Female Interventions in Politics in the *libera res publica*: Structures and Practices

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Abstract

This chapter charts the structures and practices of female interventions in politics in the *libera res publica* (509–27 BCE). Previous scholarship has emphasized the efflorescence of female political activity in the first century BCE. Yet Greek and Roman authors retrojected such activity into their histories of early Rome: mytho-historical paradigms are the intercession of the Sabine women and of Veturia with Coriolanus. Furthermore, female benefactions saved Rome from financial and military crises in the fourth and third centuries BCE. For such interventions, women received enduring privileges and status symbols. Moving beyond previous scholarship, I argue that the interventions of senatorial women like Servilia, Iulia, Terentia, Hortensia, and Octavia were not novel, but a manifestation of a long tradition of women seizing political initiative. This chapter outlines and evaluates some of the structures of female interventions—the *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles—and their practices—intercession, benefactions, and participation in family *consilia*. Through numerous formal and informal initiatives, inside and outside of the *domus*, women proactively engaged in the *res publica*.

Keywords

Roman women – politics – *res publica* – *ordo matronarum* – matronal meetings – religious roles – intercession – benefactions – family *consilia*

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So Terentia—who was generally neither of a mild nor undaring nature, but an ambitious woman, and, as Cicero says himself, more likely to participate in his political affairs than to share with him her domestic affairs—told him this [interpretation of the omen] and incited him against the men.¹

I see you [Terentia] are taking on every burden; I fear you may not endure, but I see everything is dependent upon you.²

When he [Brutus] takes his mother's [Servilia] counsel, or even her prayers, why should I interfere?³

And when I began to speak on what should have been done ... your friend [Servilia] exclaimed: "Truly, I've never heard anyone say that!" I restrained myself. ... (Moreover, Servilia promised to arrange that the grain commission be removed from the senatorial decree.)⁴

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- 1 Plut. *Cic.* 20.3 (Cicero and Terentia, during his consulship in 63): ἡ δὲ Τερεντία—καὶ γὰρ οὐδ' ἄλλως ἦν πράξις τις οὐδ' ἄτολμος τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ φιλότιμος γυνὴ καὶ μάλλον, ὥς αὐτὸς φησιν ὁ Κικέρων, τῶν πολιτικῶν μεταλαμβάνουσα παρ' ἐκείνου φροντίδων ἢ μεταδιδούσα τῶν οἰκιακῶν ἐκείνῳ—ταῦτά τε πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔφρασε καὶ παρώξυνεν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας. All translations are my own. Latin from PHI Latin Texts and Greek from the TLG. Many thanks to Lovisa Brännstedt, Harriet Flower, Tom Hillard, Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, Brad Jordan, and Irene Selsvold for feedback on earlier iterations of this chapter. I am grateful to Lea Beness, Harriet Flower, Tom Hillard, Josiah Osgood, Francesca Rohr Vio, Cristina Rosillo-López, Catherine Steel, and Kathryn Welch for conversations on Roman women. All errors remain my own. All dates are BCE. All magistracies: Broughton 1951; 1952. Research funded by the Swedish Research Council (2019-06370).
- 2 Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.3 (Cicero to Terentia, during his exile, October 58): *omnis labores te excipere video; timeo ut sustineas, sed video in te esse omnia.*
- 3 Cic. *Att.* 15.10 (Cicero to Atticus, June 44): *matris consilio cum utatur vel etiam precibus, quid me interponam?* Cf. Cic. *Ad Brut.* 26.1 on this relationship between Servilia and Brutus.
- 4 Cic. *Att.* 15.11.2 (Cicero to Atticus, Servilia's *consilium* at Antium, June 44): *cumque ingressus essem dicere quid oportuisset ... exclamat tua familiaris "hoc vero neminem umquam audiui!" ego <me> repressi. ... (etenim Servilia pollicebatur se curaturam ut illa frumenti curatio de senatus consulto tolleretur).* Cf. Asc. 19C on the maternal authority (*materna auctoritas*) Servilia held over her half-brother Cato.

1 Introduction

Were Roman women excluded from politics in the *libera res publica* (509–27)? A cursory glance at the ancient sources suggests so. For example, Livy's Cato expressed outrage at the female lobby against the *lex Oppia* in 195: men were allowing women to engage (*capessere*) in the *res publica* and almost to be involved in the Forum, public meetings (*contiones*), and assemblies (*comitia*)!⁵ In response to Cato, Livy's Valerius claimed that magistracies, priesthoods, triumphs, insignia, gifts, and war spoils could not be attained by women, and that elegance, adornment, and fine appearance were their insignia (*insignia feminarum*) and what they gloried in (*gloriantur*).⁶ Similarly, Appian's Hortensia delivered an oration in 42 demanding to know why women should pay a triumphal tax when they did not share in magistracy, honor, command, and the polity (πολιτεία, cf. *res publica*).⁷ Finally, Valerius Maximus asserted that a woman had nothing to do with a public meeting (*contio*) according to ancestral custom and Gellius declared that women had no participation in assemblies (*comitiorum communio*).⁸ So far, so definitive.

Yet we know of women like Servilia, Iulia (mother of Marcus Antonius), Terentia, Clodia, Fulvia, Hortensia herself, and Octavia who loomed large in the politics of the last century of the *libera res publica*, as recent studies have demonstrated, particularly those of Rohr Vio.⁹ Even Syme, typically dismissive of women's roles in Roman society, acknowledged the political ambitions and interventions of Servilia, a woman he described as “possessed of all the rapacious ambition of the patrician Servilii and ruthless to recapture power for her house.”¹⁰ As my opening examples indicate, Cicero himself was incited against

5 Livy 34.2.11.

6 Livy 34.7.8–9.

7 App. *B Civ.* 4.33.

8 Val. Max. 3.8.6; Gell. *NA* 5.19.10.

9 Notable recent studies include: Culham 2004; Froese 2004; Treggiari 2007; 2019; Harders 2008; 2014; Skinner 2011; Brennan 2012; Lejeune 2012; Rohr Vio 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019; forthcoming; Luchelli & Rohr Vio 2014; Osgood 2014; Valentini 2014; Hopwood 2015; Borrello 2016; Buonopane 2016; Foubert 2016; Kunst 2016; Welch forthcoming. Earlier important studies: Münzer 1920; Balsdon 1962; Babcock 1965; Pomeroy 1975, 176–189; Dixon 1983; 1988; Hillard 1983; 1989; 1992; Hallett 1984; Purcell 1986; Hemelrijk 1987; 1999; Tatum 1990; Evans 1991; Bauman 1992; Christ 1993; Dettenhofer 1994; Welch 1995; Glinister 1997; Laurence 1997; Cluett 1998; Günther 2000. See also Osgood in this volume.

10 Syme 1939, 23. For Syme's dismissive attitude: “Influences more secret and more sinister were quietly at work all the time—women and freedmen” (Syme 1939, 384) and “Women have their uses for historians. They offer relief from warfare, legislation, and the history of

the Catilinarian conspirators by Terentia in 63 and relied heavily on her support during his exile in 58. He was also acutely aware of Servilia's influence over Brutus in June 44, was—*mirabile dictu*—silenced by her during her *consilium* at Antium in the same month, and was unsurprised by her promise to alter a senatorial decree. These and other women seized political initiative and intervened in politics, that is, they were active participants in republican political culture. This chapter will chart the structures and practices of such female interventions in politics in the *libera res publica*.

Here I follow Dixon's expansive conception of politics in the Republic as "the pursuit and exercise of real power,"¹¹ Hölkeskamp's reading of "political culture" in the Republic as "a discursive environment in which power is legitimated,"¹² an "extraordinarily dense 'ensemble' of abstract values and ideology, rules and codes of behavior, cultural practices and civic rituals, images, messages, and meanings,"¹³ and Rosillo-López's finding that informal institutions (i.e. informal interactions, political customs, relationships, social networks, and unofficial channels, especially those unregulated by law) provided opportunities for female participation in politics in republican Rome.¹⁴ I define female interventions in politics as women's proactive engagement in the *res publica*, what Cicero and Livy termed *rem publicam capessere*,¹⁵ a definition akin to Kunst's for such interventions, namely "das Eingreifen in eine politisch aufgeladene Situation."¹⁶

Valerius Maximus links such female interventions with sedition (*seditio*) and violence (*violentia*).¹⁷ Were the female interventions of the first century, then, simply symptoms of civil war and dysfunction? Were they novel? In general, previous scholarship has regarded them so, or as a function of increased female "emancipation."¹⁸ Rohr Vio's statement is paradigmatic: "La ragione principale

ideas" (Syme 1986, 168). Cf. less dismissive comments on elite women and their power in Syme 1939, 444–445; 1964, 25–26.

11 Dixon 1983, 91.

12 Hölkeskamp 2010, 55 after Braddick 2005, 69.

13 Hölkeskamp 2010, 67 after Geertz 1973, 452. On republican political culture: Hölkeskamp 2010, esp. 53–75 and his contribution in this volume. Hölkeskamp builds on Meier 1966 and others.

14 Rosillo-López 2017, esp. 16–18, 221–222.

15 Cic. *Att.* 16.7.7; *Cael.* 72; *De or.* 2.106; *Fam.* 1.9.18; *Off.* 1.71–72; *Sest.* 23; Livy 3.69.5, 34.2.11.

16 "Intervention in a politically charged situation" (Kunst 2016, 200).

17 Val. Max. 3.8.6.

18 E.g., Syme 1939, 12, 444–445; 1964, 25, 135 (individual cases and emancipation); Pomeroy 1975, 149–189 (with precedents); Dixon 1983, esp. 91, 109–110; cf. 1988, 168–203 (on mothers and sons); Hillard 1983; 1989; 1992, esp. 39–40, 55; Evans 1991, 13–17 (with precedents); Bauman 1992, 60–61; Christ 1993; Cluett 1998, esp. 67–68, 77–79; Culham 2004, esp. 155–158;

dell'ingresso delle donne nella politica romana è ... l'eccezionalità del tempo dei conflitti intestini.”¹⁹ Yet later Greek and Roman authors retrojected female interventions into their histories of early Rome: famous examples include the intercession of the Sabine women and that of Veturia and Volumnia with Coriolanus.²⁰ Now, these examples may have been merely artificial precedents for female interventions in the first century, forged to provide an aura of authority and legitimacy for the novelty of “le iniziative femminili” of women like Terentia and Servilia, as suggested by Rohr Vio.²¹ But what if there were various structures and practices of such interventions that existed long before these women were born? According to Livy, there were several instances in the fourth and third centuries when female interventions (viz. benefactions) saved Rome from financial and military crises.²² Appian's Hortensia even invoked one of these instances in her oration against the triumviral tax in 42, namely women's contributions from their jewelry (κόσμοι) in the Second Punic War.²³ Should we dismiss these as anachronistic fancies or as utterly exceptional?

