs of any user. For this same reason, it was also decided to translate the episodes into English, in a dedicated section. The podcast is in Italian, which limits its audience to the territory of the peninsula and makes it unlikely to reach an international

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[168] Feedback and reviews will then be displayed on Spreaker.

(Link: https://www.spreaker.com/show/matronae)

[169] As of right now, Facebook and Twitter are the only social media platforms available for sharing this content.

audience.[170] By providing an English transcript, the podcast can thus be read by experts and non-experts from around the world, expanding the distribution pool of knowledge proposed by the project. However, to create a simple web page with an intuitive layout, it was still preferred to give more importance to the Italian texts and provide the English transcript through a compressible section that can be accessed with a simple click. By doing so, the page design is more understandable, and the content is also consistent throughout the whole page. Furthermore, it avoids creating lengthy pages on which users may find it difficult to locate the information they are seeking.

The space devoted to the individual episode concludes with its bibliography. To reconfirm the special interest of the project in respecting sources and historical truth, the ancient and modern sources - referred to when writing the article - are indicated. Maintaining this idea of transparency and clarity, moreover, bibliographical citations are also given within the texts themselves. Once again, a compressible section was used to fulfil this task. The reasons for this are common to the English transcript: there was a desire to give greater importance to the Italian and primary content, and to leave these additional sections to the degree of the user's interest.

After taking advantage of all the features of the page, it is finally possible to move within the series itself. The five covers of the other episodes thus give the opportunity to discover the stories of the other Roman women told by the podcast.

Work is also underway to incorporate a new section, again at the end of the episodes page, in which to report on other projects or articles discussing the same topic within the GIEFFRA site. This will establish synergy among the same projects, and users will constantly be provided with new information and food for thought.

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[170] GIEFFRA intends to translate this podcast into the various languages of participating universities, but at the time of writing this thesis, the podcast is only available in Italian.

Ascolta subito l'episodio o seleziona una piattaforma per l'ascolto!

Introduzione

Spreaker

00:00   06:40

MATRONAE
VOCI DI DONNE DALL'ANTICA ROMA

Spotify

Autrice: Chiara Valeri

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Per le donne romane tacere non è solo un dovere, ma una vera e propria virtù. Mentre gli uomini venerano il dio della voce, le donne sono tenute al culto della dea Tacita Muta, privata della lingua da Giove perché troppo chiacchierona. Non possono intervenire in pubblico, non possono occuparsi di politica, non possono esprimere le proprie opinioni. Sono davvero poche le matrone che prendono coraggio e rompono le regole. Eppure, una domanda sorge spontanea: oggi, duemila anni dopo i fatti che racconteremo, è davvero cambiata la situazione?

Introduzione

Sigla. Benvenuta o benvenuto, questo è *Matronae*. Il podcast che restituisce la voce alle donne dell'antica Roma.

Narratore. Nel mondo antico l'*ars dicendi*, ovvero l'arte della parola, era una prerogativa esclusivamente maschile, e, in particolare, l'uso della parola in pubblico era proibito alle donne. Le radici di questo divieto risalgono al mondo greco. Sofocle, uno dei tre celebri tragediografi del V sec. a.C., scriveva:

Sofocle. «γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἡ σιγὴ φέρει» (Sof., *Aj.*, 293). "Donne, il silenzio è ornamento per le donne!"

Narratore. Tre secoli dopo, a Roma, il commediografo latino Plauto, in una delle sue opere, scrive un verso che sembra quasi un calco dell'espressione usata da Sofocle:

Plauto. «*Tacita bonast mulier semper quam loquens*» (Plaut., *Rud.*, 1114). "È sempre meglio una donna silenziosa che chiacchierona".

Narratore. Per le donne, infatti, tacere non era solo una virtù ma, soprattutto, un dovere. Proprio per questo motivo le donne romane dovevano far testo all'esperienza di Tacita Muta, una ninfa che, a causa del suo troppo parlare, viene privata della lingua dal dio Giove divenendo la divinità per eccellenza del Silenzio, oggetto di culto esclusivamente femminile, mentre gli uomini celebravano proprio la divinità della voce, Aio Locuzio. Tuttavia, le fonti antiche testimoniano una realtà spesso distante da questa: sono note storie di donne che usarono la propria voce per intervenire in questioni familiari e politiche, appropriandosi anche di quelle forme di comunicazione e di quegli spazi da cui erano tradizionalmente escluse.

Ciò si verifica in un periodo, quello delle guerre civili, di profonda e duratura crisi, un periodo in cui i *mores*, le antiche tradizioni su cui si basava l'intera società romana, vengono sovvertiti a causa dell'emergenza. Gli uomini sono lontani, in fuga, uccisi negli scontri di piazza, a capo degli eserciti, disertano le consuete attività istituzionali e in politica agiscono le donne. Non ricoprono magistrature né partecipano alle assemblee, ma fanno politica in sedi private, nelle proprie abitazioni in occasione di incontri e cene politiche, ma anche in luoghi pubblici, come le strade di Roma e il foro. A questo scopo si avvalgono di strumenti comunicativi propri delle donne, come i pianti, la gestualità, la comunicazione visiva, come la scelta di un abbigliamento specifico, ma ricorrono anche agli strumenti comunicativi della politica, fino ad ora esclusivamente maschile. Sono pochissime le attestazioni di discorsi femminili nel mondo romano e, per di più, quelli che abbiamo sono riportati da fonti maschili, che spesso condannavano l'intraprendenza delle donne. Un'analisi attenta delle fonti antiche consente di comprendere modalità e obiettivi di tali iniziative, anche nella consapevolezza degli stereotipi che distorcono i ritratti femminili.

Come afferma Eva Cantarella:

Eva Cantarella. «La storia delle donne romane merita particolare attenzione. A differenza della storia delle donne greche e delle altre donne antiche non è un passato remoto. È il nostro passato prossimo. E forse, in qualche misura, è anche una parte del nostro presente.» (Cantarella E., *Passato prossimo. Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 2001, p. 146)

Narratore. E come dice Sarah Pomeroy:

Sarah Pomeroy. «È estremamente importante notare la persistenza con cui alcuni atteggiamenti verso le donne e il ruolo di queste nella società occidentale si sono protratte attraverso i secoli.» (Pomeroy S.B., *Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma*. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)

Narratore. Se infatti, ci scandalizziamo di fronte all'assenza di fonti antiche scritte da donne, con limitatissime eccezioni, e critichiamo il fatto che queste non potessero parlare in pubblico o agire in politica, dobbiamo innanzitutto chiederci se oggi, più di 2000 anni dopo gli eventi che racconteremo, le cose sono davvero cambiate.

Secondo AgCom, l'Autorità per le garanzie nelle Comunicazioni, in Italia gli esponenti politici che a dicembre 2022 hanno parlato ai telegiornali - tenendo un discorso politico - sono per il 66% uomini e solo per il 34% donne; se poi si esclude la premier Meloni, la prevalenza maschile nella posizione di retore raggiunge l'81%.

Questo è uno dei tanti motivi per cui è necessario studiare la storia delle donne del mondo antico.

Come ha detto Sarah Pomeroy:

Sarah Pomeroy. «Il passato illumina problemi contemporanei nei rapporti tra donne e uomini".» (Pomeroy S.B., *Dee, prostitute, mogli, schiave. Donne di Atene e Roma*. Milano, Bompiani, 1997, p. 17)

Narratore. E sta a noi conoscerlo per poter migliorare il nostro presente, nella speranza di un futuro in cui le donne non siano più *tacitae*.

Titoli di coda. Podcast prodotto dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, GIEFFRA e VeDPH.

Introduction (english translation)   ⌄

Bibliografia di riferimento   ⌄

Scopri gli altri episodi

MATRONAE   MATRONAE   MATRONAE   MATRONAE   MATRONAE

Figure 15. Introduction page. Source: GIEFFRA (https://sites.google.com/unive.it/gieffra/progetti-di-ricerca-e-attivit%C3%A0-di-public-history/matronae/introduzione?authuser=0)

3.4 Sharing the podcast with everyone

Matronae podcast was first announced to the public on May 22, 2023. It was intended to use the podcast *medium* to bring historical research closer to people who are not experts in the field, but the content was also designed to gain the support of academics. The primary listeners of such a project are undoubtedly scholars. However, the goal and target audience stated from the outset was to target an audience that does not have any prior knowledge of these stories. Ultimately, the podcast is intended to educate. In particular, three promotion strategies were implemented to reach the greatest number of people possible: word of mouth, institutional social media, and the distribution of posters and business cards.

Initially, friends, family, and colleagues were involved in the distribution of the podcast. As many people as possible were invited to listen to the podcast by sharing the link directly with them or through university groups. Former high school teachers or fellow college professors were also contacted. This in turn led to their students becoming aware of the project. Several of us students also turned to social media, advertising the podcast on our social media pages, and informing our followers about the project. There was immediate positive feedback on the project, and many people sent messages of congratulations and appreciation.

Afterwards, the institutions that contributed to the feasibility of the project were contacted: the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities. Having been satisfied with the final outcome, the institutions have agreed to promote the podcast on their web sites and social media pages. For each platform, a custom text was created and sent for publication.

An article entitled "Matronae, voci di donne dall'Antica Roma: il podcast del lab sperimentale" was published on Ca' Foscari's homepage (*Figure 16*).

Figure 16. Ca' Foscari homepage: third from the left is the article dedicated to the podcast. Source: Ca' Foscari website (https://www.unive.it/)

Throughout the article, the objectives and content of the podcast are discussed, as well as the direct experience of one of the participants.

An excerpt is provided below:

> « "Your focus group was all female. Did you ever wonder if the protagonists of the stories had the podcast to make their voices heard, how they could have used it?"
> "I worked in deep synergy with a team of brilliant colleagues with diverse skills, and it was great to think that we could give back a female voice to these women who had been told by men for so many centuries. If matronae had had their own podcast I think they would not have used it as a political or emancipatory propaganda tool. The speeches we talk about in the podcast are delivered in crisis situations, where women react almost impulsively to the decisions and politics of the time. Moreover, there is never any real claim to authority. In the context of a recording, they would probably have devoted themselves to telling their lives and stories: not as mothers or wives of generals or senators, but simply as women." »[171]

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[171] *Matronae, voci di donne dall'Antica Roma: il podcast del lab sperimentale* article: https://www.unive.it/pag/14024/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=14634&cHash=c3cdeb678fe2863122e86a 002e222d5e.

