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**Democratizing History? The significance of historical podcasts in the dissemination and popularization of history.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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David John Garwood-Bish  
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## Abstract

A return to the oral tradition, historical podcasts constitute a pioneering component of today's historical discourse that challenge the traditional boundaries of how the past is considered and presented. The popularity of these podcasts and the increasing proliferation of the podcasting medium as a means of sharing complex historical information has significantly exceeded written texts among public audiences in recent years. This has created new avenues through which academic historians can connect with public audiences. Moreover, the nature of this technology democratizes both the creation and success of these oral histories. Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History* and Patrick Wyman's *The Fall of Rome* and *Tides of History* illustrate the different approaches to presenting the past that podcasts permit. Both engage in contemporary historical discourse in a new and unique manner through the freedom offered by podcasting technology, utilizing the oral and aural dimensions of verbal storytelling that cannot be conveyed by the written word, while also drawing on established academic historiography to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of the history presented.

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## Introduction and Terminology

With the explosive growth of digital resources over the past two decades, podcasts have firmly established their presence as a prominent new medium for the communication of complex information. Amongst its sub-genres, a place for the historical podcast has also been carved, and this new voice for history is growing more influential with each passing year. While not to the complete exclusion of academic historians, it is important to note that many of these podcasts are the work of enthusiasts of history who translate past events into narrative form for public consumption. Yet despite this, it would be remiss to categorize historical podcasters as simple storytellers. Many present comprehensive histories constructed from the works of recognized experts within the historical discipline and show significant awareness of the issues that a telling of the past faces. However, the intent of the creators, whether amateur or academic, and the style in which these histories are presented are in many cases contrary to the traditional academic purpose for which history is written. The prioritization of an engaging narrative flow, the intent to immerse the listener within the past in an *experiential* sense, and the consequent proclivity for drama rather than detail are near ubiquitous in prominent works. Moreover, the medium itself, a presentation through audio, adds an altogether new dimension to both narrative history and to discourse about history within the discipline itself. This paper is concerned with how historical discourse is being constructed and retold through a new technological medium, the similarities it shares with amateur histories of the past and its relationship to the standardized methods and suppositions about history that are present in academia today.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first is a summary of the origins of podcasting technology, a clarification of exactly what is being referenced by the term podcast and what is not, how the medium functions as a practical matter, as well as its growth and the extent of the proliferation of podcasts today. This chapter also highlights the rapidity with which podcasts have permeated into the cultural consciousness as a method of communication, that in part, shapes how individuals in the modernized western countries understand and interact with the world. The second chapter looks at the discourse around modern historical theory, with particular attention given to post-modern historical thought, as well as the rise of public history from the nineteen-

seventies onwards. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the purpose for which history is written and where podcasts fall into modern historiography; detailing why historical podcasting is not a return to a pre-academic past but an extension of modern historiography despite the dissonant lack of academic interest in it. Significant reference is made to the arguments of Hayden White and Keith Jenkins as to how history *is* and *should* be written. The third and fourth chapters each analyze the works of history podcasters with very different approaches and aims in their work: the ‘fan of history,’ Dan Carlin and a specialist in the history of the Roman Empire, Patrick Wyman. These analyses illustrate that while historical podcasts do not constitute an entirely new step in historiography by themselves, as an amalgamation of modern historical practices and traditional oral presentation the medium allows for such unique approaches to the presentation of history that it may as well be considered as such. This perspective is made more pronounced by the inexorable entrenching of podcasts, and by extension history podcasts, within the cultural consciousness to such a degree that they can now be considered a supplement, if not a partial replacement to older media from which the public traditionally received historical information. The fifth and final chapter discusses several consequences of podcasting technology that are alluded to briefly throughout the thesis. Specifically: podcasts’ disruptive nature and the rise of a new class of public intellectuals with access to an audience incomparably larger and more varied than any orator in the past. The democratizing elements exhibited in how the public engages with this new medium. And finally, what the *reification* of history that can be observed in both Carlin and Wyman’s works suggests about the various ways that history can be presented to a public audience.

First, it is necessary to make clear terms that will be used throughout this dissertation. To begin, ‘oral’ history in the context of this paper refers to the presentation of history through the spoken word, rather than the methodological tools for collecting information that typical discussions around oral history allude to;<sup>1</sup> the oral *presentation*

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<sup>1</sup>L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315640761>.