Münzer himself recognized long ago that “die Frauen, die Mütter, Schwestern und Töchter” had decisively intervened (entscheidend eingegriffen) in “das Leben der männlichsten [!] Männer” in the Republic and he spoke of their complete involvement (die ganze Einmischung) in “die Kämpfe der Parteien.”²⁴ More recently, Kunst has mapped three “Formen der Intervention einflussreicher Frauen” in the Republic,²⁵ comprising 1) interventions with female relatives (weiblichen Verwandten) of influential men, 2) interventions with male family members (Männer der Familie), and 3) interventions in public (Öffentlichkeit); these she envisions as part of a “Dimension weiblichen Handelns” she terms “Matronage.”²⁶ Broadly, Kunst interprets the majority of interven-

Froese 2004; Sumi 2004, 196–197; Milnor 2005, 1; Brennan 2012, esp. 363 (with precedents); Osgood 2014, esp. 47; Cenerini & Rohr Vio (eds.) 2016 (and the contributions therein esp. Manzo 2016); Rohr Vio 2016; 2019, 7–16. Notable exceptions: Münzer 1920, esp. 244–245, 362–364, 426–427; Hemelrijk 1987; Dixon 2007, esp. 15–32; Valentini 2012; Kunst 2016; Treggiari 2019, esp. 217–220; Webb 2019; Welch forthcoming.

19 “The principal reason for the entry of women into Roman politics is ... the exceptional nature of the period of internal conflicts” (Rohr Vio 2019, 12).

20 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.45–46, 8.39–54; Livy 1.13, 2.40 with, e.g., Hemelrijk 1987; Brown 1995; Rohr Vio 2019, 13.

21 “Female initiatives” (Rohr Vio 2019, 13).

22 Livy 5.25.8–10, 5.50.7, 24.18.13–14, cf. 34.5.8–10.

23 App. *B Civ.* 4.33. Probably the contributions from *viduae* in 214: Livy 24.18.13–14, 34.5.10.

24 “Women, mothers, sisters and daughters” ... “the life of the manliest men” ... “the struggles of the parties” (Münzer 1920, 426–427). Cf. Münzer 1920, 244–245, 362–364.

25 “Forms of intervention of influential women” (Kunst 2016, 197).

26 “Dimension of female action” (Kunst 2016, 199).

tions as occurring in familial and marital contexts in the *domus*, for example, at events like the *salutatio*, *convivium*, and *consilium*, and through female networks built on family ties and collective religious activity.²⁷ She also traces several examples of what she terms “public” intervention (öffentliche Intervention), including: 1) religious interventions, namely Quinta Claudia’s role in the inaugural procession for Magna Mater in 204, the Vestal Claudia’s intervention in her father Appius Claudius Pulcher’s triumph in 143, Caecilia Metella’s dream in 90, and the Vestals’ interpretation of an omen in 63; 2) political interventions, notably the female lobby against the *lex Oppia* in 195 and Hortensia’s oration of 42; 3) pleas for mercy (Gnadengesuche), especially during the triumphal proscriptions; and, 4) the public, political activity of women like Fulvia.²⁸ Kunst concludes that the majority of these interventions were in the form of a plea (die Bitte; cf. *supplicatio*)—a vital aspect of republican political culture for men and women,—that such pleas could, at times, be framed as a demand (Aufforderung), and that interventions encoded as pleas were viewed as a legitimate form of social participation (gesellschaftlichen Teilhabe) for women.²⁹ There were, then, many structures (female networks, domestic contexts) and practices (religious activity, pleas) of female interventions before Servilia.

But this image is somewhat inchoate, for pleas were not the only, nor necessarily the most important, practice of female interventions, nor was the *domus* always the primary structure for these. In this chapter, I outline and evaluate additional structures of female interventions, namely the *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles, and their practices, namely intercession (including pleas), benefactions, and participation in family *consilia*. My primary focus will be on interventions by elite women (senatorial and to some extent equestrian), as these women possessed various resources (cultural, economic, social, and symbolic capital) that enabled them to participate in republican political culture, and as they were related by birth or marriage to the men who could hold magisterial offices and commands.³⁰ Regarding economic capital, elite women could control substantial property, for example, the prop-

27 Kunst 2016, 200–205, esp. 200–201.

28 Kunst 2016, 205–209.

29 Kunst 2016, 209–213. Cf. Manzo 2016 who focuses on pleas and female voices in the first century and Rohr Vio 2019 who focuses on women and politics in the late Republic and locates their political actions in either private or public contexts and spaces.

30 On these women, see esp. Dixon 1983; 2007; Hemelrijk 1999; Culham 2004; Valentini 2012; Rohr Vio 2019; Treggiari 2019; Webb 2019; Welch forthcoming.

erty in their dowries,³¹ inheritances,³² personal effects,³³ and *peculium*,³⁴ and were Roman citizens registered in the census;³⁵ property (or the lack thereof) could greatly enable (or disable) their participation in public life.³⁶ While elite women could not seek or hold magisterial offices and commands themselves, with their various resources they could influence and support (or undermine) the men who could.³⁷ Cicero's evidence is clear: women like Terentia and Servilia could affect and effect the *res publica*. Moving beyond previous scholarship, I argue that their interventions were not novel, but a manifestation of a long tradition of women seizing political initiative. We will see that women proactively engaged in the *res publica*.

A word or two on source issues before we proceed. Apart from a letter attributed to Cornelia "*mater Gracchorum*," our surviving ancient textual sources attesting female interventions are primarily authored by elite males or by male authors writing for predominantly elite male audiences. Consequently, we are left with veiled representations of elite women, representations colored by elite male biases and concerns. Genre was closely entangled with these representations, that is, authors would employ various female stereotypes or stock characters depending on genre. Regardless of genre, male authors frequently interpreted female activity sexually, to the extent that sexuality plays a role in many representations, and was often used to vilify politically active elite women.³⁸ For these and numerous other reasons, there are complex relationships and tensions between literary representation and the identities and lived experiences of elite (and other) women.³⁹ Thus, great cau-

31 Dowries: e.g., Polyb. 18.35.6, 31.22.4, 31.27 with Evans 1991, 53–88; Saller 1994, 204–224; Treggiari 2002, 323–364, esp. 348–350.

32 Inheritances: e.g., Cato, fr. 158 ORF⁴; Polyb. 31.27.5; Lucil. fr. 519–520, 1350M; Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.107; Livy 39.9.7 with Champlin 1991, esp. 121–124; Pölonen 1999; Cantarella 2016, 422.

33 Personal effects (*res*): e.g., Plaut. *Amph.* 928; *Men.* 801–804; *Trin.* 267; Polyb. 31.26; Lucil. 16.519–20M; *Dig.* 32.100.2, 34.2.13, 34.2.30, 34.2.32.6 with Champlin 1991, 123; Berg 2002; Treggiari 2002, 446–447.

34 *Peculium*: e.g., Plaut. *Cas.* 193–202; *Mostell.* 253 with Treggiari 2002, 363, 381, 445–446. Cf. See *Senatus consultum de Pisone patre* 104–105 with Flower 1998, 164, 169.

35 Women, citizenship, and the census: Cic. *Leg.* 3.7; Livy 3.3.9; *Per.* 59; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.15.6, 5.75.3, 9.25.2 with Hin 2008, 201–204; Northwood 2008, 258, esp. n. 5.

36 E.g., Polyb. 31.26.6–8 with Walbank 1979, 503, 505, 510–511. I delve into these matters in a forthcoming chapter on impoverished senatorial women.

37 Cf. Yakobson in this volume on the non-elite influences on the formal initiatives of office-holders.

38 On these source issues, see esp. Hillard 1989; 1992; Dixon 2001, 16–25; 2004, 56–59, 69–70; Schultz 2006b, 6–9; Milnor 2009.

39 Dixon 2001, 16–25, esp. 24–25.

tion is needed in approaching and assessing male-authored representations of female interventions in politics. Nevertheless, these do provide rich insight into how some men understood and (re)constructed elite women and their lives. The silences, stereotypes, and absences present in our primarily male-authored sources should not preclude women from a history of republican politics, for that would exclude many of the people who shaped Rome itself. Finally, I privilege contemporary republican sources (e.g., Polybius and Cicero) in an attempt to avoid the anachronism present in later sources. However, given the dearth of these, I will turn to later sources as well, for I assume these were not all manufactured *ex nihilo* and may still offer some details of individuals and events from at least the third century onwards.⁴⁰ Instead of viewing these source issues as an insurmountable barrier, in this chapter I consider a wide variety of ancient textual sources and take up Richlin's proposition that women were *necessarily* participants in the cultural systems of Rome.⁴¹

2 Structures

The elite *domus* and *villa* were quintessential structures for women and politics, enabling various interventions, as Foubert, Kunst, Flower, and Rohr Vio have argued.⁴² Therein Servilia planned the future of the *res publica* in her *consilium* of June 44. I do not discount their importance. But if we move outside of these for a moment and look elsewhere, a few other structures appear, including the *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles.

2.1 Ordo matronarum

Elite married women were members of an organized social network, the order of married women (*ordo matronarum*), whose criteria for entry probably included marriage, high social position (rank), and wealth.⁴³ This order com-

40 For similar perspectives: Fantham 2004; Bispham 2006, 32–40; Schultz 2006b, 8–9.

41 Richlin 2014, 11–12. Slightly more pessimistic attitudes: Hillard 1989; 1992; Dixon 2001. Similarly optimistic attitudes: Culham 2004; Schultz 2006b; Dixon 2007 (shift in attitude); Milnor 2009; Richlin 2014; Treggiari 2019.