This illustrates how our present and their past are closely connected. With the aid of this medium, it is possible for everyone to gain access to a world as complex and remote as the Roman one. Additionally, it demonstrates a willingness to tell the story and a desire to spread and communicate history.

Furthermore, the podcast's appearance on the university's homepage increases the visibility and, above all, the credibility of the content. Through its user base, the website is able to reach a large number of academics who are interested in the development of the subject, as well as uncover new approaches and projects that are different from those found in traditional histories.

In the context of social media promotion, the university posted a tweet, and the centre reserved a space for the podcast on both Instagram and Twitter, announcing the launch of the project (*Figure 17*). As a public history initiative, the podcast fits into the goals of the centre, which emphasizes historical research and dissemination through new media.
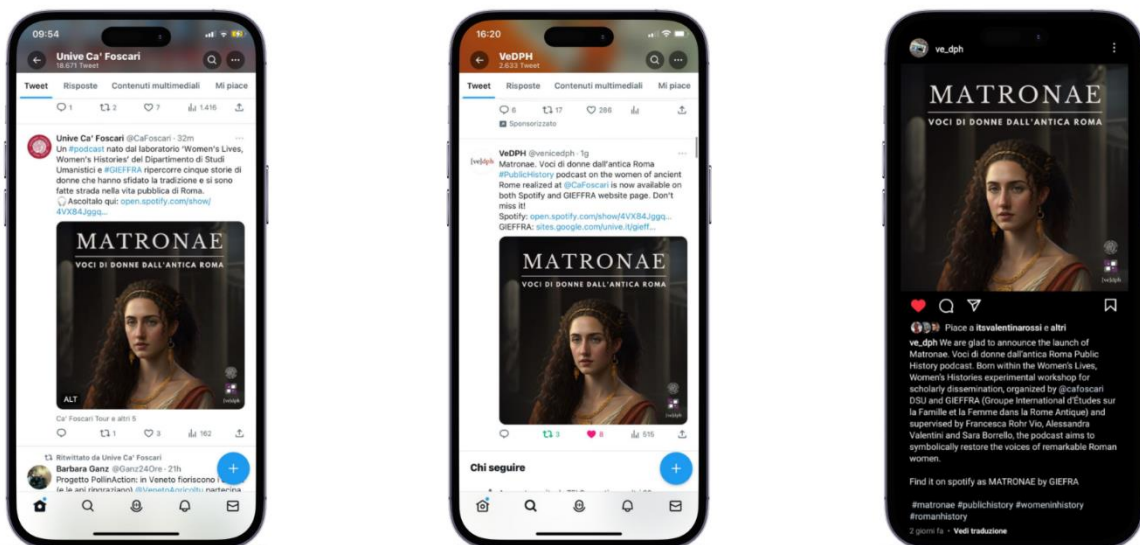
Figure 17. Social media promotion. From the left: Ca' Foscari tweet, VeDPH tweet, VeDPH post on Instagram.

To broaden the podcast's audience base even further, posters and business cards were created from the episode covers to be distributed around our cities. A QR code gives the possibility to reach the various platforms to listen to the podcast.

Figure 18. Matronae bussiness cards.

SECOND PART

PODCAST AS *MEDIUM* FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

4. Public History: making history accessible to the public.

The *Matronae* project is situated withing the broad scope of endeavors and research conducted within the field of Public History. However, what does Public History truly entail and how can it foster public engagement through the utilization of new media? Enrica Salvatori, a professor specializing in medieval history and digital public history, discusses how the field of historical dissemination is constantly evolving, giving rise to new practices and content.

> «History is an ancient discipline that has refined purposes, methods, tools, and products over the centuries, from Thucydides to Jacques Le Goff, from Livy to Carlo Ginzburg. Like all human sciences, the historian's craft is constantly evolving and being modified by changes in society, mindsets, and the development of new methods of analysis. »[172]

Public History thus emerges as a brunch of history itself, focusing on the relationship with the public and the application of historical content in context beyond academia. This chapter will analyse the main theories and practices of this emerging discipline, from its precursors to the foundations that have led to the development of topics and themes overlooked by traditional history. Finally, it will discuss the interaction with new media and the new opportunities that can arise from this encounter. Public History has ancient roots that aim to create a sense of community around historical matters, with everyone participating in its narrative.

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[172] Salvatori, E. (2017). Storia digitale e pubblica: lo storico tra i "nuovi creatori" di storia. In P. Berletta Fernetti, L. Bertucelli, & A. Botti, *Public History. Discussioni e pratiche* (pp. 189–197). *MIMESIS Passato Prossimo*. p. 189

4.1 Definition and history of the field.

For many years, Public History lacked a space in the academia, and particularly its own, clear, and common definition. Probably this was due to the revolutionary and subversive nature of such a discipline. Since its inception, the academia has been considered an ivory tower inaccessible to anyone but scholars.[173] While Public History, on the other hand, is intrinsically linked to the vindication of history by the public sphere. By making history accessible and engaging to a broader audience of experts as well as non-experts, it sought to facilitate learning in different contexts and according to different practices than those approved by the academia. In the 1970s, British historians themselves advocated for the creation of new spaces for history that were no longer confined within academic walls but rather close to citizens and their everyday issues. The reason for this is because history is much more than a subject of academic study; it is a value that we all share. Ultimately, this will lead to the development of a shared memory of the past and to the stimulation of critical reflection on history through the active involvement of the population. The practice of public history is not limited to publishing books or articles about historical outreach. It also involves museum display, historical education, and heritage preservation, which have been enhanced by the use of new *media* and technologies to reach a wider audience.

These practices, now widely available, have roots in the distant past, when history was viewed as an elitist pursuit. It should be noted, however, that some embryonic forms of Public History predate the creation of such rigid and closed institutions. As a matter of

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[173] Johnson talking about the status of the historian wrote in The Public Historian: «Increasingly the academy, rather than historical society or public arena, became the habit of the historian, who literally retreated into the proverbial ivory tower. The triumph of the professional was complete, and so was his isolation. » (Johnson, G.W. (1978). Editor's preface, in *The Public Historian, I, n.1*, p.5.)

fact, popular historiography is one of the roots of Public History. It represents a form of historical narrative understood and enjoyed by the masses, as represented by oral tales, ballads, songs, and legends passed from generation to generation. Does this mean that the *aedi* were already engaged in Public History? The heroic deeds and legends told by the *aedi* of Homer's Greece are embryonic and archaic forms of traditions that have evolved into what has become known as a form of Public History in the XX century. Thus, these are not Public History practices per se, but rather they illustrate how historical knowledge has been of interest to mankind since the dawn of history. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the places associated with the origins of Rome, and its legendary founder Romulus, called *tugurium Romuli*, had such a high historical value that they were used as places of worship during ancient times. And precisely in this historical site, which is full of historical memory, the emperor Augustus wanted to locate his residence to feel closer to his past.[174] During the time of the ancient Romans, the public significance of history had not yet been adequately analysed, but it was certainly recognised for its importance. Nevertheless, the past served more than merely as a sense of belonging to a community. It served as a means for edification as well. History was transmitted through *exempla*, models derived from past history, which reinforced to subsequent generations the code of ethics and appropriate behaviours for good citizens to follow. Models such as these were particularly useful in rhetoric, where examples from the past were used to support the rhetorician's arguments. To transmit virtues and values proper to *mos maiorum* to their contemporaries, ancient authors appealed to stories from their pasts. Accordingly, the ideal of the good citizen was carved out of respect for these values, mirroring centuries of tradition handed down through history.

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[174] See Drago Troccoli, L. (1998). Scavi e ricerche archeologiche dell'Università di Roma La Sapienza. *L'ERMA di BRETSCHNEIDER.*

There will be different forms and degrees of recognition of this historical value conferred upon objects, places, and individuals in subsequent centuries. Most importantly, this historical aura will be concretised with the establishment of museums and the display of universal exhibits from the XIX century. Through these practices, history and culture are intended to be taken outside of the academic realm and made more accessible to the general public. This period of time is also marked by the formation of a middle-class bourgeoisie capable of absorbing such cultural messages. Increasingly, culture is no longer the private and exclusive domain of aristocrats, but rather is being democratised. As a result of the democratisation of history, the community can grow culturally, socially, and even politically. Through a critical examination of the past, which is becoming increasingly accessible, it is possible to identify positive and negative aspects from which lessons can be derived.

The purpose of universal exhibitions was to present the scientific, technological, and cultural advances of different nations to the public, thereby providing the opportunity for them to engage with the historical heritage of diverse nations. Furthermore, by making their permanent collections accessible to the public, museums contribute substantially to the preservation of cultural heritage and the creation of shared memories. As a result of this shared memory, it was possible to educate the public regarding culture and engage them in the process of constructing its narrative.

As early as the XIX century, these engaging and educational practices contributed to the development of a public interest in history. Historical precedents such as these laid the groundwork for Public History to develop as an interdisciplinary subject in the XX century that was committed to engaging a wide and diverse audience with history.

4.2   Theoretical foundations of Public History

From the early XX century onwards, British and U.S. institutions have shown an interest in broadening the scope of history's application.[175] Nevertheless, such a desire would be concretized only in the 1970s with the advent of the Public History movement and the establishment of programs for new kind of historians.