Lynn Abrams defines oral history as the “method of research. It is the act of recording the speech of people with something interesting to say and then analysing their memories of the past.”

Sam Park, “Introduction: (Re-)Inserting the Producer and Process Into the Research Equation,” in *Oral History Reimagined: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (Hershey: IGI Global, 2020), 1-26. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.4018/978-1-7998-3420-5.ch001>.

Sam Pack similarly summarizes oral research as a method of historical inquiry in the first chapter of *Oral History Reimagined*.

of history as opposed to the aggregation of historical evidence from an oral source. Use of this term is necessary however, as it corresponds with aural history, which describes a much broader, inclusive dimension of audio. Oral history, in this sense, is the direct counterpart to written history, being simply the voicing of the written word, while aural history is all that is heard by the listener of a podcast, including sound effects, music, timing, vocal intonations, changes in volume, and so on. This distinction is particularly of note within the context of podcasting, as the latter complements the former to add nuance and detail that the written word is unable to replicate. ‘History’, the ‘past’, and ‘historiography’ also need to be clarified as they have been so rigorously discussed and debated in the context of modern and post-modern historical theory. As such, this paper adopts the definitions of other historians as listed below. ‘History,’ according to its Greek origins, is an “inquiry into the past” with “the genre of history writing as an account of past events.”<sup>2</sup> Histories are, more specifically, “verbal structure[s] in the form of a narrative prose discourse... [that] combine a certain amount of ‘data,’ theoretical concepts for ‘explaining’ these data, and a narrative structure for their presentation.”<sup>3</sup> The ‘past’ comparatively, is “made up of events and entities which once existed but no longer do,”<sup>4</sup> the events before now as they actually occurred, forever lost to the present and separate from the reconstructions that historians put to paper. Lastly, when speaking of ‘historiography,’ this paper is referring to the collective discourse on history available in the Western world. This is not limited to the boundaries of modern academic work, and instead, follows the definitional structures laid out by John Burrow in *A History of Histories*<sup>5</sup> and his predecessor, R. G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* as including all historical work that sought to investigate “*res gestae*: actions of human beings that have been done in the past;” from Greco-Roman mythological quasi-history to the micro-histories of today.<sup>6</sup> While these terms may carry a different definition in other texts, within this dissertation they should be understood in no broader or narrower of a sense than as laid out above.

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<sup>2</sup>Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 51.

<sup>3</sup>Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), preface IX.

<sup>4</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, preface XIII.

<sup>5</sup>John Burrow, *A History of Histories* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

<sup>6</sup>R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 9.

## Chapter One: Podcasting: Conception and Proliferation

The term podcast refers to a “downloadable digital media file typically composed of audio content”<sup>7</sup> that became popularized throughout the early 2000’s. While similar to radio broadcasting in many respects, podcasting delineated from traditional media through the technical advantages afforded by the development of internet-based utilities. The most significant of these advantages was the great reduction of barriers to entry in creating and distributing audio files, as well as, on the consumers end, significantly increased ease of accessibility and the ability to listen when, where and how they would like. In 2001, podcasting was a term recognized by only a small niche of developers and technology pioneers. Today podcasts are ubiquitous to such a degree that they are now arguably the predominant medium for long-form audio communication in the modern world. The importance of this medium has also been largely understated in academic literature. In part this is because the transformation from incipience to ubiquity took a period of less than two decades. It is however, worth detailing that transformation here to fully illustrate the role that podcasts, and more particularly historical podcasts, have in the procurement of information in the lives of individuals today.

In 2001, internet entrepreneur Adam Curry, alongside friend and programmer Dave Winer began experiments with bootstrapping audio data files to RSS (Really Simple Syndication<sup>8</sup>) based subscription feeds, creating a framework for the method of distribution that has become prevalent today.<sup>9</sup> In less technical terms, the RSS framework allows any individual with an internet connection to subscribe to a distributor or ‘feed’, and their device will automatically refresh at set intervals to update

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<sup>7</sup>Jim Greene, “Podcast,” *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Science* (2019).

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=93788168&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>8</sup>Shelley Powers, *Practical RDF: Solving Problems with the Resource Description Framework* (Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, 2003).