42 Foubert 2016; Kunst 2016, 198–205; Flower 2018; Rohr Vio 2019, 19–46.

43 Plaut. *Cist.* 22–26; Livy 10.23.10, 34.7.1; Val. Max. 5.2.1; 8.3.3; App. *B Civ.* 4.32–34 with Purcell 1986, 170, 179; Hemelrijk 1987; 1999, 11–12, 202; Bauman 1992, 82–83; Böels-Janssen 1993, 275–281; 2008, 38; Fantham 2011, 171–174; Valentini 2012, 44–81; Hopwood 2015 (without reference to the *ordo*); Webb 2019, 257–258. I have elsewhere theorized that the order may have comprised the wives of the privileged 1800 equestrians with a public horse (*equites equo publico*) in the middle Republic, for these numbers are remarkably close (1400

prised at least 1400 wealthy married women by 42, as attested by Valerius Maximus and Appian in their respective accounts of Hortensia's oration against the triumviral tax of 42; it was members of this *ordo* who selected Hortensia to speak for them.⁴⁴ The earliest allusion to something akin to this *ordo* occurs in Plautus' *Cistellaria*, when the *lena* and mother of the *meretrix* Gymnasium compares her own order of freedwomen (or freedpersons) to a kind of network of highborn daughters (*summo genere natae*) and high-ranking married women (*summatis matronae*) who cultivate friendship (*amicitiam colunt*) and are joined together by it (*eam iunctam bene habent inter se*).⁴⁵ While this is not secure evidence for the *ordo*, Plautus and his audience were clearly aware of networks of elite married women. Our earliest secure references to the activities of the *ordo* occur in Livy, when he links it with the foundation of the cult of Pudicitia Plebeia in 296 and with the female lobby against the *lex Oppia* in 195.⁴⁶ Valerius Maximus connects this same *ordo* with the legendary intercession of Veturia, Volumnia, and other married women with Coriolanus and the foundation of the temple of Fortuna Muliebris in ca. 488; similarly in his account Dionysius writes of the most prominent of women (ἐπιφανέσταται τῶν γυναικῶν) accompanying Veturia and Volumnia to Coriolanus, Livy of married

married women and 1800 equestrians with a public horse) and, if the triumviral tax of 42 was designed to make up a shortfall of 200,000,000 drachmae/denarii from the property of 1400 women, many of these women would have had property worth more than the late republican equestrian census qualification or above (100,000 drachmae/denarii): App. *B Civ.* 4.32–33 with Webb 2019, 257 n. 30; forthcoming. Note especially that when the triumvirs revised the tax, they imposed it upon 400 women and then *all* men who possessed more than 100,000 drachmae/denarii: App. *B Civ.* 4.34. How the *plebiscitum reddendorum equorum* of ca. 129 may have affected the membership of the *ordo* is uncertain.

44 Val. Max. 8.3.3 (name: *ordo matronarum*); App. *B Civ.* 4.32–34 (membership and nature—*χιλῖαι καὶ τετρακοσίαι γυναῖκες* [1400 women], *μάλιστα πλοῦτος* [the most wealth], *γυναῖκες τοιαίδε* [such women], *γένος καὶ τρόπος* [birth and custom]; selection—*προχειρίζω*) with Hopwood 2015.

45 Plaut. *Cist.* 22–26 with Fantham 2011, 157–174, esp. 169–174; Stockert 2012, 91. The *ordo* mentioned by the *lena* is one of freedwomen (or freedpersons): Plaut. *Cist.* 23 (*hic ordo*), 33 (*noster ordo*), 38 (*nos libertinae sumus, et ego et tua mater, ambae*) with Fantham 2011, 159, 169–174. Cf. collective activity by *libertinae* in 217: Livy 22.1.18 with Fantham 2011, 172. Plautus does not explicitly mention an *ordo matronarum*, but the comparison between the *ordo* of freedwomen/freedpersons and the highborn daughters and high-ranking *matronae* is suggestive, especially as the latter cultivate and are joined by *amicitia*. For an *ordo libertinus/libertinorum* in the Republic: Cic. *Cat.* 4.16; *Phil.* 2.3; *Verr.* 2.1.124; Cicero, *Comment. pet.* 29 with Treggiari 1969, 162–168; Ryan 1998, 146; MacLean 2018, 17, 94.

46 *Ordo* in 296: Livy 10.23.10 with Oakley 2005, 245–259. Pudicitia Plebeia episode: Palmer 1974, 123–125; Nathan 2003; Treggiari 2019, 20. *Ordo* in 196: Livy 34.7.1 with Briscoe 1981, 60–62. Abrogation of *lex Oppia* and *ordo*: Hemelrijk 1987; Webb 2019; forthcoming.

women meeting as a crowd (*matronae frequentes coire*) at Veturia's *domus* and a great company of women (*mulierum agmen*) accompanying her to Coriolanus, and Plutarch of the most eminent (δοκιμώταται) women—including Valeria who he describes as having glory (δόξα) and honor (τιμή) in the city (πόλις)—approaching Coriolanus' mother and wife, although these authors do not mention an *ordo* explicitly.⁴⁷

Members of this *ordo* and/or wealthy married women had particular privileges and status symbols, including unrestricted movement in Rome, the use of the two-wheeled carriage (*carpentum*) and the four-wheeled carriage (*pilentum*) for religious and secular purposes in Rome, the use of the insignia of ears/earrings (*aurium insignia*), the distinction of the fillet (*vittae discrimen*), gold trimmings/borders (*aurea segmenta*), purple clothing (*purpurea vestis*), and possibly funerary orations (*laudationes*).⁴⁸ According to Diodorus Siculus, Livy, Valerius Maximus, and Plutarch, many of these were honors granted by senatorial decree to married women and/or the *ordo* for their interventions, notably for their intercession with Coriolanus and their benefactions during financial and military crises in the fourth century, namely a financial contribution for a votive *donum* for Delphic Apollo in 395 and a ransom for the Gauls in 390, all of which came from their jewelry.⁴⁹ Whether or not these episodes and explanations are mere aetiological speculation, these authors projected the existence of a network of elite married women into Rome's distant past, a network distinguished by its privileges and status symbols, suggesting the antiquity of something akin to the *ordo*. Critically, the interventions of these married women were publicly honored: they were effective, legitimate, and laudable.

Once the existence of such a network (or networks) is acknowledged, we can entertain the possibility that it lay behind some of the collective actions (e.g., mourning, benefactions, religious activity, lobbies) of married women throughout the Republic, and was one of the central structures enabling their interventions.⁵⁰

47 Val. Max. 5.2.1 (explicitly *matronarum ordo*). Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.39–54; Livy 2.40; Plut. *Cor.* 33–34 with Ogilvie 1965, 334.

48 Status symbols and privileges: Cic. *De or.* 2.44; Diod. Sic. 14.116.9; Livy 5.25.9, 5.50.7; Val. Max. 5.2.1; Plut. *Cam.* 8.3–4; *De mul. vir.* 1; Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 142L, 225L, 282L; CIL VI 31075 with Hemelrijk 1987, 222–223, 229–230; 1999, 11; Hillard 2001; Berg 2002, 43; Hudson 2016; Webb 2019; forthcoming; Östenberg forthcoming.

49 Diod. Sic. 14.116.9 (Gauls); Livy 5.25.9 (Apollo), 5.50.7 (Gauls), 34.5.9 (Gauls); Val. Max. 5.2.1 (Coriolanus); Plut. *Cam.* 8.3–4 (Apollo); Zonar. 7.21 (Apollo) with Ogilvie 1965, 684, 741; Webb 2019; forthcoming.

50 E.g., for such collective actions in Livy alone: Livy 2.7.4, 2.16.7, 2.40.1, 3.48.8, 5.25.9, 5.50.7,

2.2 *Matronal Meetings*

With this network in mind, two instances of organized matronal meetings in the Republic are worth (re)consideration. Firstly, Livy describes a *coetus* (meeting) of married women in 395, whose purpose was to consider a financial contribution for the votive *donum* for Delphic Apollo, as there was not enough gold in the public treasury to produce an adequate one; in this meeting, convened to consider the matter (*matronae coetibus ad eam rem consultandam habitis*), the married women promised gold to the military tribunes by a communal decree (*communi decreto pollicitae tribunis militum aurum*), and subsequently delivered all their (presumably gold) jewelry to the public treasury (*omnia ornamenta sua in aerarium detulerunt*).⁵¹ Secondly, Livy records another meeting of married women in 207, convoked on the Capitoline by the edict of a curule aedile (*aedilium curulium edicto in Capitolium convocatae*), again to discuss a financial contribution for a *donum*, in this case to expiate a prodigy (*prodigium*) concerning Iuno Regina that pertained to married women according to the *haruspices*. This meeting involved all married women living in the city of Rome or within ten miles thereof: this was no small affair! At this meeting, married women delegated twenty-five from among themselves (*ipsae inter se quinque et viginti delegerunt*) to whom they should bring a contribution from their dowry (*stips ex dotibus*); from these contributions a *donum* of a gold bowl (*pelvis aurea*) was made and carried to the Temple of Iuno Regina in the Aventine.⁵² What is striking about Livy's accounts of these meetings is that they suggest married women a) had the capacity to hold formal meetings without male oversight, b) had a collective decision-making process, c) had the authority to issue—presumably binding—communal decrees (*decreta communia*) pertaining to married women,⁵³ and d) could delegate responsibility for important financial tasks to meeting attendees.⁵⁴ In both instances, the Senate and magistrates respected these meetings and recognized their process and outcomes: I am reminded in both instances of senatorial consultation of sacerdotal *collegia*. Moreover, in the first instance of 395, a thankful Senate voted an honor

5.52.11, 6.4.2, 10.23.4–9, 21.62.8, 22.1.18, 22.7.7, 22.55.4–6, 22.56.4–5, 24.18.13–14, 25.12.15, 26.9.7–8, 27.37.7–10, 27.50.5, 27.51.9, 29.14.10–12, 34.1.5, 34.2.10, 34.5.3–10, 34.6.8–9, 15. Cf. Fantham 2011, 171–173.

51 Livy 5.25.8–9 with Weissenborn 1865, 312; Ogilvie 1965, 684 (with no comment on the *coetus*). Cf. Plut. *Cam.* 8.3–4; Zonar. 7.21.

52 Livy 27.37.7–10 with Weissenborn 1863, 92–93; Boyce 1937; Hänninen 1999b, esp. 41–51; Schultz 2006b, 34–37, 44, 135, 144.

53 Cf. *decretum commune* in Livy 36.20.3, 37.6.2.

54 Cf. a meeting of the equestrians on the Capitoline and their delegation to the consuls and Senate in 58: Cass. Dio 38.16.2–3 with Hall 2014, 45.