Regardless of its forms of expression, the environments in which it is practised, and its intended audience, any historical study must adhere to what Robert Kelly called the "historical method". This approach – as Kelley stated in The Public Historian – is intended to define how historical research should be based exclusively on a critical and systemic analysis of the sources available for a terminated historical context. And these sources produce valid and reliable arguments about the meaning of past events.[176] However, although the starting point is common to all historical practices, with scholarly and technological advances come two different aspects of historical research. These aspects are distinguished by public involvement and collaborative activity. In fact, since the 1970s there has been an increasing emphasis on the public vocation of the historical discipline. This is opposed to the academic approach that characterised the discipline until those years. But what does it mean to make history public? Normally, one might think

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[175] See Conard, R. (2015). The Pragmatic Roots of Public History Education in the United States. *The Public Historian, 37(1),* 105–120. During the early 1900s, there was a shortage of historians in museums and archives. It was not until the 1930s that there has been an attempt by institutions to integrate these professions into fields not strictly related to research. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered that sixty historical monuments and artifacts be transferred from the War Department and the U.S. Forest Service to the NPS, and the input of some historians was sought. Among them, Verne Chatelain, was commissioned to create a history program. A program, however, that had to depart from the academic lessons learned and recognised what would later be some of the cardinal points of Public History: site-based research and audience - oriented interpretation.

[176] Kelley, R. (1978). Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects. *The Public Historian, 1(1),* 16–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/3377666.

that historical research was a public matter all along. The discipline's development, however, shows otherwise. Since the opening of universities and specialised history institutes, research has remained confined to academic walls. It was research conducted by academics for academics. And to be even more precise, it was an individual scholar's work read and praised by an entire institution. Apparently, the academic approach did not involve collaboration between colleagues, or specialists in a particular field of knowledge. Hence, let alone engaging the public in its entirety. By the late 1970s, however, such rigid and solitary approaches to academic history were beginning to falter. Under the guise of a revolution in history, and especially a "new field of history," lurked the limited academic work proposals offered by universities. The intention was to promote an innovative approach to history by training historians who could bring the dimension of "time" out of academia for the public good (Johnson, 1999).

Under these premises, the University of California Santa Cruz launched its first Public History graduate program in 1975, developed by the environmental historian Robert Kelley and the African historian G. Wesley Johnson. Students learnt reusable skills and competences that could be applied in any type of work environment that would benefit the public. This is the reason why historians trained in this course adopted the name "Public Historian." According to Johnson, this expression was intended to show that «historians had skills that could be used for public benefit, whether in business, government, foundations, historical societies, or wherever. »[177]

As professional historians lack traditional job opportunities, such as tenured position in academia or career in museums and archives, they looked for ways to apply their knowledge outside their established field. Analytical methods of historical research were

[177] Johnson G.W. (1999). The Origins of The Public Historian and the National Council on Public History, in *The Public Historian, XXI, n.3*, p. 168.

valued to help solve any kind of issues, from matters relating to national politics to daily problems affecting institutions, communities, and individuals. In deeds, Kelley goes on in The Public Historian to propose a definition of the professional figure and its discipline:

> «Public Historians are at work whenever, in their professional capacity, they are part of the public process. An issue needs to be resolved, a policy must be formed, the use of resources or the direction of an activity must be more effectively planned – and an historian is called upon to bring in the dimension of time: this is Public History. »[178]

As proof of his claim, Kelley points to the figures of Richard Hewlett and Wayne Rasmussen, who served as chief historians for the Department of Energy and Agriculture respectively. As they worked among archives and documents, unknown to other members of their agencies, they conducted research regarding the work and history of their departments. It was also during this process of acquiring knowledge that their positions evolved into one of the most important resources for policy making.

Additionally, in 1978, Johnson delineates eight distinct domains of engagement for historians. The foremost encompassed the realm of public and government institutions, spanning from local to state and federal levels. The second domain entailed the private enterprises. The third revolved around oral history institutions.[179] The fourth sphere embraced the expansive influence of mass media, including film, radio, print, and television, as channels for historical discourse. The fifth realm sector focused on the

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[178] Kelley, R. (1978). *Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects*. The Public Historian, 1(1). p. 16.
[179] The purpose of oral history institutions is to collect interviews and recordings in order to preserve individual and collective memory. This collection of testimonies encompasses several themes: local history, recounting events that occurred in a particular area; social history, in which communities or social groups tell their stories; history of social movements, which documents their struggles and the achievement of opportunities and rights; and family history, which is the transmission of family traditions to future generations. In addition to preserving stories of everyday life and ordinary people, oral history institutions are committed to ensuring the diversity and inclusion of history.

preservation of traces of collective memory within the physical and environmental landscape. The sixth sphere concentrated on localized historical inquires, uncovering narratives and insights tied to specific local issues. The seventh domain pertained to the organizational, managerial, and archival aspects of historical material, ensuring its preservation for posterity. Finally, the eight real entailed the teaching of Public History in colleges and universities.[180]

The intention is to demonstrate that public historians cannot be defined as individuals who engage in sporadic activities involving an audience, but as citizens incorporated into the public life of a nation. Therefore, it was precisely a revolution, the beginning of a "new history field" movement in which to envision a new approach to history and the training of historians who through their profession would be able to act on behalf of the public good. In fact, underlying Kelley's thinking was the extreme of the concept "*historia magistra vitae*".

Over sea, analogous practices were emerging. Ruskin College began teaching Public History in 1996. This program's objective was to bridge the gap between the academia and the real world. Public History conferences, discussions groups, visual history studies, and popular memory studies are some of the methods employed for promoting the field. Additionally, from 2000, the College has organized public workshops based on Public History lectures, attended by students, family historians, heritage organizers, and academics.

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[180] See Bertella Farnetti, P., Bertella Farnetti, P., Bertucelli, L., & Botti, A. (2017). Public History: una presentazione. In *Public History. Discussioni e pratiche* (Passato prossimo, Vol. 34, pp. 38–56). *MIMESIS*.

Founder of the History Workshop Journal and leader of the Public History English movement, Raphael Samuel, explains that history is not the historian's prerogative but rather a collective responsibility, as a:

> «a social form of knowledge; the work in any given instance, of thousands different hands. »[181]

Raphael Samuel began in the 1970s to explore a history that started from the bottom, outside the academy. This involved not only scholars, experts, and researchers, but sought input from teachers, local history experts or family historians. In short, figures who had long been labelled second-class scholars. However, Public History's intentions and methodologies intended it as a "collaborative enterprise."

Also maintaining a focus on community dynamics and the problems of the community, the British newspaper almost thirty years after its founding, published in 1997 an additional section devoted to Public History. This restricted area of the journal analysed and discussed the practices and uses of oral history through different *media*. It dealt with global issues, such as migration, or technological developments, such as websites.

As early as 1902, Lord Acton, professor of modern history, in the introductory note to the first volume of Cambridge Modern History, notes that the study of history must be directed toward the present, and new tools and materials are inevitably introduced as a consequence of this approach:

> «Indeed history, unlike other branches of knowledge, cannot prescribe limitations for itself. It is not only that men need the experience of the past to help them in practical endeavours, to enable them to understand the position of actual questions with which they and their age are engaged. […] At the same time, the variety of the matters with which history is bound to concern itself steadily increases. As more

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[181] Samuel, R. (1994). Theatres of Memory. *Verso*, p.8

interest is taken in questions relating to social organisation, researches are conducted

in fields which before were neglected. »[182]

Compared to an academic historian who alone analyses written sources such as documents, letters, and maps, the public historian can mediate across different fields and sectors. At the time of research, he or she draws on archaeologists, anthropologists, or art historians' knowledge to broaden the field of research. He or she also analyses non-text sources as well. Instead, the realisation of the final product requires artists, designers, and web developers to give new life to this story. An academic paper is not the only and necessary outcome. With the involvement of other professionals and experts, it is possible to create a multidisciplinary narrative around the research that is inspiring and co-inventive. Therefore, historical dissemination maintains the rigour and attention to the truth of the sources while speaking the language of the public.

In the historical sphere, historians are increasingly placing an emphasis on the 'public' vocation of the discipline: a history that reaches out to the public, a history for the public, a history shared with the public. Although a fifty-year-old field of knowledge, like Public History, should offer solid foundations for building strong and good practices – a clear definition has yet to be found. There are several reasons why Public History has not been defined clearly. In the first instance, the discipline developed as a response to social and professional needs. Therefore, it places more emphasis on its practical application than on its theoretical foundation. Furthermore, it is imperative to consider the heterogeneity and plurality of the discipline, not only in terms of their creators but also in terms of their

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[182] Acton, LL. D. (1902). The Cambridge modern history. (A. W. Ward, G. W. Prothero, & S. M. Leathes, Eds.). *Macmillan*. Pp. 3-4.

users and forms of communication. As a result, theory has found it difficult to synthesize such diverse practices, methodologies, and languages under a single definition. The common notion among early scholars is to place this practice beyond the academia realm. In this regards, Robert Kelly, in 1978 wrote in *The Public Historian* journal:

> «Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside the academia: in government, private corporation, the media, historical societies and museums, even in private practice. » [183]

And again, he stated:

> «There are more forms of public history than we can name here, and new ones appear all the time, which is one of the things that makes the field vibrant and exciting. » [184]

Kelley outlines the fundamental tenets of the filed. Public History transcends the work of an individual scholar and the exclusive analysis of textual sources. Public historians actively engage with diverse academic and non-academic professionals, deliberating not only upon historical debates, but also contemporary issues that resonate with their own time. During the period spanning from the 1970s to the 1990s, the discipline embarked on a trajectory of development, gradually establishing its distinctive path. However, it was in the subsequent decades that these methodological approaches expanded beyond the confines of traditional contexts and scholarly investigations, venturing into previously overlooked subject areas.

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[183] Kelley, R. (1978). *Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects*. The Public Historian, 1(1). p. 16.
[184] Lyon, C. M., Nix, E. M., & Shrum, R. K. (2017). *Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences.* Rowman & Littlefield. p. 2.