This acronym has seen several variations since its creation, originally RSS stood for RDF Site Summary, however with changes in technology, it was updated to Rich Site Summary and finally to Really Simple Syndication. Each of the abbreviated are used in reference to different software, however engagement at the user end of each version is similar. David Winer, the programmer who bootstrapped audio files to RSS is most commonly associated with Really Simple Syndication. For a comprehensive overview of the technology.

<sup>9</sup>Dave Winer, “Payloads for RSS,” accessed June 4, 2020, <http://scripting.com/davenet/2001/01/11/payloadsForRss.html>.

them with the latest content released. This removed the necessity for users to manually search for and confirm releases one by one, saving time and apprising users of releases within seconds of being shared: “listeners can, through subscriptions, have each new podcast delivered directly and automatically to a designated computer where they are immediately available for listening” a process far faster than publication.<sup>10</sup> While the technology was innovatively applied, it was not until 2005 that, outside of the small niche of technologically literate early adopters, RSS feeds with the adjoined media of podcasts would see significant public exposure. This was a consequence of several developments that immediately followed the turn of the century. For one, Apple’s integration of podcasts into the popular iTunes software drew attention to the medium, made navigation of the medium “more fluid,”<sup>11</sup> and brought the word ‘podcast’ into mainstream use.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, to replace the then dated dial-up internet connections, broadband internet was also becoming more common, from 6% of adults in the United States having home broadband in 2001 to 36% by the end of 2005, and 62% by 2009.<sup>13</sup> This allowed for much higher volumes of data transfer and reduced the impediments that data caps and limited transfer speeds had on downloading digital media. Reportedly, by 2006 12% of internet users had downloaded podcasts,<sup>14</sup> a figure that rose to 19% in the following two years.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, mainstream recognition of podcasting’s viability as a method of communicating with a public audience and the creation of applications for operating systems other than Apple’s IOS continued to accelerate the adoption of the format over the next decade. Both the total download figures and the scope of content produced expanded exponentially.

Jumping forward to 2020, statistics showed that 55% of the United States population, some 155 million people, had listened to a podcast, with sixteen million across a wide

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<sup>10</sup>John F. Barber, “Digital storytelling: New opportunities for humanities scholarship and pedagogy,” *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2016): 5.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Berry, “A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 22, no.2 (2015): 172.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2015.1083363>.

<sup>12</sup>Cyrus Farivar, “10 years of podcasting: Code, comedy, and patent lawsuits,” accessed June 11, 2020, <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2014/08/10-years-of-podcasting-code-comedy-and-patent-lawsuits/2/>.

<sup>13</sup>“Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet: Home broadband use over time,” Pew Research Center, last modified April 7, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>.

<sup>14</sup>Mary Madden, “Podcast Downloading,” accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2006/11/22/podcast-downloading/>.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

demographic reportedly consuming podcasts regularly.<sup>16</sup> Complete and accurate data regarding total consumption is, unfortunately, unobtainable as there is ‘no unified source of listening data,’<sup>17</sup> from which to draw from and many sources obfuscate download statistics for practical, largely financial reasons. To compound the minimal data provided by large corporations, there is also the unavoidable reality that one download does not correspond with one listen,<sup>18</sup> in the same way that “metrics of consumption [of written texts...] fail to capture the complete reading process.”<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, an extremely conservative estimation of figures does still express some of the degree to which podcasts have proliferated in popular culture today. The most prolific example of this, the most downloaded podcast of all time, *The Joe Rogan Experience* had, according to several news outlets, an average of eleven million viewers per show in the final months of 2021.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, the biggest show on cable news networks in the United States, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, reached only 3.7 million views per episode in mid-January 2022.<sup>21</sup> Amongst popular history specific podcasts, Carlin’s *Hardcore History* consistently passes well over a million downloads each episode.<sup>22</sup> Another show, Mike Duncan’s *History of Rome* was cumulatively downloaded over 100 million times as of 2017;<sup>23</sup> it would be remiss not to assume that these numbers have continued to increase in last few years. These figures illustrate the tremendous influence that any individual can achieve in the new public square with little more than a microphone and a computer. This is particularly salient when considering that, of the best selling historical literature today (almost exclusively works of popular universal

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<sup>16</sup>Ross Winn, “2020 Podcast Stats & Facts (New Research From April 2020),” accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/>.