(viz. issued a senatorial decree) for the married women for their munificence (*honoremque ob eam munificentiam ferunt matronis*), namely, that they might use four-wheeled carriages for religious rites and games and two-wheeled carriages for festal and non-festal days (*ut piletis ad sacra ludosque, carpentis festo profestoque uterentur*).⁵⁵ Such a decree to married women offers additional substantiation for the *ordo matronarum*. As with the *ordo*, the sources attest to the efficacy, legitimacy, and laudability of this structure (matronal meetings) of female intervention.

Beyond these two meetings, Livy recounts an earlier event in 217 when the Senate decreed that after money had been collected by married women, each contributing as much as was appropriate, they should bring it as a *donum* to the Temple of Iuno Regina and a *lectisternium* should be held (*decretum est ... matronaeque pecunia conlata quantum conferre cuique commodum esset donum Iunoni reginae in Aventinum ferrent lectisterniumque fieret*), and this collection suggests further meetings and organization.⁵⁶ Additionally, the selection of Sulpicia by ten married women (themselves chosen by lot from a hundred married women) to dedicate a statue for Venus Verticordia ca. 216/215 (or perhaps earlier in 237 or 224) and the selection of Quinta Claudia for a leading role in the inaugural procession for Magna Mater in 204 feasibly entailed similar meetings and decrees.⁵⁷ Pliny relates how this Sulpicia was the first to be judged the most

55 Livy 5.25.8–9.

56 Livy 22.1.17–18 with Weissenborn 1872, 151; Fantham 2011, 172.

57 Sulpicia: Val. Max. 8.15.12; Plin. *HN* 7.120; Solin. 1.126. Quinta Claudia: Cic. *Cael.* 34; *Har. resp.* 27; Livy 29.14.12; Plin. *HN* 7.120. On these selections: Flower 2002, 162–166; Schultz 2006b, 144–145; Fantham 2011, 172–173; Webb 2019, 260–261. The date of Sulpicia's selection is uncertain. Pliny's account in *HN* 7.120 (*semel ... Sulpicia ... iterum ... Claudia*) suggests it occurred prior to the selection of Quinta Claudia in 204. If Quintus Fulvius Flaccus, consul of 237, was Sulpicia's husband, as is generally supposed, then her selection feasibly occurred during one of his consulships in 237, 224, 212, and 209 or during his urban praetorships in 215 and 214: Münzer 1931, 817. A date ca. 216/215 is attractive, as Flaccus was co-opted into the pontifical college in 216, the Vestals Floronia and Opimia were convicted of *stuprum* and died in 216, Flaccus was urban praetor in 215, the temple of Venus Eryx on the Capitoline was dedicated in 215, and the *lex Oppia* was passed in 215: Livy 22.57.1–6 (Floronia and Opimia); 23.21.7 (co-optation of Flaccus); 23.30.13–14, 18 (Venus of Eryx, Flaccus as urban praetor); 34.1.1–3 (*lex Oppia* passed). Women and their actions were in focus ca. 216/215. Cf. Köves 1963, 340–342 (216); Pomeroy 1975, 179, 208; Gruen 1990, 26 n. 109 (216); Palmer 1997, 121–122 (ca. 215). *Contra* ca. 216/215, Livy does not mention the selection of Sulpicia in Books 21–30 (for 219 to 201). However, he may have mentioned it in his lost Book 20, perhaps in his account of the years 237 or 224, that is, for the years of Flaccus' first or second consulships. 237 is also an attractive date, as a Vestal Tuccia was condemned for *incestum* around that year: Livy *Per.* 20. Cf. Schultz 2006b, 200–201 n. 24; Fantham 2011, 172. For prosopographical details and pitfalls: Hillard 2014, 43–46.

sexually virtuous woman by a resolution of the married women (*pudicissima femina semel matronarum sententia iudicata est Sulpicia*), suggesting again that married women had a collective decision-making process.⁵⁸ These meetings, collection, and selections offer us a glimpse at matronal authority and power in the Republic, particularly in matters of religion and property.⁵⁹ Matronal meetings provide corroborating evidence for the existence of an organized social network like the *ordo matronarum* and, indeed, hint at some kind of matronal governing body. Later evidence from the Empire attests to a hierarchical assembly of women or married women (*conventus feminarum/matronarum*) that met on the Quirinal, suggesting some structural continuity in female interventions between Republic and Empire.⁶⁰ To borrow an expression from Dixon, DiLuzio, and Treggiari: these few instances are but “the tip of an iceberg.”⁶¹ Married women must have met frequently in such meetings, discussed and debated numerous matters affecting themselves and the *res publica*, and issued communal decrees. We know the Senate, a meeting of senators, exercised power, but so too did matronal meetings.

2.3 Religious Roles

Women, especially elite ones, held numerous sacerdotal (priestly) and non-sacerdotal roles in the Republic, as demonstrated masterfully by Schultz and DiLuzio.⁶² Pace Livy's Valerius, women held sacerdotal public offices (*sacerdotia*), notably as the three *flaminicae maiores* (*flaminica Dialis*, *Martialis*, and *Quirinalis*, priestess of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus), the *regina sacrorum* (queen of the sacred rites), and the six *virgines Vestales* (Vestal virgins), all prominent and prestigious priesthoods.⁶³ In particular, the patrician *flaminica Dialis* and the patrician and plebeian *Vestales* served as living *exempla* for other women, embodying ideal marital, religious, and sexual behaviors.⁶⁴ Moreover, *flaminicae*, *regina sacrorum*, and *Vestales* (and perhaps the *sacerdos Cereris*, priestess of Ceres) seem to have offered sacrifices on behalf of the People (*pro populo*), a clear indication of their religious authority and capacity.⁶⁵ Beyond priesthoods, women held many non-sacerdotal roles, participating prominently in regular

58 Plin. *HN* 7.120.

59 In these cases, probably *res*, personal effects, and *dos*, dowry.

60 Sen. *De matrimonio* fr. 13.49 Haase; Suet. *Galb.* 5; CIL VI 997 (Quirinal); SHA *Heliogab.* 4.3–4 (Quirinal) with Hemelrijk 1987, 230–231; Valentini 2012, 49–52.

61 Dixon 1983, 108; DiLuzio 2016, 239; Treggiari 2019, 218.

62 Schultz 2006b; DiLuzio 2016.

63 Livy 34.7.8. Priesthoods: DiLuzio 2016, esp. 17–68, 119–239; Webb 2018, 68–70.

64 Schultz 2006b, 141–143; DiLuzio 2016, 47–51, 152; Webb 2019, 260.

65 Schultz 2006b, 135, 143; DiLuzio 2016, 28, 51–52, 68, 109–110.

religious festivals, leading prominent public processions (before the People and with *sacerdotes* and magistrates), hosting rites, dedicating statues, and organizing *dona*, as I have mentioned earlier.⁶⁶ *Sacra publica*, public religious rites, were a prominent domain of female action.⁶⁷ Here I will not readdress the numerous roles and functions of priestesses and other women, but instead focus on key examples of female interventions enabled by their religious roles.

The *Vestales* engaged in numerous interventions in politics in the Republic, as Gallia and DiLuzio have argued.⁶⁸ A few examples follow. Famously, the Vestal Claudia supported her father Appius Claudius Pulcher's illicit triumph in 143, interposing her body between a hostile plebeian tribune (*inimicus tribunus plebei*) and her father by embracing the latter (*patrem complexa*), blocking the former's actions with her bodily sanctity and religious authority, thence allowing her father to complete his triumph.⁶⁹ The Vestal Licinia dedicated an altar, shrine, and ritual couch in a public place on the Aventine without the permission of the People (*iniussu populi*) in 123, which was a possible violation of the *lex Papiria* on such dedications of ca. 179–154; her dedication seems to have been politically motivated and was rapidly declared *non sacrum* by the *pontifices* and thence removed by the urban praetor Sextus Iulius Caesar.⁷⁰ In ca. 69, Cicero recounts how the Vestal Fonteia embraced her brother Marcus Fonteius (akin to the Vestal Claudia), as a public sign of her support during his trial for *repetundae* and appealed to the *fides* of the judges and the Roman People (*germanum fratrem complexa teneat vestramque, iudices, ac populi Romani fidem imploret*); indeed Cicero warns the judges of the religious consequences and peril (*periculosum*) if they reject the supplication (*obsecratio*) of Fonteia, whose prayers (*preces*) kept them safe (*salva*): Fonteia had Vesta on her side.⁷¹ In 63, a different Vestal Licinia, granted (*concedere*) her seat at some gladiatorial games to her relative and close friend (*propinquus et necessarius*) Lucius Licinius Murena, who was campaigning for the consulship of 62, and thereby visibly offered him her political support: this was Vestal endorsement.⁷² During the December rites for Bona Dea in 63, hosted by Terentia at her and Cicero's *domus*, the assembled *Vestales* and married women witnessed an

66 Cf. Schultz 2006b, 139–150.

67 Webb 2019.

68 Gallia 2015, 77–82; DiLuzio 2016, 223–239.

69 Cic. *Cael.* 34 with Gallia 2015, 78; DiLuzio 2016, 225–228; Webb & Brännstedt forthcoming. Cf. Val. Max. 5.4.6; Suet. *Tib.* 2.4.