4.3 New Public History approaches

As Public History has evolved over the past few decades, it has expanded not only geographically but also in terms of public participation and the issues it addresses. The field of Public History is becoming an international discipline that is evolving according to different models around the world. For instance, Italy is currently undergoing an aural phase of the discipline. Even though it is only in the early stages of rethinking history from a public perspective, it has the advantage of being able to analyse the countries that preceded it and determine what practices should be adopted. Conferences, lectures, and articles have all contributed to the definition of the practices, methodologies, and content of this field. Historian Elisabetta Vezzosi wrote in the journal Contemporanea:

> «In recent years in Italy the success of Public History has grown: a history seen, heard, read, translated and interpreted, addressed to a non-specialist audience. A complex and dynamic entity, Public History has taken many different forms, while maintaining some clear objectives: to bridge the enormous distance existing between history professionals and "public", to identify new discursive practices and new languages, to create circular communication, and to foster the elaboration of a multifaceted and conscious "public memory". »[185]

Thus, several organizations were born to investigate and promote this new discipline. In the United States, the National Council on Public History dates back to the 1970s, but in Italy the birth of an organization for Public History is formalized only in 2018, with the drafting of the Italian Public History manifesto by the Italian Public History Association (AIPH). This text then defines the fields of action of the discipline and its practitioners.

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[185] Vezzosi, E. (2009). I festival di storia e il loro pubblico: una «via italiana» alla "public history"? *Contemporanea*, *12*(4), 717–720. p.1.

«Public historians work in cultural institutions, museums, archives, libraries, the media, the cultural and tourism industry, schools, cultural and social promotion volunteers, and in all areas where knowledge of the past is required to work with and for diverse audiences. »[186]

A new emphasis has been placed on innovation, public participation, and expanding the scope of issues addressed in these new directions. It is no longer the sole responsibility of historians to interpret history«». The public is increasingly required to participate and assist in the research process, in the collection of evidence, and in the creation of historical content through Public History projects and initiatives. In this scenario, Public History becomes a collaborative practice in which some of the historian's authority is ceded to the public.[187] This control can be exercised at different stages of a project, ranging from the research phase to the interpreting stage to the dissemination phase. Therefore, the public historian is faced with the challenge of balancing public participation with the rigid methodologies that are used by academic institutions. In this way, various projects are developed in which people are centred and their stories are highlighted. During the coronavirus pandemic, many initiatives lent themselves to collecting voices and testimonies from a such dark period. Coronarchive for example, aims to «document this diverse present and preserve it for future generations. The pandemic will be over one day. How we will be remembering and discussing the "corona crisis" after that day depends entirely on what will be left on it».[188] Recognizing the inequity of the historical narrative, the archive proposes to collect texts, images, videos, or drawings in which people recount

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[186] The Manifesto of Italian Public History by AIPH (https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2020/12/Manifesto-della-Public-History-italiana-1.pdf)

[187] The notion of shared authority, originally introduced by Michael Frisch in 1990, asserts the fundamental principle of collaborative authorship between historians and the public as the foundation of historical scholarship.

[188] Coronarchive website:
https://coronarchiv.geschichte.unihamburg.de/projector/s/coronarchive/page/welcome.

their experiences during the pandemic and thus create a shared and inclusive history and memory. In this way, history is told by the very people who have lived it or are living it. Essentially, this concept represents the same mission as other large organizations such as the Center for History and New Media (CHNM), which developed museums and digital archives to commemorate the Twin Towers bombing in 2001. Interviews with direct witnesses, photographs, and film footage are collected in these archives. James T. Sparrow, one of the project's creators, stated that the aim of the archive is «to bring the public close to the center of Public History, thereby allowing ordinary Americans to literally make their own history. »[189]

Incorporating the public into the creation and interpretation of history is therefore an efficient means of broadening the perspective represented in historical narratives and providing opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities to tell their stories. As an example, TheHistoryMakers is an oral history project dedicated to recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of prominent African Americans.[190] A valuable resource for scholars and the general public has been provided through video interviews conducted by TheHistoryMakers documenting African American history and culture. As a result, Public History is today embracing and exploring issues that are often overlooked by traditional historical narratives, thus contributing to a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of the past. It is now common for many initiatives to focus on topics such as the history of societies, the history of women, the history of ethnic minorities, the history of migration, the history of the environment, and a variety of other topics.

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[189] Noiret, S. (2009). "Public History" e "Storia Pubblica" nella rete, in *Media e storia*, p. 297.

[190] TheHistoryMakers website: https://www.thehistorymakers.org/.

In the context of this thesis, which centres on the analysis of Roman women, it is of significance to investigate the inception and subsequent evolution of the field of women's history, thereby elucidating its scholarly trajectory.

Prior to the advent of public history, women's history was often marginalized or undervalued in favour of historiographies that focused primarily on men, political events, and dominant institutions. However, since the 1960s and 1970s, when the feminist movement and the claim for gender equality became more prominent, women's history has gained increased relevance and visibility. An epochal juncture in the trajectory of women's history unfolded with the release of *Historie des femmes en Occident* in 1991, its genesis stemming from the confluence of student dissent ad feminist liberation movements. At its core, the central question pertained to the viability of engendering a historiography that centred on the experiences and contributions of women. Public history has played an important role in creating innovative spaces and in contributing to research devoted to women's history. Most importantly, it has empowered women scholars to take an active part in these projects. Professor Silvia Giorcelli, a scholar specialized in Roman history, highlights this emerging shift in academic prominence, while lamenting the persistently inadequate acknowledgment of such research within the Italian context:

«Indeed, until a few decades ago, academia was predominantly male dominated, with female scholars being exceptionally rare, the history of women did not exist, and gender merely regarded as a grammatical category. However, significant changes have transpired: academia now boasts accomplished female scholars, including historians and ancient historians, and the field of women's history has attained both dignity and scientific autonomy. The gaze directed towards women has proliferated across numerous disciplines, forging exceptionally vibrant and fruitful research paths that run parallel to traditional approaches, fostering an interaction that has enriched the broader scope of knowledge. There is a growing number of female scholars dedicating their research, or a portion thereof, to delve into themes of women's history, or history from a feminine and/or feminist perspective, within their respective areas of expertise. However, in Italy, there still remains a lack of universally acknowledged recognition for these heuristic and historiographical endeavours: those who

propose them often find themselves navigating uncertain terrain, where legitimacy is only partially granted. »[191]

Women's voices have been recorded and preserved through documents and interviews, thereby providing a more comprehensive and intimate understanding of their heritage. Through this method, women's everyday experiences, struggles, and successes were clearly highlighted in ways that traditional historiography had failed to capture. Particularly when considering the condition of women at the inception of Western society, they were greatly subjugated to the power of men. In this regard, Professor Giorcelli emphasizes that «our ultimate goal as historians is to reevaluate the way we perceive history, society, and politics, so that neither masculinity nor femininity are regarded as normative, but both are seen as equally influenced by the gender constructs of their culture.»[192] The study of Roman women, therefore, «must draw upon anthropology, psychoanalysis, and social sciences, thus initiating parallel or alternative avenues of interpretation to the traditional approaches. »[193] However, such an analysis encounters difficulties in ancient sources, which are largely androcentric and misogynistic. Women were mentioned primarily in terms of their familial connections rather than their individual prestige. Thus, it becomes challenging to construct a comprehensive history of women based on the limited details offered by the literature. Nevertheless, it is possible to interpret the sources through new perspectives. For instance, while traditional Roman history relegates women to the confines of the domus, an intimate and private sphere, it

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[191] English translation from the Italian: Giorcelli Bersani, S. (2016). Donne romane: storie "di genere" vere, possibili, improbabili. *Donne, istituzioni e società fra tardo antico e alto medioevo* (pp. 405–430), Pensa. p. 414-415.

[192] Giorcelli Bersani, S. (2016). Donne romane: storie "di genere" vere, possibili, improbabili. *Donne, istituzioni e società fra tardo antico e alto medioevo* (pp. 405–430), Pensa. p. 406-407.

[193] *Ibidem*

is possible to reconsider the public/private dichotomy within the aristocratic *domus*. Particularly during the late Republic, these spaces were also sites dedicated to politics, where women stood alongside their husbands and sons. This approach instils the female figure with a renewed strength and interpretation, transforming her into a matron who *in domo et in re publica agens*. Undoubtedly, in recent years, thanks to the work of female scholars, a complete rewriting of the history of Roman women has taken place, rescuing them from the obscurity to which they had been relegated.

As a consequence, history becomes a much more profound concept; it is no longer simply an accessible means of gaining knowledge but becomes a tool for understanding and defining humanity as a whole. Benedetta Giuliani, an expert in historical sciences, in an article for the journal *Diacronie, Studi di Storia contemporanea* recalls the social contribution of Public History and the «importance of historicizing public thought and political action, conscious of taking place within a historical dimension and able to use historical context in order to refine itself. »[194]

History has primarily a civic function. As a result of a variety of approaches and methodologies, history is dedicated to the collective growth of society, not only by constructing a sense of identity but also by providing individuals and communities with a sense of empathy and unity. Firstly, historical narration presents itself as a shared and global narrative from which we can draw knowledge and understanding of the past. Upon analysing the social and cultural dynamics of a particular period, it is possible to discover connections between different periods as well as identify a sense of identity to refer to and be proud of. It is important, however, to recognize that the patriotic sentiment towards our own history should extend beyond the boundaries of space and time. The study of

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[194] English translation from Giuliani, B. (2017). Dalla public history alla applied history. *Diacronie. Studi Di Storia Contemporanea*, (32). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/diacronie.6473.

history provides opportunities for the expression of diverse voices that have experienced a variety of journeys over time. Exposure to different perspectives fosters empathy towards others, leading to a sense of respect and inclusion for all. It is possible to draw valuable life lessons from these diverse and multiple narratives. Through time's vicissitudes, history serves as a *magistra vitae*. The study of history can assist individuals in making informed decisions, not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of the community at large. Moreover, the celebration of history through celebrations and memorial sites further intensifies this sense of belonging by creating meeting points and spaces for exchange that foster connections based on shared memories.

Thus, history is fundamental in developing an inclusive and harmonious society that has the ability to learn from past mistakes and construct a better future for the community. Regardless of the method and means employed to communicate the studied history, the ultimate goal of any history project is to effectively communicate valuable messages for a better future.