<sup>17</sup>Berry, “A Golden Age of Podcasting?” 173.

<sup>18</sup>Pete Davies, “Downloads, listens, listeners, and about those podcast numbers,” accessed June 11, 2020, <https://medium.com/@pete/downloads-listens-listeners-and-about-those-podcast-numbers-73a5ee3e2fca>.

<sup>19</sup>Simon Peter Rowberry, “The limits of big data for analyzing reading,” *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 16, no.1 (2019): 237- 238.

<sup>20</sup>Tyler Durden, “Mainstream Media Is "Being Swallowed" By Joe Rogan,” January 8, 2022, <https://www.zerohedge.com/markets/mainstream-media-being-swallowed-joe-rogan>.

<sup>21</sup>“Total Viewing: Cable Network TV,” Nielsen, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/top-ten/>.

See Appendix 1 for a captured image of data from retrieval date.

<sup>22</sup>Slate, Jeremy Ryan, “Hardcore History Host Dan Carlin on Toughness and What We Can Learn from History,” Grit Daily, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://gritdaily.com/dan-carlin/>.

<sup>23</sup>“The Storm Before the Storm: An Interview With Historian and Podcast Superstar Mike Duncan,” Daily Stoic, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://dailystoic.com/mike-duncan/>.

history<sup>24</sup>) only a select few have ever surpassed a million copies sold,<sup>25</sup> with the vast majority selling less than a thousand copies following their release.<sup>26</sup> It is apparent then, that popular historical podcasts can, and sometimes do, have much greater influence on public audiences than many of the most prestigious academic historians' written works today.

Alongside, and partially influenced by its increase in listeners, the typical idea of what a podcast is has evolved – although arguably, it has become increasingly difficult to describe what a 'typical' podcast constitutes, as the variety in genre, length, production quality, and purpose for which a show is made is now so expansive. Generally speaking however, the overarching trend has been a shift away from high-cost, professional, radio like productions from major companies and towards more personal, amateur and often unedited content; although the former do still exist. In many cases, a show will first gain a following and then increase its production quality, progressing from an independent creator simply speaking into a cheap microphone, to a creator speaking into an expensive microphone in perhaps a small recording studio with additional editing in post production. Fundamentally however, the necessary core cost of creating a podcast, an individual's time, does not change. A podcast does not need high technical skill or costly publishing, marketing and distribution institutions, and this mitigates many of the inexorable limitations placed on expensive productions to manage financial risks on behalf of its investors. For this reason alone, it is no surprise that podcasting is considered a "highly liberating platform"<sup>27</sup> by those who have experience in legacy media, that from its inception functioned as both a "meritocratic and democratic"<sup>28</sup> form of emergent media. Moreover, the fact that "there are no set limits to the content or length of a podcast" and very "few hard limits to what a podcast must be or how it is consumed"<sup>29</sup> has meant that any individual who would consider uploading their

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24Alison Bashford, "Deep Genetics: Universal History and the Species," *History and Theory* 57, no.2 (2018): 313-314. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12065>.

25"100 Best-Selling History Books of All Time," BookAuthority, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://bookauthority.org/books/best-selling-history-books>.

26Xindi Wang, Burcu Yucesoy, Onur Varol, Tina Eliassi-Rad & Albert-László Barabási, "Success in books: predicting book sales before publication," *EPJ Data Science* 8, no.31 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-019-0208-6>.

27Greene, "Podcast."

28Christopher Cwynar, "Self-service media: Public radio personalities, reality podcasting, and entrepreneurial culture," *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 17, no.4 (2019): 321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2019.1634811>.

29Dom Tromans, "Casting into the Past" (Masters diss., University of Bristol, 2016): 5.

thoughts into the digital ether, either can do so or already has. Notably, despite the freedom to produce whatever content a creator would like, one pronounced trend in recent years has been the popularization of long form content, often from academics or experts in various fields – a phenomenon that very much deviates from the widely established supposition of a shortening of attention span brought upon by “the affects of an increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the human mind.”<sup>30</sup> Podcasts predominantly have come to be lengthy, sometimes multiple hour pieces of media. Consequently, a class of ‘public intellectuals,’ those who “offer representation by alternative voices in the dominant culture,”<sup>31</sup> have become a mainstay of podcasting. This class of public intellectuals will be discussed at length later.