70 Cic. *Dom.* 136–137 with DiLuzio 2016, 228–231. For the *lex Papiria*: Cic. *Dom.* 127–128 with Elster 2003, 353–354.

71 Cic. *Font.* 46–48 with Ridley 2000, 223; Gallia 2015, 78–79.

72 Cic. *Mur.* 73 with DiLuzio 2016, 231–232.

omen (σημείον) after sacrifices (re-ignition of the ashes and bark on the altar), and the *Vestales* interpreted it as divine support for Cicero's severe approach to the Catilinarian conspirators; it was this interpretation that Terentia relayed to Cicero and with which she presumably incited him against the conspirators.⁷³ These individual acts aside, the *Vestales* could also collectively intercede with magistrates on behalf of men, as they did for Caesar when he was proscribed by Sulla in 82, when by their intercession (along with that of his *maternal* relatives Caius Aurelius Cotta and Mamercus Aemilius Lepidus Livianus), he obtained a pardon (*per virgines Vestales perque Mamercum Aemilium et Aurelium Cottam propinquos et adfines suos veniam impetravit*).⁷⁴ Furthermore, the *Vestales* could be consulted by the Senate along with the *pontifices* on religious matters (probably as members of the pontifical *collegium*), as Cicero indicates they were on the matter of Publius Clodius Pulcher's intrusion into the home of Caesar and Pompeia in the December rites for Bona Dea in 62 (*rem ex senatus consulto ad virgines atque pontifices relatum*); indeed the *Vestales* seem to have participated in the formulation and issue of the pontifical *decretum* wherein Clodius' intrusion was deemed *nefas* (*idque ab iis nefas esse decretum*), a decree which had profound political implications for the *res publica*, including Caesar's divorce of Pompeia.⁷⁵ As is well-known, legal documents, money, and valuables could also be deposited for safety with the *Vestales* at the Temple of Vesta, as famously was Caesar's will and the Treaty of Misenum.⁷⁶ By virtue of their religious roles, *Vestales* had enormous influence in the politics of the *res publica* and adroitly intervened on multiple occasions, even at the risk of their lives and reputations.⁷⁷

Apart from this prestigious priesthood, married women themselves could intervene in politics due to their religious roles. Two examples illustrate this phenomenon well. Polybius recounts how Pomponia, mother of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus and Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiagenus, engaged in a kind of religious lobby on behalf of Asiagenus for his aedilician electoral campaign (ca. 196, but the implied date in the account is earlier); Pomponia reputedly went around to the temples and sacrificed to the gods on his behalf (περιπορευομένην τοὺς νεῶς καὶ θύουσαν τοῖς θεοῖς ὑπὲρ τᾶδελεφού [Africanus' brother

73 Plut. *Cic.* 20.1–3 with DiLuzio 2016, 232–234. Cf. Cass. Dio 37.35.4.

74 Suet. *Iul.* 1.2 with Ridley 2000, 223; DiLuzio 2016, 234–235. Cf. Vell. Pat. 2.41.2; Plut. *Caes.* 1.

75 Cic. *Att.* 1.13.3 with Johnson 2007, 158–160; Gallia 2015, 112; DiLuzio 2016, 89, 212–213. Cf. Cic. *Har. resp.* 37; Plut. *Caes.* 10; Cic. 28–29. For the *Vestales* as members of the pontifical *collegium*: DiLuzio 2016, 119–153, 186, esp. 119, 131, 141, 152, 186.

76 Caesar's will: Suet. *Iul.* 83.1. Pact of Misenum: App. *B Civ.* 5.73; Cass. Dio 48.37.1. Deposition: DiLuzio 2016, 236–238.

77 DiLuzio 2016, 238–239.

Asiagenus]), exhibiting great apprehension (προσδοκία) about the results. Polybius' also represents Pomponia as hoping that both Asiagenus and Africanus would attain the aedileship.⁷⁸ While Polybius' account contains some problems, namely errors regarding the implied dates of Asiagenus' and Africanus' aedileships and the brothers' respective ages, Polybius clearly demonstrates that (he thought) at least one elite mother was heavily engaged and invested in her sons' political careers. Here we can imagine that Pomponia was not only seeking divine support, but leveraging and mobilizing her networks, perhaps the *ordo matronarum* itself. Around a century later, in 90, during the Social War, Caecilia Metella, daughter of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Balearicus, had a dream that resulted in the restoration of the Temple of Iuno Sospita (in Rome or Lanuvium—location uncertain) by senatorial decree (*Caeciliae Q. filiae somnio modo Marsico bello templum est a senatu Iunoni Sospitae restitutum*), according to Cicero who cites the authority of Sisenna.⁷⁹ Obsequens, in his summary of Livy's lost account of 90, recounts details of the dream, namely that Iuno was fleeing (*profugiens*) her temple, because her precincts were being foully desecrated (*immunde sua templa foedarentur*); reputedly the temple had been defiled by the filthy and vile bodily ministrations of married women (*aedem matronarum sordidis obscenisque corporis coinquinatam ministeriis*) and there was even a dog and her litter under the statue of the goddess (*in qua etiam sub simulacro deae cubile canis cum fetu erat*); supposedly Caecilia persuaded the goddess to remain with her prayers (*preces*), cleaned the temple (*commundare*), and thereafter *supplicationes* were held and the temple restored.⁸⁰ Sensational details aside, the Senate's response to Caecilia's dream indicates their acknowledgement of her religious authority and capacity, feasibly gained through her regular participation in religious activity for Iuno and other deities: her dream restored a temple. If Obsequens' (or Livy's) details are not entirely fictive, presumably the Senate trusted Caecilia's account of the purported practices of married women too. As Schultz has argued, the Senate treated Caecilia and her dream with the greatest seriousness, indicating their respect for elite women and the political significance of the dream during the Social War.⁸¹

These various examples indicate that religious roles enabled priestesses and other (particularly elite) women to intervene in politics, on an individual and

78 Polyb. 10.4.4–8 with Walbank 1967, 199–200; Webb 2017, 158–159.

79 Cic. *Div.* 1.99 with Hänninen 1999a; Schultz 2006a; 2006b, 26–28, 40, 42, 44. Cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.4; Iul. Obseq. 55.

80 Iul. Obseq. 55 with Hänninen 1999a; Schultz 2006a; 2006b, 26–28, 40, 42, 44; Flower 2015, 311–314; Kragelund 2018.

81 Schultz 2006a; 2006b, 27–28. Cf. similarly Flower 2015, 311–314.

collective basis. Cicero's account of the Vestal Fonteia provides one possible answer for why the Senate and others accepted such interventions: women, priestesses and others, propitiated the immortal gods with their prayers, hands outstretched on behalf of the People, thence the safety of Rome was in these same hands.⁸² Who, then, would dare reject their supplication?

Outside of the *domus*, the *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles provided women with numerous possibilities for interventions in politics. In general, our sources represent these structures as effective and legitimate, and, on occasion, laudable. While women could not be magistrates, these structures—and probably others—enabled them to engage with these same magistrates and effect significant change. Of note are the *decreta* issued at a matronal meeting and by *Vestales* along with the *pontifices*: these mirror the *consulta* of the Senate and *decreta* of sacerdotal *collegia*, suggesting the formal, institutional nature of female structures, matronal and sacerdotal. But this is just the apex of the iceberg. By turning now to the practices enabled by these and other structures, we shall glimpse a little more.

3 Practices

Kunst has argued that “die Bitte” was the primary practice of female interventions in politics in the Republic. Certainly, some interventions in politics took the form of pleas or supplications, particularly in the *domus* with female relatives of influential men or with male relatives or before magistrates and judges. Yet the *domus*, the *ordo*, matronal meetings, and religious roles enabled more than just pleas. In what follows, I outline three practices of female interventions emergent from, or attendant on, these structures, including intercession (encompassing pleas and more), benefactions, and participation in family *consilia*.

3.1 *Intercession*

Female intercession—women interceding on behalf of others—is intertwined with the history of the *res publica*. Three examples of intercession that are not *just* pleas follow, for these broaden our understanding of the practices of female interventions.

I begin with the account of Veturia and Volumnia's legendary intercession with Coriolanus, which feasibly goes back to Fabius Pictor, as he was one of

82 Cic. *Font.* 48.

Livy's sources for his account.⁸³ According to Livy, it was not Roman envoys (*legati*) or priests (*sacerdotes*) who moved Coriolanus to abandon his siege of Rome in ca. 488, but his own mother Veturia and wife Volumnia, who advanced to meet him in a company of women (*mulierum agmen*).⁸⁴ Regarding the company, Livy writes that these women were defending (*defendere*) the *Urbs* with their prayers (*preces*) and tears (*lacrimae*).⁸⁵ Prior to their delegation, elite married women had reputedly gathered (*coire*) at the *domus* of Veturia and Volumnia, led perhaps by a Valeria, presumably requesting their intercession with Coriolanus, as in Dionysius', Plutarch's (with alternate names for Coriolanus' mother and wife), and Appian's later accounts.⁸⁶ Here we catch a glimpse of these authors' understanding of the practices of a female network like the *ordo* and their matronal meetings. When Coriolanus noticed his mother in the company of women, he approached her for an embrace. At this point, her prayers changed to anger (*in iram ex precibus versa*). Rather than pleading with him, she rejected his embrace and reproached him in an oration full of rhetorical questions and emotionally charged statements: did he come as an enemy (*hostis*) or a son (*filius*); is she a captive (*captiva*) or a mother (*mater*) in his camp (*castrum*); has her long life (*longa vita*) and unhappy old age (*infelix senecta*) led her to see her son as an exile (*exsul*) and enemy; will he devastate this land (*terra*) that bore (*gignere*) and nourished (*alere*) him; did his anger (*ira*) not fall when he entered the territory (*fines*); when he saw Rome did it not come to mind (*succurrere*) that his *domus*, *penates*, mother, wife (*coniunx*), and children (*liberi*) were within these walls (*moenia*); had she no son, she would have died a free woman (*libera*) in a free country (*libera patria*); nothing was more repulsive (*turpius*) or more miserable (*miserius*) for her; even though she was most miserable (*miserrima*), it would not be for long (i.e. she would die soon); and if Coriolanus continued only an untimely death (*immatura mors*) or a long slavery (*longa servitus*) awaited her.⁸⁷ Livy represents this speech and the subsequent embraces of his wife and children, along with the tears (*fletus*) and lamentation (*comploratio*) of the company of women for their country (*patria*) as breaking or defeating (*frangere*) Coriolanus.⁸⁸ Veturia's intercession was not a plea per se, but a reproach and dissuasion that centered Coriolanus' family,

83 FRHist 1 F16 = Livy 2.40.10–11 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335; Cornell et al. (eds.) 2013, 33.

84 Livy 2.40.3 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335.

85 Livy 2.40.2 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335.

86 Livy 2.40.1 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335. Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.39–54; Plut. *Cor.* 33–37; App. *Ital.* 5.7–13.

87 Livy 2.40.5–9 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335.

88 Livy 2.40.9 with Ogilvie 1965, 334–335.

familial roles, emotional ties, and her own emotions.⁸⁹ Now, I am not arguing that this speech (or even the episode) is in any way historical. Instead, I suggest that here we find a model of female intercession characterized by reproach and dissuasion, a model recognized by Livy in his day, and one we find at work in at least two other intercessions.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for such intercessions is the letter(s) of Cornelia "*mater Gracchorum*" to her youngest son the future plebeian tribune Caius Sempronius Gracchus, wherein she aims at dissuading him from his political goals and competing for the plebeian tribunate before her death. Two reputed excerpts from her letter(s) survive in the manuscripts of Cornelius Nepos (fr. 59 Marshall). The date and authorship of these excerpts is not secure: there is considerable scholarly disagreement over whether they are Cornelian and/or post-Gracchan propaganda and over whether they are from the same letter or separate letters by the same or different hands.⁹⁰ Despite these disagreements, scholars tend to date them stylistically to the late second century or to ca. 124 before Caius Sempronius Gracchus' first plebeian tribunate in 123, that is, when Cornelia was a widow.⁹¹ The excerpts are worth examining, for they offer us a potent example of how one elite woman engaged—or was represented as engaging—in the *res publica*:

[First excerpt]

You will say that it is beautiful to take vengeance on personal enemies (*inimici*). This does not seem greater nor more beautiful to anyone than it does to me, but only if it is possible to pursue this with the *res publica* unharmed. But since that cannot be done, may our personal enemies not perish for a long time and for the most part, and may they remain as they are now, rather than that the *res publica* be cast down and perish ...