4.4 Public History and new *media*: two worlds combined.

In spite of the fact that new technologies are making their mark on every aspect of daily life, academicians were frowned upon for a long time for integrating them into the humanities. They were perceived as a tool that could facilitate research, but not as a means of organising, visualising, and promoting the results of such research. Hence, the initial steps of digital innovation in academia are nothing more than a mere façade. Technology was merely used to digitize existing methods for publishing scholarly materials. In

addition to the traditional publication of monographs, miscellaneous and revised volumes, a complementary or exclusive digital edition was also available.[195]

Additionally, this is due to a difficult interaction between the two disciplines themselves, as well as between those who are their experts. It is often difficult for historians to recognise the opportunities and tools that will enhance their research; and even if they rely on professional computer scientists, these individuals are not able to fully comprehend the deep value of the content and are thus unable to maximize its potential. There is a language barrier that is difficult to overcome. Historians themselves lamented this educational gap.

«Our training as historians has not prepared us to address the tensions between our understanding of the past and the public's, between scholarly integrity and our responsibility to the public. We are trained to be authorities, But when history is interpreted to the public, in museums and historical organizations, that tension has to be addressed – history has to be negotiated. »[196]

«Sharing too little authority means that the audience will lose interest in or be unable to follow the narrative (…). Sharing too much authority, on the other hand, means simply telling the audience what they already know, or what they want to know, reinforcing memory, not adding new dimension of knowledge, new ways of approaching problems, new understandings. »[197]

Recent years have seen the introduction of hybrid educational paths in the humanities sector, allowing a thorough understanding of these two worlds and facilitating their

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[195] See Salvatori, E. (2017). Storia digitale e pubblica: lo storico tra i "nuovi creatori" di storia. In P. Berletta Fernetti, L. Bertucelli, & A. Botti, *Public History. Discussioni e pratiche* (pp. 189–197). *MIMESIS Passato Prossimo*.

[196] Gardner, J. B. (2004). Contested terrain: History, museums, and the public. *The Public Historian*, *26*(4), 11–21. https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2004.26.4.11.

[197] Lubar, S. (1995). In the footsteps of Perry: The Smithsonian Goes to Japan, in *The Public Historian*, vol. 17, n. 3, p. 46.

interaction. There is a growing field of study known as the Digital and Public Humanities, which comprises interdisciplinary and heterogeneous groups consisting of humanists, computer scientists, graphic designers, and computational linguists. As a result, there is a synergistic effect between the disciplines, whose ultimate goal is to make academic research accessible to the public. In addition to breaking down language barriers between disciplines, this also improves communication between academia and the general public. Such a communicative approach additionally enables a convergence between scholarly and popular products, thereby reigniting the debate previously discussed, surrounding the restricted reliability of certain historical endeavours. The role of the public historian proves to be crucial in addressing this issue. Indeed, this figure possesses the ability to translate academic research, grounded in textual and non-textual sources, into a language that is suitable and accessible to a broader audience. Consequently, academic dissemination finds new opportunities for storytelling and visualisation through emerging media platforms. The immediate consumption offering leverages a tool that has become an integral part of everyday life for everyone: the smartphone. Through the development of mobile applications, it is possible to provide information about museums, historical sites, or places of interest. At more advanced levels, access to tourist guides, interactive maps, and augmented reality experiences is also feasible. The immediacy and personalisation of content consumption thereby enrich the user's experience. These applications find a natural connection with websites, which can serve as essential resources for historical dissemination. When linked to institutions or museums, websites can provide articles, images, and videos for the public to explore independently. An illustrative example is the "Mapping Indigenous LA" project, which narrates the history and culture of indigenous communities in Los Angeles through an interactive online map,

offering access to information, images, and audio testimonies for each location.[198] Furthermore, such content can be further explored trough open access to digital archives and collections, providing the public with the opportunity to contribute to the storytelling of history by sharing their own connected experiences. Withing this context, the practices of Public History, mentioned earlier, play a significant role, where the public becomes co-creators of shared memory by commenting, submitting photos or videos. More innovative approaches are emerging in the field of social media, podcasting, and virtual and augmented reality. Firstly, an increasing number of cultural institutions are registering on social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. A notable example is the Library of Congress in the United States, which regularly shares photographs, documents, and stories related to its historical heritage. Such application of history lends itself well to reaching a wide audience, who can directly interact with the content through features offered by social media platforms, such as sharing, commenting, and initiating discussions about historical heritage.

The opportunity for discussion is also offered by a medium that has seen incredible growth in recent years: podcasts. Through historical podcasts, both scholars and non-scholars can narrate and delve into historical events and personalities, while reflecting on the present. For instance, the British Museum has its own podcast titled "The British Museum Podcast," which began in 2019. It narrates history and art through the museum's collections, delving into stories and exhibited objects. [199] Historical dissemination in this format assumes a more informal connotation, making it more flexible and convenient.

Lastly, virtual reality and augmented reality are gaining favor in the field of Public History. Through devices like VR headsets or smartphones, the public can immerse

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[198] Mapping Indigenous LA website: https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/636-2/.
[199] The British Museum podcast: https://www.britishmuseum.org/the-british-museum-podcast.

themselves in virtual reconstructions of past locations, interact with historical objects or figures, and experience immersive journeys that enable a deeper understanding of history. The Reggio Emilia City Museums, for example, provide an immersive experience in their collections.[200] The Google Arts & Culture digital platform enables virtual tours of museum rooms to be accessed from the comfort of one's own home. The services offered by these organizations offer a unique opportunity to get closer to history not only geographically, but also culturally.

Even more immersive is the experience offered by augmented reality of archaeological sites. The Campania Region founded the ARTU project, in which archaeological sites from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Naples are shown through AR glasses. The city of Pompeii can be "visited" in its original state before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.[201] The goal is to provide an immersive and interactive experience that allows exploration of Pompeii's buildings, streets, and objects as they appeared in antiquity.

As evident from the aforementioned projects, digital technologies have opened new opportunities for the creation of multimedia narratives, immersive experiences, and access to historical resources in a more inclusive and accessible manner. On the audience side, new media have brought greater accessibility and personalization of historical content. Today, historical dissemination can find space in numerous digital contexts and be tailored to the interests and curiosities of individuals. Thus, not only are new information and reflections on history constantly offered, but the digital format also allows for a broader audience, reaching even non-experts or those geographically distant

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[200] Reggio Emilia City Museums through Google Arts&Culture: https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/museicivicidireggioemilia/KAFfVAYJOSE58A?hl=it&sv_l ng=10.63267936466147&sv_lat=44.700080017662444&sv_h=1.369543246807325&sv_p=21.57109201 8383013&sv_pid=XO2qJpvn77fFkiufCXvp_A&sv_z=1.

[201] Augmented Reality Tour of archaeological sites in Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Naples provided by the ARTU project: https://www.ar-tour.it/.

from the historical sites. Social media and websites enable institutions to offer up-to-date and accurate historical narratives. Furthermore, the use of various forms of content, including images, photographs, videos, and audio, enriches the historical narrative. A multimedia approach makes the learning experience more engaging and stimulating.

Lastly, new media provide the possibility of direct engagement with and involvement of the audience. Through comments, sharing, and participation in online discussions, the public can become an integral part of the historical narrative. This stimulates a dynamic dialogue between historians and the audience, fostering interaction and the enrichment of historical knowledge.

5. The podcast as a tool for historical dissemination: origins, evolution, and impact in Public History.

Over the past decade, podcasts have grown to become a popular alternative *medium* of communication. Initially, in line with radio station programming, its content evolved to break out of outdated patterns and language. As the new millennium approached, technical innovations led to not only improvements in accessibility but also - perhaps more importantly - improvements in its content. Early podcasts were primarily listened to by a narrow niche of enthusiasts. However, over time its popularity grew. A product which has traditionally been considered as non-specialized outreach is now carving out a place for itself within academia. Particularly, Public History has recently begun to explore this *medium* as a means of disseminating research outside the academy. therefore, therefore mean that podcasting is an effective tool for reaching the general public? The prospects for this field appear promising, but academia has yet to fully embrace this "new" approach.

5.1 The origins of podcasting

Several scholars (Bottomley A.) suggest that the podcast is a simple evolution of a radio program, maintaining that podcasting's history is the natural progression from radio.[202] Early on, podcasting shared some similarities with radio's programming. While the new *medium* broke the traditional communication patterns so dear to radio speakers,

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[202] See Bottomley A.J. (2015). Podcasting, Welcome to Night Vale, and the Revival of Radio Drama. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media, vol. 22, n.*2, p. 180.

it also renewed its content structure as well as its technological capabilities, lending itself to its own unique and distinctive history.

On February 12, 2004, The Guardian published an article about a new phenomenon that was gaining considerable traction during those years. One of the paper's multimedia reporters, Ben Hammersley, is the first to identify the new revolution taking place in the audio world. In this article, he attempted to explain the situation as follows:

> «Online radio is booming thanks to iPods, cheap audio software and weblogs […]. With the benefit of hindsight, it all seems quite obvious. MP3 players, like Apple's iPod, in many pockets, audio production, software cheap or free, and weblogging an established part of the internet; all the ingredients are there for a new boom in amateur audio. But what to call it? Audioblogging? Podcasting? GuerillaMedia? »[203]

As a result of Hammersley's neologism, two words have been combined into a single term: the iPod, the famous media player launched by Apple in 2001, which revolutionized not only the technology industry but also the music industry; and broadcast, representing the general term for transmission via radio or television. As a result, the term "podcast" was used to refer to the transmission of audio via iPod. Alternatively, the Oxford Languages dictionary provides a more comprehensive description of podcasts as radio broadcasts distributed over the Internet, which can be downloaded and stored on a portable audio device.

Actually, in his article, Hammersley was attempting to explain a phenomenon that emerged earlier in the decade. In the early 1990s, a new generation of Internet sites that allow users to stream music on the Internet was emerging in the United States. The tracks were initially presented in a continuous sequence. Due to their success, however,

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[203] Hammersley, B. (2004, February 12). Audiable Revolution. *The Guardian*. (https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia).

traditional radio stations incorporated them into their programming.[204] It is thus possible to follow a radio station from within one's browser.