Another medium with many similar qualities to podcasts are audiobooks. And, as there is significant crossover of both audience and creators between these and the topic of our discussion, it is worth taking a moment to detail their differences as well as the partially symbiotic relationship they have had throughout the past two decades.<sup>32</sup> Podcasts and audiobooks share very similar technological elements in production and consumption. Both mediums are a form of digital audio that are able to be listened to, paused and experienced in much the same way. As well as this, they have experienced a concurrent increase in adoption and comparable growth over recent years.<sup>33</sup> They do however, diverge in how and for what purpose they are created and published. While podcasts are a product of the new millennia, audiobooks official origins date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>34</sup> and it was with the 1931 Pratt-Smoot Act, which “provided federal funding

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[https://www.academia.edu/27806498/CASTING\\_INTO\\_THE\\_PAST\\_Podcasting\\_as\\_a\\_medium\\_for\\_producing\\_works\\_of\\_history](https://www.academia.edu/27806498/CASTING_INTO_THE_PAST_Podcasting_as_a_medium_for_producing_works_of_history).

<sup>30</sup>Kalpathy Ramaiyer Subramanian, “Product Promotion in an Era of Shrinking Attention Span,” *International Journal of Engineering and Management* 7, no.2, (April, 2017): 85.

<sup>31</sup>Jim Scripps, “Podcasting and the Rise of the Public Intellectual: Viewing an Emergent Group of Media Personalities Through the Prism of Antonio Gramsci’s ‘The Intellectuals’,” (Masters diss., University of Nevada, 2020), 3.

[https://scholarworks.unr.edu/bitstream/handle/11714/7592/Scripps\\_unr\\_0139M\\_13274.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://scholarworks.unr.edu/bitstream/handle/11714/7592/Scripps_unr_0139M_13274.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>32</sup>Craig Wigginton, Duncan Stewart and Mark Casey, “The ears have it: The rise of audiobooks and podcasting,” Deloitte Insights, last modified December 9, 2019,

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/technology-media-and-telecom-predictions/2020/rise-of-audiobooks-podcast-industry.html>.

<sup>33</sup>Amy Watson, “Share of adults who have read a book in any format in the last 12 months in the United States from 2011 to 2021, by format,” Statista, last modified January 13, 2022,

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/222754/book-format-used-by-readers-in-the-us/>.

<sup>34</sup>Jennifer Moore and Maria Cahill, “A Sound History,” *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children* 15, no.1 (Spring 2017): 22.

for recorded books for the blind,” that “audiobook production in the United States intensified.”<sup>35</sup> Since which, the format has carved a niche market in Western countries’ bookstores. In the past decade however, this niche has expanded significantly. According to a recent study, twenty-three percent of American adults reported that they listened to an audiobook in the last twelve months compared to just eleven percent a decade before.<sup>36</sup> This growth, while not as explosive, mirrors podcasting’s development, and many creators have released audiobooks alongside or as an addition to their primary shows, or conversely, begun a podcast after writing and recording their audiobook.<sup>37</sup> However, despite these intersects, there are three key differences between the mediums. The first is that audiobooks were and are, at their core, a conversion of an already published text to audio form; a text that has already seen extensive editing, rewriting and review, while podcasts tend more towards the more informal style of talk radio shows. The second, is that podcasts are typically released episodically with only a vague determination of progression towards a terminal ‘chapter,’ if there is intended to be any at all – akin to releasing a book chapter by chapter with no fixed terminus. In many cases, as will be discussed later, the audience themselves holds influence over the direction the podcast takes. And thirdly, podcasts are a platform that are not limited to monologues, with many featuring several individuals providing their perspectives in real-time; a feature that is unable to be replicated (at least in the sense of a *real-time* discussion) by audiobooks. It is however the case that both mediums lend themselves well to long form conversation; audiobooks provide a platform for the rigorous work of writers to reach a large audience, and podcasts provide a platform to engage with that audience more reactively.