[Second excerpt]

I would dare to swear a formal oath that, apart from those who killed Tiberius [Sempronius] Gracchus, no personal enemy has delivered so

89 Hallett 2018, 314.

90 For recent discussion and bibliography on the Cornelian letter(s), see Courtney 1999, 135–139; Hemelrijk 1999, 185–188; Hallett 2002, 13–24; 2018; Dixon 2007, 24–32; Roller 2018, 197–232.

91 Style: Hemelrijk 1999, 185–188; Dixon 2007, 27–28. Date of ca. 124: Courtney 1999, 136; Hallett 2002, 15. The date is controversial and I find attractive the putative suggestion of Lea Beness and Tom Hillard that 129 might serve as an appropriate date for the actual composition of such an impassioned letter or for the dramatic context to which it was ascribed. I will not expand on their arguments for that date here.

much trouble and so much hardship to me as you have because of these things; [you] who ought to bear the part of all the children I have ever had, and to take care that I should have the least anxiety in my old age, and that whatever you did, you would wish to please me the most, and that you would consider it *nefas* to do greater things against my judgment, especially to me, to whom a little part of life remains. Cannot even such a short span [of life] relieve [me] from you opposing me and casting down the *res publica*? What end will there be finally? When, if ever, will our family cease being insane? When, if ever, can a measure be set on this matter? When, if ever, will we cease from troubles, desist from both having and causing them? When, if ever, will it [the family] truly feel shame for disturbing and perturbing the *res publica*? But if this cannot possibly happen, seek the tribunate when I am dead; as for me, do what will please you, when I will not perceive it. When I have died, you will sacrifice to me as a parent and you will invoke the parent of the gods/parent god.⁹² At that time, will it not shame you to seek prayers of those gods, whom, while living and present, you considered abandoned and forsaken? May Jupiter himself not permit you to persevere in this, nor permit such madness to enter your mind. And if you persevere, I fear that, by your own fault, you may receive such hardship throughout your whole life that at no time would you be able to please yourself.⁹³

92 The identity of the *deum parens* or *deus parens* is uncertain, perhaps Jupiter (*deum parens*) or Africanus or Cornelia (*deus parens*): Walbank 1985, 122–123; Courtney 1999, 138; Hallett 2002, 17; 2010, 360–361; 2018, 316.

93 Nep. fr. 59 Marshall: *dices pulchrum esse inimicos ulcisci. id neque maius neque pulchrius cuiquam atque mihi esse videtur, sed si liceat re publica salva ea persequi. sed quatenus id fieri non potest, multo tempore multisque partibus inimici nostri non peribunt atque, uti nunc sunt, erunt potius quam res publica profligetur atque pereat. ... verbis conceptis deierare ausim, praeterquam qui Tiberium Gracchum necarunt, neminem inimicum tantum molestiae tantumque laboris, quantum te ob has res, mihi tradidisse; quem oportebat omnium eorum, quos antehac habui liberos, partis eorum tolerare atque curare, ut quam minimum sollicitudinis in senecta haberem, utique quaecumque ageres, ea velles maxime mihi placere, atque uti nefas haberes rerum maiorum adversum meam sententiam quicquam facere, praesertim mihi, cui parva pars vitae restat. ne id quidem tam breve spatium potest opitulari, quin et mihi adversere et rem publicam profliges? denique quae pausa erit? ecquando desinet familia nostra insanire? ecquando modus ei rei haberi poterit? ecquando desinemus et habentes et praebentes molestiis desistere? ecquando perpudescet miscenda atque perturbanda re publica? sed si omnino id fieri non potest, ubi ego mortua ero, petito tribunatum; per me facito quod lubebit, cum ego non sentiam. ubi mortua ero, parentabis mihi et invocabis deum parentem. in eo tempore non pudebit te eorum deum preces expetere, quos vivos atque praesentes relictos atque desertos habueris? ne ille sirit Iuppiter te ea perseverare, nec tibi tantam dementia venire in animum. et si perseveras, vereor ne in omnem vitam*

In these excerpts, Cornelia (or “Cornelia”) demonstrates her deep knowledge of Roman politics, her concern for the safety and stability of the *res publica* (mentioned four times), her rejection of zero-sum vengeance on personal enemies, and her ability to reproach and influence her son on political matters. Besides the abundance of highly charged emotional language, these excerpts are rich in religious, legal, and political language (e.g., *inimici*, *res publica*, *deierare*, *verba concepta*, *nefas*, *sententia*, *petere*, *parentare*, *invocare*, *deus*, *preces*, *di*, *Iuppiter*), indicating her reputed knowledge of those areas.⁹⁴ Notably, Cornelia foregrounds religion: her religious roles affected her form of dissuasion. These excerpts reveal that at least one elite woman—and by inference many more—shared (or was represented as sharing) the political struggles of her male relatives and was deeply engaged in their public lives. Based on the similarity of the rhetorical questions and themes, Hallett has argued for some intertextuality between Cornelia’s letter and Veturia’s speech in Livy (cf., e.g., *inimicus* and *hostis*, *senecta*, *res publica* and *patria*, hardship and misery).⁹⁵ Certainly, Veturia and Cornelia are both represented as interceding with their sons through reproach and dissuasion. Even if the excerpts are not genuine, they indicate that an elite woman was expected to engage in the *res publica* and to wield influence over her son(s). In the first excerpt, Cornelia refers twice to the family’s personal enemies, a highly suggestive allusion to politics, for personal enmities were forged through politics.⁹⁶ The second excerpt is also suggestive: here Cornelia outlines the trouble and hardship that Caius Sempronius Gracchus was causing her and admonishes him for not reducing her anxiety in her old age, for not trying to please her, for not considering it *nefas* to pursue his political goals against her judgment, and for opposing her. Moreover, she indicates she did not want to perceive the results of his political goals, which included potential damage to her and to the *res publica* itself. Clearly, Cornelia cared deeply about the *res publica*. Cornelia’s admittedly unsuccessful attempt here to dissuade Caius Sempronius Gracchus from his political goals (zero-sum vengeance, tribunate) is akin to her successful dissuasion of his legislative pursuit of Marcus Octavius, one of the family’s personal enemies, a dissuasion effected through her successful request he withdraw his *rogatio* (*lex*?)

tantum laboris culpa tua recipias, uti in nullo tempore tute tibi placere possis. See Courtney 1999, 135–139; Hallett 2002; 2010, 357–364; 2018.

94 Cf. Courtney 1999, 135–139.

95 Hallett 2002, 19–20; 2018, 313–314.

96 Caius Sempronius Gracchus, competition, and personal enmity: Epstein 1987, 2, 23, 115–116.

Sempronia de abactis of 123.⁹⁷ Beyond such dissuasion, various other sources testify to Cornelia's influence over her sons' education, political advice, and interventions in their political careers.⁹⁸ Plutarch recounts that Cornelia often reproached (ὀνειδίζω) her sons, because the Romans still addressed her as the mother-in-law (πενθερά) of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, and not the mother (μήτηρ) of the Gracchi.⁹⁹ Such a reproach suggests, along with the other evidence, that Cornelia was proactively engaged in her sons' public lives and in the *res publica*.

Finally, I return to Hortensia and her intercession with, and oration before, the triumvirs (Lepidus, Marcus Antonius, Caesar *Divi filius*) on the matter of the triumviral tax on the 1400 members of the *ordo matronarum* in 42. Appian's Hortensia opens her oration by recounting the failure of the elite married women's (γυναικες τοιαίδε) initial mode of intercession, namely to obtain the support of all the triumvirs' female relatives, for they were successful with Octavia and Iulia (mother of Marcus Antonius), but not with Fulvia. Indeed, they were ill-treated (πάσχω) by Fulvia and Hortensia explains that this forced (συνωθέω) them to the forum (ἀγορά). The *ordo* had failed to mobilize support from within. Her oration swiftly pivots to a reproach of the triumvirs for depriving (ἀφαιρέω) the women of their fathers, sons, husbands and brothers, and for now attempting to additionally deprive (προσ αφαιρέω) them of their property (χρήμα), which would reduce them to a condition unworthy (ἀνάξια) of their birth (γένος), custom (τρόπος), and nature (φύσις). After demanding that women be proscribed (προγράφω) if they had wronged the triumvirs, Appian's Hortensia asks why women should share in (κοινωνέω) the punishment (κόλασις) if they had not partaken (μετέχω) in the wrongdoing (ἀδίκημα), especially if they had not voted any of the triumvirs a public enemy (πολέμιος), nor torn down (καθαίρέω) their houses, destroyed (διαφθείρω) an army (στρατός), influenced (ἐπάγω) them against each other, nor prevented (κωλύω) them obtaining magistracy (ἀρχή) and honor (τιμή). (As Rohr Vio has identified, with this question Hortensia dissociated the 1400 married women from their husbands and male relatives, many of whom committed these same acts against the Caesari-

97 Dissuasion: Diod. Sic. 34/35.25.2; Plut. *C. Gracch.* 4.2–3 with Epstein 1987, 115–116; Dixon 2007, 11; Beness & Hillard 2013, 63–64. On the *rogatio* (*lex*?) *Sempronia de abactis* of 123: Rotondi 1912, 308. Plutarch's version of the events in Plut. *C. Gracch.* 4.3 suggests a *rogatio* was withdrawn (ἐπαναίρέω) not a *lex* abrogated. Cf. Dixon 2007, 11.

98 Cornelia and her sons' education: Cic. *Brut.* 104, 211; Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.6; Tac. *Dial.* 28.4–6; Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 1.4–5; Jer. *Ep.* 107.4.6 with Dixon 2007, 18, 24; Beness & Hillard 2013, 63. Political advice and intervention: Nep. fr. 59 Marshall; Diod. Sic. 34/35.25.2; Plut. *C. Gracch.* 4.2–3; 13.2; *Ti. Gracch.* 8.5 with Beness & Hillard 2013, 63–65.