The turning point for the podcasting phenomenon can be attributed to three individuals: Dave Winer, Christopher Lydon, and Adam Curry. Software developer Dave Winer is regarded as the father of RSS (Really Simple Syndication). It was used on news sites and blogs in order to inform readers that new textual content was available. At first, Winer sent text files through the feed. However, over time, he came up with the idea of uploading audio files through the same feed as well. Known as an RSS feed, this file contains all the information necessary for later podcatcher apps to listen to podcasts and receive updates on the programs. It was the introduction of the syndication system within the audio field that paved the way for the development of podcasts as we know them today. At this point, Winer encouraged Christopher Lydon, a famous radio personality, to use this new technology. As a result, Lydon shared his interviews that he had recorded online, thereby making the first podcast in history. Podcasts take their first steps. Yet, as podcasts spread throughout the digital world during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was no central point where they could be listened to. Former MTV video jockey Adam Curry started working on podcasts in 1999 and spent the next four years developing a system for aggregating audio content: iPodder. Through the use of this technology, all podcast feeds could be collected, and episodes could be downloaded to the iPod.

With the advent of the new millennium, technological advancements in podcasting have continued to grow, resulting in a rise in production possibilities. With the decline in recording costs and the development of easier-to-use audio editing programs, even amateur podcasters were able to enter the world of podcasting. As a result of the launch

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[204] Webradios also achieved much success among universities. Radio Ca' Foscari was one of the first.

of Audacity in 2002 and the introduction of Apple's iLife suite in January 2003, software for audio production were available to anyone who had access to the internet. Approximately seven months after Hammersley's article, Dannie J. Gregorie coined the term "podcasting" to refer to the automatic downloading and synchronization of audio content. Additionally, he registered several podcast domains, including podcast.net, the first podcast directory in the world. The first commercial podcasting hosting service, audioblog.com, was also launched in 2004 by Eric Ric and Randy Dryburgh.

In 2005, Apple launched iTunes 4.9.[205] In the update, a directory for podcast-formatted content was introduced. Users could find podcasts in the iTunes database categorised by genre, category, and topic. Moreover, a simpler process for subscribing to feeds was implemented: podcast subscriptions were now available.[206] In this way, a separate program was no longer required to download and transfer audio content to a mobile device. Apple thus stood as the first gatekeeper of the thousands of podcasts that were already springing up in the early years of the *medium*.

Podcasting experienced slow growth during the first decade of the 2000s, with major advancements being concentrated on the technological side rather than the content side.

In the new millennium, the podcast also makes its first appearance in Italy. It was in 2004, a year we can consider the year zero of podcasting, that quix.it, a technology news site, published the first Italian podcast. This new technology was still considered to be a niche phenomenon: generally, it is technophile bloggers who experiment with this *medium* or alternative professors who wish to publish their lectures online. It was only after

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[205] See Apple Prende il mainstream del podcasting. *Apple Newsroom (Italia).* (2005, June 28). https://www.apple.com/it/newsroom/2005/06/28Apple-Takes-Podcasting-Mainstream/.

[206] Although there was a charge for downloading songs and music albums, podcast subscriptions were free. A major factor contributing to the success of the podcast was the promotion of the medium by the most popular device for listening to audio.

acknowledging the success and potential of podcasting that radio stations began to take a serious interest in it: the BBC began podcasting in 2005, and Rai in 2007. [207] In the past, radio stations dominated the podcasting sector by using it as a supplement to their traditional tools. Early podcasts were primarily repurposed audio portions or entire episodes from radio shows.

Although the industry continues to grow and thrive, it has attracted the attention of software and hardware companies that have recognized the potential market for their products. During this period, they developed microphones, mixers, tools, and audio platforms to support this emerging industry. However, despite a surge in popularity, podcasts continue to be a fringe hobby that is slow in spreading. It was not until 2014, with the release of *Serial*, that it became a mass phenomenon.

5.2   The evolution of podcasting

Richard Berry, Senior Lecturer in Radio at the University of Sunderland (UK), described the years that followed the first decade of the podcast *medium*:

> «In late 2014 – ten years after the medium first appeared – the world was suddenly talking about podcasting again. […] What began as a rush of early content that initially presented itself as a potential rival to radio, seemed then to settle down into a pattern of steady growth of niche content and on-demand listening. »[208]

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[207] See Bonini, T. Mutazioni del podcasting. in Spinelli, M., & Dann, L. (2021). Podcast. Narrazioni e comunità sonore (pp. 401–414). afterword, *SuperTele*.

[208] Berry, R. (2015). A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast Histories. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 22(2),* 170–178. p.174.

As Berry pointed out, podcasts were gaining in popularity over radio, and many people are opting for this new format on both the supply and demand side of the equation. Technological advancements in podcasting production platforms, as well as a greater accessibility of mobile devices, enabled this product to be incorporated into the daily lives of listeners. In 2007, Apple introduced its first iPhone, combining the functionalities of a regular cell phone with that of an iPod. With the growth of podcasts, there were more opportunities to reach a greater segment of the population, and in 2014 Apple Podcasts was created - an app dedicated solely to listening to podcasts.

As smartphones spread and connectivity improved, the process of mass distribution of this service was greatly accelerated. The final product became even more appealing thanks to the rising of platforms and tools that enhanced the audio quality. This is primarily due to the entry into the industry of not only radio stations but also production houses. In fact, these companies devoted a portion of their budgets to the experimentation of this new *medium*, breaking away from their traditional production methods. Due to their superior economic resources than amateur organizations, radio stations contributed greatly to the improvement of technical quality and efficiency in the industry. As a result of their larger budgets, they could also require the collaboration of experts and a research team, bringing different topics to the audience than traditional radio programming.

Although the industry was experiencing growing popularity, no mass distribution content had yet been developed. *Serial* was the first podcast to be widely accepted by the general public and the international community. The series, whose first season was released in 2014, depicts the 1999 murder of American student Hae Min Lee. Episodes were aired on a weekly basis, each telling a small part of this tragic story. Throughout the series, Sarah Koenig, journalist and host of the show, interspersed narrated sections with phone

recordings and police interrogations to recount the prolonged and complex trial.[209] In terms of podcasts, *Serial* revolutionized the industry. As of its first season, the series had reached 68 million listening, earning it the Peabody Award and the title of "audio game-changer".[210] Similarly, in Italy, another crime series gained great popularity in 2017: Pablo Trincia's *Veleno*.[211] The series brings to light events that took place twenty years earlier in Emilia Romagna: sixteen children had been removed from their families by social services. Their stories gave rise to five trials against parents and relatives, accused of paedophilia and satanism. The episodes resumed trial papers and testimony to reconstruct heinous facts but disappeared from the pages of newspapers.

Aside from daily news, entertainment, and sports podcasts, there were now specialized podcasts in a wide variety of fields, including crime, science, art, history, and more. As a result, history podcasts became useful for delving into well-known topics as well as exploring little-known stories, often with the assistance of experts and academic sources. The wide range of offerings for the listener is only increasing, and there is now a podcast for everyone.

The constant demand for new podcasts and new distribution and monetization models intrigued not only experts in the field, but also other professionals. The podcast was fast becoming a *medium* for people to express and tell their passions. However, this more refined and amatorial content had to give way for large commercial producers. Not only because they were more technologically equipped but also because the success of their content had a greater attraction for advertising companies. The most successful podcasts saw the interest of advertisers, and the subsequent ability of their creators to generate

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[209] *Serial* on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/5wMPFS9B5V7gg6hZ3UZ7hf.

[210] See Berry, R. (2015). A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast Histories. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 22(2),* 170–178. (http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/6524/)

[211] *Veleno* on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/66fZ8K1hHPhnBrbWxIODEi

revenue by advertising a given product or service. Or again, it was possible for them to create paid programs, or make exclusive content for their supporters. With the introduction of monetization, a large market was created that does not seem to want to give way. Since 2014, more and more publishers have sprung up, specializing in podcast production. The first production houses in the United States were Radiotopia and Gimlet Media, in 2014. The global market for "Latin" listeners was covered in 2016, when the Prisa Group, one of the largest print and radio publishers founded Podium Podcast. In the same year, Audible was launched in Italy, which opened the "market" for many other producers: in 2016 Piano P, which now produces for *Corriere della Sera*; in 2019 Storielibere.fm, a native podcast publishing platform, was founded; and in 2020 Chora Media was born.[212]

Hence, it is possible to confirm that the podcast grew vertically after 2014. With the help of Google's word frequency tool Google Books Ngram, it is possible to determine how often a particular word appears in texts between 1800 and 2019. In light of the podcast's chronology, it would be appropriate to begin the analysis in the early 1990s. The line chart (*Figure 19*) illustrates that before the technological advancements of the new millennium, podcasting was an unknown *medium*. As a matter of fact, the concept first appeared in the world of literature in 2004. From articles analysing its opportunities and limitations to practical guides for creating audio products, podcasts began to be discussed and experimented with. The first decade of podcasting's existence has been characterised by a slow growth that is largely attributed to the development of new technologies during that period. As of 2007, when the first iPhone was released, interest in podcasts seemed to have waned. With the release of *Serial* in 2014, the industry began to experience a new

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[212] See Bonini, T. Mutazioni del podcasting. in Spinelli, M., & Dann, L. (2021). Podcast. Narrazioni e comunità sonore (pp. 401–414). afterword, *SuperTele*.

peak. In the years following that year, literature has become increasingly interested in this medium as a means of communicating across generations in a way that differs from traditional models such as radio and television. Authors and podcasters Martin Spinelli and Lance Dan in their book, from which the following excerpt is taken, analyse the evolution of this new form of communication:

«Podcasting represents a tempting opportunity for a new generation to leave behind the entire history of audio with the goal of inventing and reinventing, discovering and rediscovering, experiences and relationships in the world of audio media, but in their own way and on their own terms. We may consider it a naive or risky approach, but that of reimagining drama, journalism, science, philosophy, sex, spirituality, and even humanity, is a rare and regenerating opportunity to be grasped without hesitation. »[213]