It is also necessary to consider the financial dimension of podcasting that has evolved alongside the medium. In its early days, skepticism around the future utility of the medium was common in the assertions of both researchers and companies. As late as 2007, podcasting was considered as “a niche prosumer activity, not as random listening or a passive feed”<sup>38</sup> in the same sphere as digitalized music; in other words podcasting

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 23.

<sup>36</sup>Andrew Perrin and Michelle Faverio, “Three-in-ten Americans now read e-books,” Pew Research Center, last modified January 6, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/01/06/three-in-ten-americans-now-read-e-books/>.

<sup>37</sup>Emily Polson, “10 Intersections between Podcasts, Audiobooks, and Storytelling at Large,” Bookriot, last modified August 2, 2019, <https://bookriot.com/podcasts-audiobooks-storytelling/>.

<sup>38</sup>Enrico Menduni, “Four steps in innovative radio broadcasting: from QuickTime to Podcasting,” *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* 5, no.1 (2007): 11.

was viewed as a temporary extension of radio broadcasting returning to its amateur roots with little profitability. However, as previous assumptions such as the idea that “both Digital radio broadcasting and Internet radio go against the winning trend of radio, namely its miniaturisation and its mobility”<sup>39</sup> were overturned through advancements in accessibility, due in large part to Apple’s creation of its end-user interface and the increasingly ubiquitous use of smartphones, the medium saw a renewed interest from individuals and companies looking to monetize the space. Consequently, a wide variety of monetization strategies emerged. These strategies can be loosely divided under the two umbrellas of crowd-sourced consumer derived monetization and top down affiliate monetization. The former crowd-sourced approach includes methods such as the merchandising of related products, subscription based models on unaffiliated third-party websites, the direct selling of premium content, the payment gating of older episodes, interacting with fans in live shows involving paid comments such as YouTube's super-chats, as well as through direct donations via payment processors or cryptocurrencies. The latter, affiliate based monetization methods, are directly inherited from those that legacy technology typically employed. These often involve podcasters entering into contracts with third parties in return for compensation. Sponsorship in exchange for advertisement time and exclusive releases of a podcast to an affiliated website are the most apparent of these.<sup>40</sup><sup>41</sup> Many podcasters utilize several of these approaches to maximize their income. Often however, affiliate based income is limited to podcasts with larger audiences. Dan Carlin for example, has included the donation tagline, “for the cost of a cup of coffee” since the earliest days of his podcast. He has in the past partnered with the largest audiobook repository, Audible, as well as placing older episodes of his shows behind a relatively inexpensive paywall. Patrick Wyman has also received a sponsorship from Audible, and, for several years now, has had an exclusivity agreement with Wondery. Joe Rogan, mentioned above, who previously funded his show through personally presented advertisements at the beginning of each episode, signed an exclusivity agreement that commenced on

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[https://doi.org/10.1386/rajo.5.1.9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/rajo.5.1.9_1).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>40</sup>“How Do Podcasts Make Money? Try These 20 Strategies to Monetize Your Show,” Castos, last modified October 7, 2021, <https://castos.com/monetize-a-podcast/#:~:text=Sponsorship%20is%20the%20most%20common%20way%20to%20monetize%20a%20podcast.&text=Sponsorships%20pay%20more%20depending%20on,don't%20have%20many%20listeners>.

<sup>41</sup>Jon Clark, “Eight Ways To Monetize Your Podcast,” Forbes, last modified August 5, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2021/08/05/eight-ways-to-monetize-your-podcast/?sh=2f5cd9953e68>.

September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 with the publisher Spotify<sup>42</sup> for a reported 100 million US dollars.<sup>43</sup> Some of the potential consequences that these methods of monetization may have on the construction of history within the medium will be explored in the discussion of the democratization of history in the concluding chapter of this paper.

At the end of his compilation on the writing of history from its conception as a subject to the present era, John Burrow commented that, “in the presentation of history, the chief new medium is obviously television... but it has been a mixed blessing, concentrating attention on the twentieth century and what news agencies, film makers and government propaganda thought worth recording.”<sup>44</sup> He notes on the same page that “the internet now opens even greater possibilities for research, whose boundaries and implications we cannot yet see.” With each passing year however, it is becoming increasingly more clear that digital media’s boundaries are extremely broad, and that the process of displacing television from its role as the primary means with which individuals engage with the world outside of their immediate communities is well underway. Among the emergent technologies in this digital era, podcasting, and the advantages it provides in sharing and receiving information are also becoming more apparent. Listeners are able to remain *au courant* with little effort and can conveniently consume audio media as and when required (on subjects of their own choosing) through their smartphone or computer. The audio formatting of podcasts also relieves listeners from the burden of assiduous attention that consuming work in a visual format demands. Finally, as the technology continues to evolve, methods of monetization are also allowing for podcasting to become a legitimized source of revenue for many individuals. For historians, this is another avenue through which to engage with the public – where exactly these types of shows fall into historiography is presented below.