99 Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 8.5.

ans; Hortensia herself was linked affinally to Marcus Porcius Cato and the Caesaricide Marcus Iunius Brutus. Here Hortensia seems to have claimed, perhaps disingenuously, that she and the other women were uninvolved in these “male” actions.¹⁰⁰ As mentioned earlier, Hortensia then asks why women should pay a tax when they did not share in (μετέχω) magistracy (ἀρχή), honor (τιμή), command (στρατηγία), and the polity (πολιτεία). After reminding the triumvirs of female contributions in the Second Punic War, she asks what the triumvirs’ fear (φόβος) is for the country (πατρίς), claims that women will not be inferior to their mothers when it comes to the preservation (σωτηρία) of the same country, but that they will never contribute (εἰσφέρω) to civil wars (εμφύλιοι πόλεμοι), nor assist (συμπράσσω) the triumvirs against each other. The oration closes with a harsh reproach, namely that women did not pay taxes (συμφέρω) in the time of Caesar or Pompeius, nor did Marius or Cinna compel (ἀναγκάζω) them to do so, nor did Sulla, who ruled as a tyrant (τυραννεύω) in the country, yet the triumvirs were saying they were establishing (καθίστημι) the polity.¹⁰¹ Ergo, the triumvirs were worse than tyrants. Despite their resultant anger, the triumvirs reduced the number of women taxed from 1400 to 400. Hortensia’s oration was successful.¹⁰² As Hopwood has argued, Hortensia’s oration amounts to a sustained criticism of not just the triumviral tax, but also their proscription edict and legitimacy itself.¹⁰³ In many ways, this oration, Hortensian or otherwise, bears similarities to Veturia’s oration and Cornelia’s letter(s), full as they are with reproach, rhetorical questions, and themes of family, familial roles, the country (*patria*, πατρίς), and the *res publica* (πολιτεία). Even if Hortensia claimed women did *not* share in the polity, these three elite women were all (represented as being) proactively engaged in the *res publica*. Even more importantly, Hortensia’s oration questions the nature of the *res publica* under the triumvirs, revealing her own claim to superior knowledge and legitimacy. In hindsight, the actions of Hortensia and the *ordo* in 42 could be interpreted as vestiges of the *libera res publica* (soon-to-be *amissa*): their claims to authority and legitimacy were far more traditional than those of the triumvirs.

Numerous additional examples of female intercession in the Republic exist, many of which Kunst and Rohr Vio have enumerated,¹⁰⁴ and many of which

100 Rohr Vio 2019, 192–193. Hortensia’s affinal relations: Zmeskal 2009, 135–136, 256. Her husband Quintus Servilius Caepio adopted Marcus Iunius Brutus.

101 App. *B Civ.* 4.32–33 with Hopwood 2015, esp. 309–312.

102 App. *B Civ.* 4.34.

103 Hopwood 2015, 311–312.

104 Kunst 2016; Rohr Vio 2019.

were pleas, notably that of Iulia, mother of Marcus Antonius,¹⁰⁵ Tertia Mucia, wife of Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus and Marcus Aemilius Scaurus,¹⁰⁶ and that of the addressee of the *laudatio Turiae*.¹⁰⁷ I will not address them here. Beyond pleas, the three examined examples indicate that female intercessions could take the form of a reproach or dissuasion, and that this was recognized by Livy, the author of the Cornelian letters, and Appian. Moreover, in the cases of Veturia and Hortensia, the *ordo* and matronal meetings feasibly enabled these intercessions, while Cornelia's maternal and religious roles enabled hers. Such practices were political and powerful.

3.2 Benefactions

As we have seen, female benefactions occurred throughout the *res publica*. The *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles were intertwined with such benefactions, for these structures provided a framework for, and enabled the organization of, collections and dedications. Women engaged in both private and public benefactions, although public benefactions appear to have been limited to some degree to the religious sphere.¹⁰⁸

One of the earliest examples of such benefactions is the legendary benefaction by the Vestal Gaia Taracia/Fufetia of the Campus Tiberinus/Martius to the Roman People in ca. 449, reported by Pliny, Plutarch (naming her as Tarquinia), and Gellius.¹⁰⁹ For her benefaction, Pliny reports the Senate voted (decreed) her the honor of a statue, which she could place wherever she wished, while Gellius, drawing on *antiquae annales*, suggests a *lex Horatia* was passed that granted her many honors, particularly the right of giving testimony and the right to withdraw from her priesthood and marry at the age of forty.¹¹⁰ Gellius explicitly states these honors were thanks (*gratia*) for her munificence (*munificentia*) and benefaction (*beneficium*). Now these accounts must be aeti-

105 For example, Iulia's successful intercession for her brother Lucius Iulius Caesar when he was proscribed in 43: Plut. *Ant.* 20.5–6; App. *B Civ.* 4.37 with Kunst 2016, 208; Rohr Vio 2019, 194–196.

106 For example, Tertia Mucia's successful intercession for her son Marcus Aemilius Scaurus after Actium presumably ca. 31/30: Cass. Dio 51.2.5 with Welch 2012, 301; Kunst 2016, 204; Rohr Vio 2019, 157 n. 45. Cf. her crucial role in facilitating the negotiations at Dicaearchia/Puteoli in 39 between her son Sextus Pompeius Magnus Pius and Marcus Antonius and Caesar *Divi filius*: App. *B Civ.* 5.69, 72 with Welch 2012, 240, 248; Kunst 2016, 204; Rohr Vio 2019, 157.

107 CIL VI 1527 with Osgood 2014.

108 Dixon 2001, 100–112; Schultz 2006b, 57–69.

109 Plin. *HN* 34.25; Plut. *Pop.* 8.7–8; Gell. *NA* 7.7.1–4 with Flach 1994, 225–227.

110 Plin. *HN* 34.25.

ologies for Vestal privileges, but they clearly foreground and laud female benefactions, and retroject them into the early *res publica*.¹¹¹ Similarly, benefactions are the reputed reason for the Senate granting elite married women and/or the *ordo matronarum* their privileges and status symbols, as mentioned previously. Female benefaction was honored and rewarded, particularly when it benefited the *res publica*.

Departing from these aetiologies, we find clearer evidence of the existence and prominence of female benefactions in Plautus, a republican inscription, Cicero, and Livy. In a paradigmatic—if comically inappropriate—statement of the normative virtues of a married woman in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, Alcmene claims that she does not consider what is called her dowry (*dos*) to be her dowry, but instead sexual virtue (*pudicitia*), shame (*pudor*), restrained desire (*sedata cupido*), fear of the gods (*deum metus*), love for her parents (*parentum amor*), harmony with her relatives (*cognatum concordia*), and that she is obedient (*morigera*) to her husband, munificent (*munifica*) to the good, and helpful (*prosim*) to the honest.¹¹² The latter two are relevant here: benefactions are framed as characteristically positive and laudable for married women.

A ca. 100–50 republican inscription from Rome attests to a significant benefaction of a Publicia and her husband Cnaeus Cornelius: they built (or restored) a temple (*aedes*) of Hercules and its door (*valvae*), adorned it (*expolire*), and restored an altar (*ara*) sacred to Hercules with both her and her husband's money.¹¹³ The inscription foregrounds Publicia and her benefaction and indicates how women might use their religious roles and resources to shape the cityscape of the *res publica* itself. We saw earlier in Cicero's account of the Vestal Licinia and her abortive dedication of 123 that such benefactions could be highly political, and that not all were accepted by the Senate, but, in this case, Publicia succeeded.

Cicero offers further examples of female benefactions, notably of the aforementioned Caecilia Metella's protection of, and provision for, Sextus Roscius in 80, a kind of private benefaction. Caecilia provided the desperate, impoverished Roscius with refuge and protection in her *domus* from Sulla's powerful freedman Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus and Roscius' own relatives, along with a bodyguard (*praesidium*), nourishing (*ali*), and clothing (*vestiri*).¹¹⁴ In his defense of Roscius, Cicero lauds Caecilia as an *exemplum* of old-fashioned

111 Cf. Flach 1994, 226.

112 Plaut. *Amph.* 839–842 with Christenson 2000, 274.

113 CIL VI 30899 with Schultz 2006b, 57–69; Kragenlund 2018, 213 n. 5.

114 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 13 (*praesidium*); 27 (*domus*); 147 (*ali, vestiri*) with Dyck 2010, 77, 96–97, 201–202.

duty (*antiquum officium*) for helping Roscius herself (*opitulata est*), and praises her *virtus*, *fides*, and *diligentia*;¹¹⁵ in superlative language, he claims that she is a most spectacular woman (*spectatissima femina*) with illustrious (elite) male relatives, who, while being a woman, perfected virtue (*virtute perfecit*), such that as much honor (*honor*) was bestowed on her from their rank (*dignitas*), she returned no lesser ornaments (*non minora ornamenta*) from her renown (*laus*).¹¹⁶ High praise from Cicero. As Dixon, Skinner, and Kragelund have argued, her actions in safeguarding Roscius indicate her political authority and capacity in a time of political crisis.¹¹⁷ Not even Chrysogonus dared broach her doors. Her benefaction was intensely political, yet her political authority, perhaps emergent from her celebrated religious role with Iuno Sospita, as well as her ancestry and familial relations with Sulla, protected both her and Roscius.¹¹⁸ (Significantly, her second cousin, another Caecilia Metella, daughter of Lucius Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus, was Sulla's wife from 88 to 80, whom he reputedly honored in all things. In 88, after Sulla refused requests to restore the Marian fugitives, this Caecilia was called upon for aid.¹¹⁹ Both Caeciliae were politically influential women.) Cicero also received benefactions from women, including substantial amounts of money from his close friend Caerellia, a wealthy older woman; indebted to her, he even acted politically on her behalf, lobbying Publius Servilius Isauricus, propraetor in Asia in 46, regarding her property there.¹²⁰ For Cicero, female benefactions were an ever-present reality.

Livy offers a wealth of examples of female benefactions. Apart from the aforementioned matronal contributions for a *donum* for Delphic Apollo in 395, a ransom for the Gauls in 390, a *donum* for Iuno Regina in 217, and the dotal gold for the *pelvis aurea* for Iuno Regina in 207, Livy also records the matronal dedication of a bronze statue in the Temple of Iuno Regina in 218 and widows' contribution of their wealth (*pecunia*) to the *aerarium* in 214 during

115 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 27 with Dyck 2010, 96–97.