Podcast popularity (1994 – 2019)
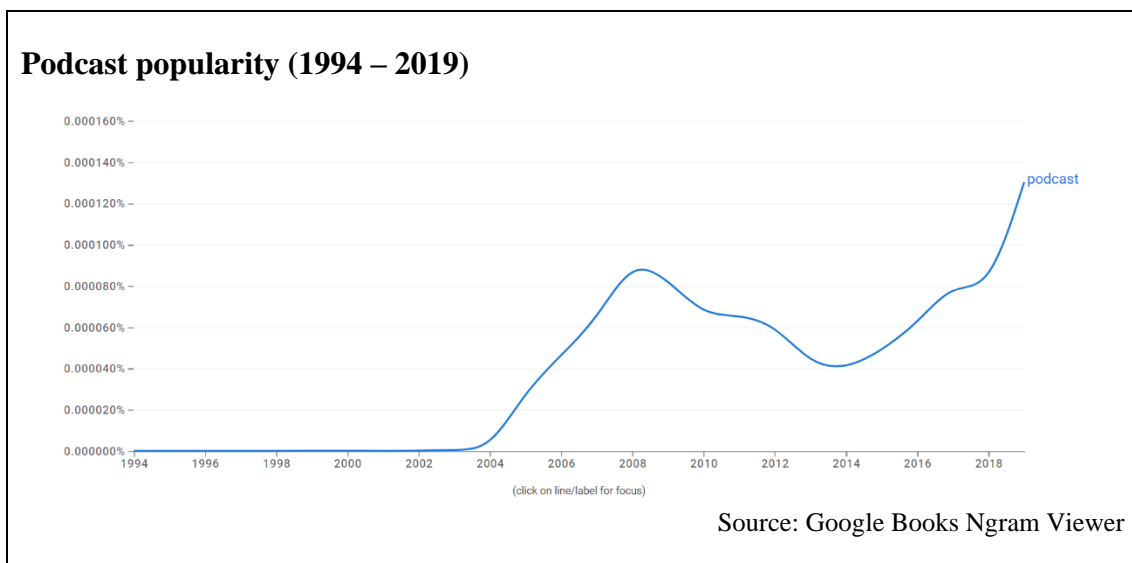
Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer

Figure 19. Line chart showing the evolution of the use of the term "podcast" in literature.
Source: Google Book Ngram Viewer.

Over the past five years much research has been devoted to investigating the popularity of this *medium*. From a 2021 Edison Research analysis of the U.S. population, [214] it is

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[213] Spinelli, M., & Dann, L. (2021). Podcast. Narrazioni e comunità sonore. *SuperTele*. p. 21.

[214] The Infinite Dial 2021 by Edison Research (https://www.edisonresearch.com/the-infinite-dial-2021-2/)

possible to read that 41% of people surveyed had listened to a podcast in the past month. This is double the 21% found in 2016 by the same analysis. The average listening to episodes in a week has also increased: from 6 in 2020 to 8 in 2021. In Italy, in the same year Ipsos offers its third survey regarding the evolution of podcasts. [215] Listening trends remain on the rise: compared to 26% in 2019 (year zero of the survey) in 2021 it reaches 31% of the population, which corresponds to about 9.3 million individuals who listened to a podcast in the last month of the research. In addition, the target audience of adults, college graduates, and professionals who therefore seek out podcasts with critical judgment, to learn and explore thick topics, seems to be growing.

Podcasts have become an important tool for the dissemination of culture due to their increasing accessibility, professionalization, and diversification. An ever-growing audience can now become acquainted with stories and narratives that would otherwise be lost.

5.3   Podcasting within Public History

As previously anticipated, the podcasting industry is continually evolving and in constant search for new stories to tell. It has become increasingly important for podcasts to provide listeners with audio stories that have an impact on their lives. It is not just about the emotional impact provided by poignant or macabre stories such as those of *Serial*, but rather the podcast is beginning to serve as an educational resource. As with the *aedi* of millennia past, it is possible for the podcast to tell stories of men and women who have

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[215] Ipsos Digital Audio Survey 2021 (https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/podcast-prova-maturita-ipsos-digital-audio-survey-2021)

played an important role in shaping the evolution of humankind. Historiographical rigour was certainly breached by the *aedi* in favour of metrics and praise for their patrons. This is not permitted for Public History podcasts. Language must be eloquent and entertaining, like an *aedo*, but the content cannot be sacrificed.

Nevertheless, academics are still sceptical regarding historical popularization via podcasts. Institutions have only recently begun to reflect and discuss the opportunities of this *medium*.[216] Currently, there is no comprehensive literature on public history podcasts, and projects to develop them are affected by limitations and distrust from other scholars. It is nevertheless true that a growing segment of academia is exploring this new *medium*, especially for educational purposes. The writer and podcaster Jenna Spinelle (2019) noted that podcasts provide faculty members with a platform for showcasing their research and experiences outside of academia as well as providing valuable teaching opportunities. Academics should use podcasts as a tool for cultural dissemination, promoting scholarly articles and monographs alongside mass outreach projects in order to reach a wider audience. In an effort to make academic research more accessible to the general public, the goal is to take academic studies outside the academy. As a result of this sharing, listeners may also be able to actively participate in the discussion about history. As a result of the narrative flexibility offered by this tool, a co-creation of a story can be achieved, involving not only experts but also individuals who have experienced certain historical events or are familiar with influential individuals from the past. A podcast format will enable the publication of conversations or interviews with people who might not normally read a long academic article to become interested in the topic. As a result of its success, a "podcasting culture" has emerged in which people have come to rely on this

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[216] See Drew, C. (2017). Educational podcasts: A genre analysis. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, *14*(4), 201–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753017736177.

tool for entertainment, information, and insight. Thus, why not take advantage of this trend to promote academic research to a broader audience?

In some academic institutions, such as museums and universities, this tool is being explored and implemented in their traditional productions. Since 2006, the National Archives Podcasts[217] has been bringing the stories contained in its archives to the general public. Early episodes were mainly recordings of university lectures and seminars, but as the medium evolved, so did the language and content of individual episodes. The platform now offers audio insight based on archival documents, as well as transcripts and detailed documentation. This is a perfect example of how academic podcasts have evolved in the last two decades. In a similar manner, the aforementioned The British Museum Podcast[218] from 2019 explores its collections by devoting episodes to specific artefacts or documents, explained by experts for the audience. Museums are not the only ones entering the podcasting business: some prestigious universities have also committed themselves to this endeavour. In its episodes, the Harvard University Business Review Podcast[219] features interviews with academic authors who have published books on history. In addition to providing insight into historical issues, the series also offers an opportunity for the audience to become familiar with developments in academic research. As an alternative, the Stanford Historical Society Podcast[220] periodically publishes recordings of lectures by its professors, addressing historical topics ranging from ancient to contemporary times.

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[217] The National Archive website: https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/category/podcasts-2/.

[218] The British Museum podcast website: https://www.britishmuseum.org/the-british-museum-podcast.

[219] Harvard Business Review podcast: https://hbr.org/podcasts.

[220] Stanford Historical Society podcast: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/stanford-historical-society/id385664533.

These podcasts share one thing in common: the tone and seminar setting used in each episode. For an ordinary person, this content - which can last up to an hour - may be challenging to comprehend due to its academic and rigid language. Of course, much depends on the oratorical skills of the host: in most cases, these are professors or experts who are used to disseminating their research to the public. It is possible, however, to use a form of "dramatisation" of the narrative as an alternative to the academic setting. This should not be confused with a romanticisation of the content in which historical events serve as a backdrop for themes of intrigue and love that may appeal to a general audience. For example, in movies or television series, the history is embellished with non-existent facts in order to enhance the drama. It is this form of historical popularisation that is most frequently criticized by the academia, as it is not concerned with historical accuracy or reporting history as it was. The accounts described above, however, are more likely to fall into the realm of fiction. It is fiction that makes use of elements and aspects of the past in order to lend a sense of wonder to the story. The ultimate goal is to entertain, not educate.

Rather, the term "dramatisation" describes the interpretation of history in almost a "theatrical" manner. Content from academic sources is not rehash or transformed into something other than what it is. History remains as it happened; the characters utter speeches that are attested and confirmed in the sources. In this case, the interpretation of the characters and the use of sounds and noises contribute to the *pathos* of the story. To some extent this is what was tried with *Matronae*: each voice represents a character, interpreted according to feelings and emotions required by the text; the noises of the horses, or of the blade entering Porcia's thigh make the narrative more realistic and truer. Ultimately, this project aims to educate the audience about these stories, allowing them to discover the characters hidden behind the traditional historical narrative. It is, however,

presented as "dramatic" interpretation of the story, which provides more intrigue to the listener and allows the audience to feel closer to the story.

A historical podcast's ability to interpret events can be its greatest strength; however, it is also its most significant challenge.

5.4   New challenges and new opportunities

The popularisation of historical events through new *media* continues to be a relatively unexplored subject in academia. According to many academics, the *medium* has both limitations and critical aspects that do not balance its advantages. But does this really hold true?

As previously reported the biggest critical issue for a Public History podcast is the credibility and reliability of its content. Podcasting is presented as an open *medium* that can accommodate any type of storytelling: due to the ease and accessibility of new technologies, anyone can create their own podcast. In spite of this, not all podcasts adhere to the appropriate level of historiographical rigour appropriate to their subject matter. The study of textual and non-textual sources ensures such veracity. Although historical interpretation in podcasts respects the dynamic language of the technology, it must be primarily objective and supported by academic documentation at every stage. There is a clear distinction between a reputable Public History podcast and a fraudulent one when there is transparency in the research process and in the documentation used to write the content. It is at several points in *Matronae* that the authors describe the research that was conducted, starting with ancient historiographers, and concluding with modern sources. During the episodes themselves, it is mentioned when a particular passage is a direct quotation (even if translated) from ancient sources: the non-narrated parts are a spoken

transposition of the texts of Livy, Dionysius, Plautus, and many other authors who recounted their historical period in their works. In addition, precise bibliographical references are given for each episode. Although this was also intended for episode descriptions on the various podcasting platforms, due to space constraints, it was decided to reserve this information for the podcast web pages only. The episode transcripts give the exact bibliographical references following the quoted passage. Finally, the last section of each web page is reserved for text bibliographical references. It is certainly important to be transparent regarding the documentation that is used to support the content in order to increase its credibility. Membership in an academic institution-such as a museum or university-further enhances its trustworthiness. In this case, it is also affiliation with an organisation renowned for the subject matter that creates additional value to the content. In spite of these arrangements, podcasts still have difficulty being used in academic productions. A second critical aspect for academics is the manner in which the medium communicates. Like any new *media*, podcasting language does not necessarily meet the rigid parameters desired by the academy. Experts do not view podcasts as a professional product because of their informal and colloquial nature, which also makes them doubt the accuracy of the content. Despite this, it is essential to recognise that each *medium* has its own language: what is suitable for storytelling on paper may not be appropriate for audio, and what is suitable for audio may be an absolute disaster for video. Each *medium* has its own language. And communication is thought out and designed according to the target audience the *medium* wants to reach.