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<sup>42</sup>“Podcast Pioneer: ‘The Joe Rogan Experience’ Launches Exclusive Partnership with Spotify,” Spotify, last modified May 19, 2020, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2020-05-19/the-joe-rogan-experience-launches-exclusive-partnership-with-spotify/>.

<sup>43</sup>Matt Flegenheimer, “Joe Rogan Is Too Big to Cancel,” New York Times, last modified September 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/01/business/joe-rogan.html>.

<sup>44</sup>Burrow, *A History of Histories*, 517.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review: How do historical podcasts fit into today's historiography?

Many of the earliest records of our history, dating from Herodotus and the Ancient Greeks, are found in oral traditions that, “transmitted in the form of tales, myths and legends, fairytales, songs, especially epic songs and poems, proverbs, riddles and other genres, form an important treasury of many a people's cultural heritage even today.”<sup>45</sup> The transfer of historical experience through the spoken word has been a cornerstone of culture, community, and learning for thousands of years, far preceding the written word. From religious and political figures giving sermons on the state of the world, dissidents voicing their discontent, professors lecturing students, to parents instructing their children and those children articulating, experimenting and composing the world around them verbally, oral communication, and further, the oral tradition is thoroughly ingrained in human existence. The spoken word is naturally expressive, it conforms only to the limitations of the content, volume, tone and implicit meaning that the orator chooses to impose. It is also illocutionary, in that by “saying something, one not only says something but also *does* something.” By speaking it “changes a relationship either of the speaker to the world, or one part of the world to another, or of the world to the speaker.”<sup>46</sup> Described by Madame de Staël in *Corinne ou l'Italie*, as she wrote on the transcendental power of the spoken voice of Corinne, her principal character and a muse, the spoken word goes beyond evoking both History and Literature:

The accent, the look, the least gesture of an actor, truly inspired and influenced by genuine emotion, are a continual revelation of the human heart; and the ideal of the fine arts is always mingled with these revelations of nature. The harmony of the verse and the charm of the attitudes, lend to passion that grace and dignity which it often wants in reality. Thus every sentiment of the heart and every emotion of the soul, pass before the imagination without losing anything of their truth.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Walther Heissig and Rüdiger Schott, “The Present-Day Importance of Oral Traditions — Their Preservation, Publication and Indexing: Report on an International Workshop in St. Augustin near Bonn, Germany,” *Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 102 (1998): 26. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-83676-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-83676-2_2).

<sup>46</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, 34.

<sup>47</sup>Madame de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie Vol. 1* (London: J. M. Dent and Company, 1894), Ebook, book VII, chapter III, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16896/16896-h/16896-h.htm>.

Accordingly, it is clear that the voice is a versatile and powerful tool in expressing ideas about reality, and by extension, the past. However, despite the utility oral communication has had throughout history, despite it giving us our first recognized historian in Herodotus, who undoubtedly “used his ears, if only because most of the inscriptions he may have seen were in a script and language he could not read,”<sup>48</sup> in recent years the predominance of oral presentation of academic history has been limited to the confines of small lecture halls for a handful of students and not made accessible to wider public audiences.