116 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 147 with Dyck 2010, 202.

117 Dixon 1983, 94–95; Skinner 2011, 48–49; Kragelund 2018, 214.

118 For Caecilia Metella's ancestry and familial relations, including her possible husband Appius Claudius Pulcher, consul in 79: Münzer 1920, 304 (*stemma*); Zmeskal 2009, 51, 74, 305. See further on the Metelli: Hölkeskamp 2017, 273–309. Cf. Osgood in this volume on the similarities between Caecilia Metella and Livia.

119 Plut. *Sull.* 6.12; App. *B Civ.* 1.63 with Keaveney 2005, 58; Kunst 2016, 204. Rohr Vio 2019, 145–146. For Caecilia Metella's ancestry and familial relations: Münzer 1920, 304 (*stemma*); Zmeskal 2009, 53–54.

120 Cic. *Att.* 12.51.3; 15.26.4; *Fam.* 13.72 (Publius Servilius Isauricus). See Austin 1946; Dixon 2001, 101.

financial crisis.¹²¹ Livy's Valerius links the matronal contribution to the ransom of 390 with the widows' contribution of 214: he frames the earlier event as married women collecting for public use (*in publicum conferre*) and the later event as the widows' money (*viduarum pecuniae*) attending to the public treasury (*audire aerarium*) when money was needed (*cum pecunia opus fuit*).¹²² Nowhere does he denigrate these benefactions: instead, Livy frames them as *necessary*.

Female benefactions, then, were represented as shaping female privileges, as characteristically female, as capable of saving the *res publica* (from enemies and financial crisis) and individuals, and as frequent and necessary. By offering benefactions to people and deities, especially during times of need, female collectives and individuals bound themselves to the *res publica*.

3.3 *Family consilia*

In a recent contribution on Servilia's *consilium*, Flower has confirmed the "private but very political" nature of elite family *consilia*, meetings called to discuss "a course of action that needed to be decided upon."¹²³ Their discussions and decisions had political consequences, as did those of the *consilia* of magistrates, and those of that "grand *consilium* in Rome," the Senate.¹²⁴ Indeed, Flower has argued that senatorial, forensic, or contional orations may have "had their initial origins in remarks first prepared for a presentation in a *consilium*."¹²⁵ As is abundantly clear in the case of Servilia, women could participate in, speak at, and influence politically consequential *consilia*. It was, after all, at such a *consilium* in June 44 that she promised to arrange for the removal of a grain commission from a senatorial decree. At the same *consilium* were present Servilia's daughter Tertia Iunia (Tertulla) and Porcia.¹²⁶ Furthermore, in a letter to Brutus in July 43, Cicero indicates that Servilia organized and *presided* over another such a *consilium* wherein she sought his advice on whether to call Brutus home or not.¹²⁷ Another salient example is Sempronia's *consilium* of 63 with the Catilinarian conspirators and the envoys of the Allobroges, which she hosted at her husband Decimus Iunius Brutus' home near the Forum while he was absent from Rome, although her role therein is uncertain.¹²⁸ This was unquestionably

121 218: Livy 21.62.8. 214: Livy 24.18.13–14, 34.5.10.

122 Livy 34.5.9–10.

123 Flower 2018, 253.

124 Flower 2018, 263.

125 Flower 2018, 264.

126 Cic. *Att.* 15.11.1 with Treggiari 2019, 190–191.

127 Cic. *Ad Brut.* 26.1 with Flower 2018, 259–260; Treggiari 2019, 209.

128 Sall. *Cat.* 40.5 with Syme 1964, 69; Cadoux 1980, esp. 93; Ramsey 2007, 132, 169–170; Liu-

a politically consequential meeting: the *res publica* was at stake! Servilia—and presumably other women like Sempronia—were part of the decision-making process in such *consilia*. Were these extraordinary events?

I propose that female participation in these informal, family *consilia* is clarified and illuminated by matronal meetings. If married women were (represented as being) able to hold politically significant meetings and issue communal decrees in the fourth and third centuries, then Servilia's authority and prominence in the *consilia* of 44 and 43 appears far less unusual. Elite married women had been meeting for centuries, feasibly as members of the *ordo matronarum* and for religious activity, and their collections and contributions attest to their organizational and decision-making skills. Moreover, their religious authority and vocabulary, gained from their religious roles, would have lent their words weight, as exemplified by Cornelia, Caecilia Metella, and the Vestal Fonteia. A woman of Servilia's experience and rank would have been a formidable presence at any meeting: is it any wonder Cicero restrained himself?

These examples of female intercession, benefactions, and family *consilia* testify to the breadth of possible practices of female interventions in politics. Women's pleas on behalf of others inside and outside of the *domus* were certainly political, but women also engaged in politically significant intercession through public and private reproach and dissuasion, offered politically significant public and private benefactions to people and deities, and presided over politically significant family *consilia*. The *ordo matronarum*, matronal meetings, and religious roles provided (some of the) foundations for these practices and none of these structures were represented as the novelty of the first century. We can see a little more of the iceberg.

bimova 2020, esp. 2. Sempronia's husband Decimus Iunius Brutus was consul in 77. Her ancestry is uncertain. Münzer proposed she was a daughter of Caius Sempronius Gracchus, Ciaceri a daughter of Caius Sempronius Tuditanus, consul in 129, and Syme a granddaughter of this same Tuditanus: Münzer 1920, 272–273; 1923, 1446; Ciaceri 1929/1930, 224–230; Syme 1964, 134–135. Cf. Cadoux 1980, 105–109; Ramsey 2007, 133; Zmeskal 2009, 243, 249; Liubimova 2020, 9–13. Most recently, Liubimova has proposed that Sempronia was a granddaughter of Caius Sempronius Gracchus: Liubimova 2020, 14–18, 22–23. I will not address the various prosopographical arguments here. However, I find Liubimova's proposal particularly attractive, given Sallust's favorable description of Sempronia's birth in *Cat.* 25.2 (*genere ... satis fortunata fuit*)—recalling Caius Sempronius Gracchus' own description of his high birth in *C. Sempronius Gracchus* fr. 47 ORF⁴ (*genere summo ortus essem*)—and Sempronia's probable age, viz. perhaps late thirties to mid-forties following *Cat.* 24.3, 25.2: Ramsey 2007, 133 (age); Cadoux 1980, 95–96, 106 (age); Liubimova 2020, 11, 16–17 (age, high birth).

4 Conclusion

Women were excluded from some structures and practices of politics in the *libera res publica*. There were no female consuls or *pontifices maximi*. But that did not preclude them from engaging in the *res publica*. To return to Münzer: “für die ganze Einmischung der Frauen in die Kämpfe der Parteien, für jene Hauspolitik der adligen Damen, die mit echt weiblichen Mitteln arbeitete, aber vor den höchsten Zielen männlichen Ehrgeizes nicht zurückschrak, bieten den besten Beweis die Frauen aus dem Servilischen Geschlecht, zumal die ältere Halbschwester Catos.”¹²⁹ While distancing myself from Münzer’s “echt weiblichen Mitteln” (purely womanly means), I acknowledge that female political interventions frequently occurred in domestic contexts, as exemplified by Servilia’s *consilia*. But we need to cross the *limen* of the *domus* and look to the *ordo*, *coetus* (meetings), and *aedes* (religious roles) for other, equally formidable interventions. These were represented as effective, legitimate, and occasionally laudable structures for female engagement in the *res publica*. The formality and apparent antiquity of these structures authorized and legitimized collective and individual actions by elite women and priestesses. None of these structures were represented as novel. Of note are the public honors bestowed on married women and the members of the *ordo* for their benefactions, the communal decree of the matronal *coetus*, and the religious authority and capacity of priestesses and elite women. We must never forget that the safety of the *res publica* was thought to be dependent on the prayers of women.

Nor did political interventions primarily take the form of “die Bitte.” Elite women could also intervene through the reproach and dissuasion of powerful men, through benefactions that saved individuals, collectives, and the *res publica*, and through significant roles in elite family *consilia*.

The chaos of civil war certainly produced new possibilities for elite women and politics: Fulvia is a prime example. But she was not operating in a vacuum: many elite women preceded her. Indeed, she explicitly rejected their pre-existing structures and practices when she rebuffed Hortensia and the *ordo* in 42. We have Fulvia to thank for Hortensia’s oration, which itself reveals the proactive engagement of women in the *res publica* despite Hortensia’s reputed claims to the contrary.

129 “For the complete involvement of women in the struggles of the parties, for the domestic politics of aristocratic ladies, who worked with purely womanly means, but did not shrink from the highest aims of manly ambition, the best evidence is offered by women of the Servilian clan, especially Cato’s elder half-sister” (Münzer 1920, 426–427).

Finally, I return to Livy's Valerius and his response to Cato's outrage at women engaging in the *res publica*. Addressing Cato, he demands to know what is novel about the female lobby against the *lex Oppia* in 195:

For what so novel thing have married women done by appearing in public as a crowd concerning a matter pertaining to them? Have they never appeared in public before? I will unroll your own *Origines* against you. Hear how often they have done it, and, in fact, always for the public good!¹³⁰

Valerius then recounts the intercession of the Sabines, the intercession of women with Coriolanus, the benefactions of married women that saved Rome from the Gauls in 390, the widows' benefactions to the *aerarium* in 214, and finally the matronal inaugural procession for Magna Mater in 204.¹³¹ He defends the female lobby of 195 on the basis that "it is satisfactory to vindicate them if nothing novel has been done."¹³² His subsequent claim presages my own findings: "nobody was surprised at action they took in matters concerning everyone, men and women alike."¹³³

Female engagement in the *res publica* was neither the novelty of the first century BCE nor exceptional, for the interventions of women like Servilia or Terentia were manifestations of a long tradition of women seizing political initiative. *Rem publicam capessere* was more than possible for women in the *libera res publica*: it was customary.

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¹³⁰ Livy 34.5.7: *nam quid tandem novi matronae fecerunt, quod frequentes in causa ad se pertinente in publicum processerunt? nunquam ante hoc tempus in publico apparuerunt? tuas adversus te Origines revolvam. accipe quotiens id fecerint, et quidem semper bono publico.*
¹³¹ Livy 34.5.8–10.
¹³² Livy 34.5.11: *nihil novi factum purgare satis est.*
¹³³ Livy 34.5.12: *ceterum quod in rebus ad omnes pariter viros feminas pertinentibus fecisse eas nemo miratus est.*

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