Podcasts are designed to reach the general public. Since it lacks images, the language cannot be monotonous and static. In the case of a podcast, hosts may only be able to rely on the words to convey their message. The listener stays glued to an episode because they know the host is talking to them and them alone. It creates an almost intimate atmosphere

and a trusting relationship between the two parties. Informal language also makes it possible to delve into any topic easily and without oratorical virtuosity, which would only confuse people.

Instead, taking the more practical aspects into consideration, a podcast is a fluid *medium*. This means it has no limitations on space or time: it can be listened to anywhere and at any time. The listener has control over the content production and can thus shape it to his or her listening needs: entertainment or in-depth education.

In conclusion, podcasts are increasingly educational tools, in addition to traditional academy resources. The breadth of topics makes it possible to discover unexplored times, places, and people. This makes it possible to take time out of academic programming and discover something new. In particular, the introduction of these new *media* into academic institutions allows for a revolution to keep up with the times. This revolution is necessary to reach an ever-increasing target audience. All practitioners of the historical discipline, from the *aedi* to Barbero, teach that history must be told and shared with society in order remember and learn from the past. In his work *De Oratore*, Cicero wrote:

> «*Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memmoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis.* »[221]

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[221] Cicerone, *De Oratore,* II, 9, 36. (Translation: «History in truth is the witness of the times, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the messenger of antiquity. »)

Conclusion

Since the completion of this thesis, the podcast has been published for just under a month. As a result, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions based on this short period of time. Nevertheless, looking at the data provided by Spreaker regarding the number of listeners and downloads, the picture is more than encouraging. There are actually two types of statistics that can be accessed through the free plan of the hosting platform. Specifically, the following analysis will be performed on the data for the first three weeks succeeding the launch of the podcast: 21 May to 12 June 2023. In the first graph, the number of downloads per 24 hours is shown, which reflects how many times episodes are listened to per day (*Figure 20*). Spreaker makes also available downloads per episode: the introduction dominated the charts with 208 downloads followed by Sabine and Giulia with 118 and 104 downloads respectively. The second graph indicates the number of listeners who listened to at least one episode on a particular date (*Figure 21*). Unfortunately, the platform does not provide information regarding unique listeners, that is, the total number of listeners of the podcast regardless of the days or episodes they listened to. In the same manner, as with downloads, the data is reset daily: a listener who started the podcast on one day and terminated it on another is counted on both dates. Even with this limitation in mind, one certain fact can be drawn from these statistics: on 22 May, the date of the podcast's launch, 110 people listened to it. Considering the amateur nature of the project, this is an impressive number. In general, the podcast follows a similar trend in both statistics: a high peak on the date the podcast was published (22 May), followed by a steady decline. The data shows an increase after the University Ca' Foscari and the VeDPH promoted the podcast on social media (30 May), but then the records are back to lower numbers. It should be noted that, despite a slow decline in the

data, the number of listeners is relatively consistent during the week but decreases during the weekends. It is usual for podcasts to have very high numbers on the day of publication and on significant dates. However, the continual presence of listeners bodes well for the podcast's future. In the three-week period under consideration, a total of 699 downloads were achieved by the podcast.

Matronae's downloads since publication (22 May - 12 June 2023)
The bar chart below illustrates the number of episodes listened to (downloaded) between 22 May and 12 June 2023. The podcast publication date and the social media promotion date are also indicated in the graph. Moreover, by using a coloured legend, it is possible to determine which day of the week had the highest number of downloads. In three weeks the podcast got 699 downloads.
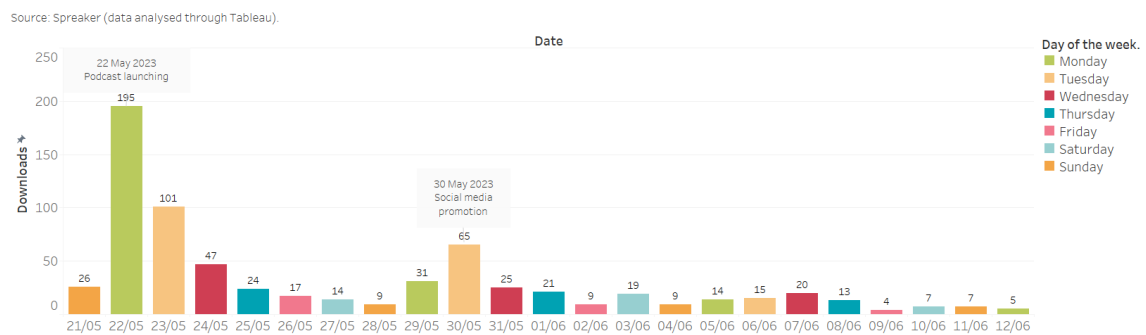
Source: Spreaker (data analysed through Tableau).

Figure 20. Matronae's downloads. Source: Spreaker

Matronae's listeners since publication (22 May - 12 June 2023)
In the bar chart below, it is illustrated how many listeners the podcast reached on a particular day between 22 May and 12 June 2023. The podcast publication date and the social media promotion date are also indicated in the graph. Moreover, by using a coloured legend, it is possible to determine which day of the week had the highest number of downloads.
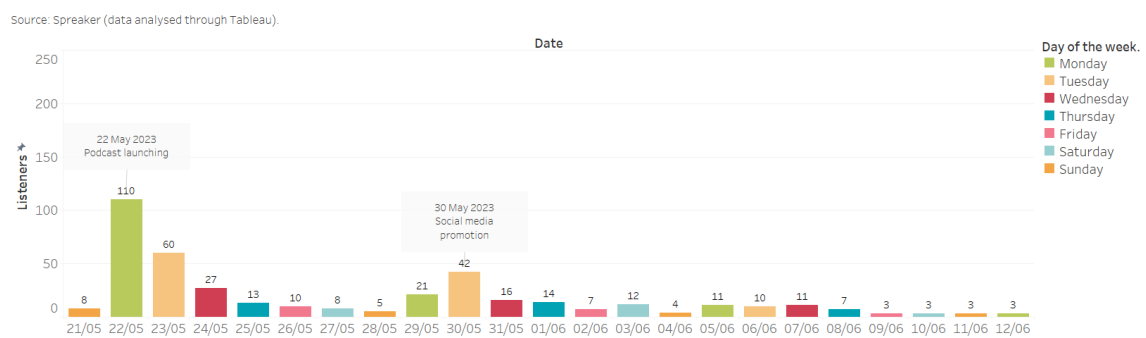
Source: Spreaker (data analysed through Tableau).

Figure 21. Matronae's listeners. Source: Spreaker

Additionally, these numbers represent an excellent starting point in the perspective of continuing this project, whether through a second season incorporating the stories of other *matronae*, or by offering it in English in order to reach a wider audience. Both options are feasible. There is still much to be learned about these women, and no podcasts on the

Italian market are specifically dedicated to this subject. Many of the most popular Roman history podcasts are devoted to a general history of the period. In contrast, the podcast *Matronae* reports these same historical facts as the background to a much more precise and profound issue: the *status* of women. So, it appears that the Italian market would be a good place for the podcast to flourish. A consideration that has also been confirmed by the audience's feedback: the podcast has received an average of five stars on Spotify in addition to the private messages sent to the authors with compliments and thanks for bringing this topic to light.[222]

It is evident from these data that the podcast was received with interest and appreciation by the general public. By combining academic content with the language of the new media, the project has reached the goals it set for itself at the beginning: conveying a reliable and accurate historical narrative to the general public.

A significant amount of research was conducted, and a focus was placed on historical accuracy for the benefit of the listener. It has been shown that historical popularisation has a positive effect on the individual in terms of education and empowerment. It has been millennia since these matrons lived, but the search for examples from the past persists as it did then. As Roman orators used to laud, we still seek the so-called *exempla* in the actions and figures that have stood before us: matrons are only a small fraction of those who have walked the earth, however, from them we can still gain insight into our past. As Italians, our connection to Roman history is even stronger, not only because Western civilisation has its roots in Roman society, but also because monuments and documents from the past remind us that we are directly connected to this culture. Although the social, cultural, and political landscape changed over the centuries, we continue to feel a strong sense of identity with the past. Moreover, as women, we feel the

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[222] Ratings are provided by the listeners themselves. In the time of writing this thesis (19 June 2023), 21 listeners gave the podcast a five-star rating.

responsibility to preserve the history of our female ancestors. The emancipation of women cannot yet be discussed during the Republican era. It will take many centuries for such a movement to take shape. However, it is possible to recognise the evolution of a female identity, which is gaining momentum and demanding respect. History is the foundation of every individual. And podcasts are a suitable *medium* for disseminating this shared identity.

To conclude, podcasts are an alternative format for narrating, conveying, mediating, disseminating, sharing academic research. Through its direct language, academic research can be made more accessible to the general public. This simplicity in communication could, however, allude to a lack of historiographical rigour. A historical podcast must therefore be capable of detaching itself from other *media* that narrate historical events - such as films and television shows, which tell history primarily for entertainment reasons - and asserting its credibility. The podcaster must have the skill to reconcile these two worlds and provide the listener with both an oral history and accurate documentation to verify the narrative or review the detailed subject matter in greater depth. In this regard, a historical podcast, if produced according to Kelley's historical method, may prove to be an effective tool for promoting academic research. Consequently, there is not only a greater level of public involvement but also a potential to revive stories that have been silenced for a long time. The podcast *Matronae* precisely serves this purpose: it provides the public with an accurate account of ancient Rome's women, providing them with a voice once again.

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