The status that written history holds as the dominant form of historical discourse is unshakable; as, for a myriad of reasons, it likely will and should continue to be going forward. Published words on paper, unless revised and reprinted, are unchanging and concrete. They are able to be reread, reprinted, reinterpreted, referenced, critiqued, excerpted and so on in systematically reliable and universal ways. Written words also tend towards being more reflective than those of reactive extemporaneous speech. It is these traits that lend themselves well towards the methodological universality necessitated by scientific principles. However, while the traditional sciences, empiric disciplines within which the method is inextricable from clear and concrete conclusions, emerged with the scientific method as their foundation, for the discipline of history, it was the 19<sup>th</sup> century that marked its gradual establishment as, however embryonic, a more recognizably scientific pursuit in the academia. Drawing from the historical method formulated by French Benedictines of the seventeenth century,<sup>49</sup> research methodology, standardized practices, and peer reviewing of historical work became an essential norm. At the same time, academic history diverged itself from the archaeological societies and antiquarian interests that some wealthy elites indulged in as collectors of the past, and discussion around theory of history itself, how history should be properly practiced, became a prominent presence in academia. The watershed for this in the English speaking world was the establishment of the *English Historical Review* in 1886 which was of considerable importance in “determining the ascendancy of professional university history.”<sup>50</sup> This trend extended into the twentieth century, at which time – drawing from the ideas of the pragmatist philosophers in Friedrich

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<sup>48</sup>Burrow, *A History of Histories*, 23.

<sup>49</sup>G. J. Renier, *History and its Purpose* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 21.

<sup>50</sup>Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 164.

Wilhelm Nietzsche, Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Sandrys Peirce, William James, and John Dewey<sup>51</sup> – post-modernism and the linguistic turn made explicit the significant questions around what it means to know the past, how it should be presented, and where history falls in the categorization of art and science. Historical podcasts, as the product of a technology that overturns many conventions separating the written and spoken word lends itself as another means as to how answers to these questions are considered, mimicking the concrete recorded nature of written text and positioning itself as a potential supplemental component of historical discourse.

As the discussions of post-modern and post-structuralist thought are extensive, it is worthwhile to begin towards the end, with the theorists who, while influenced by the lists of contemporaries and predecessors, have integrated and expounded on them to be something of a temporary capstone in historical theory today. The final book of one of the most prominent critical theorists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Hayden White's *The Practical Past*, which puts forth both a description of and argument for adoption of a utilitarian form of history that historians hereto have overlooked is one of those. White predicates his ideas on Michael Oakeshott's notion of a practical past, described as "the past that people as individuals or members of groups draw upon in order to make assessments and make decisions in ordinary everyday life as well as in extreme situations"<sup>52</sup> and presented in opposition to the historical past, a purely literary construction of history for historians. White makes clear the chasm that exists between historians that practice history academically and public audiences, the latter of which is at this time the target demographic of historical podcasts. This divide is intrinsically linked with the purpose for which history is constructed. While "professional historians profess to be interested in primarily... 'the historical past in itself' alone, or in understanding the past on its own terms and resisting any inclination to draw inferences of a practical or utilitarian kind from the past to the present,"<sup>53</sup> this is not typically the case for broader audiences who are concerned with that which relates immediately to how they perceive and understand the world around them.

Incidentally, the idea of a practical past also allows for the revival of an element of

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<sup>51</sup>Alireza Yousefy, Nooshin Forghani and Narges Keshtiaray, "A Critical Examination of Postmodernism Based on Religious and Moral Values Education," *International Education Studies* 8, no.9 (2015): 99. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1074075.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, preface XIII.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, preface XIII.

history that has been expunged to a significant degree through the modernist movement while still remaining a perceived cornerstone of historical purpose by enthusiasts and general audiences today: that of ethical history. White states:

The professionalization of historical studies required in principle at least that the past be studied, as it was said, “for itself alone” or as “a thing in itself,” without any ulterior motive other than a desire for the truth (of fact, to be sure, rather than doctrine) about the past and without any inclination to draw lessons from the study of the past and import them into the present in order to justify actions and programs for the future. In other words, history in its status as a science for the study of the past purported to purge the study of the past of any ethical content.<sup>54</sup>

This is however, impossible, as “although there may be methods of finding out ‘what happened’ there is no method whatsoever whereby one can definitely say what the ‘facts’ mean.”<sup>55</sup> Considering this from a different angle, Primo Levi, a survivor of the Holocaust, following the preface to his memoir, comments of his time incarcerated in the Auschwitz Concentration camp that “it seems superfluous to add that none of the facts was invented.”<sup>56</sup> As White points out, naturally, this draws our attention to the fact that some component of the recollection may have been constructed or fictionalized, although the extent to which we can never be clear. If then, we are open to the idea that even within direct recollection for “other things than the facts to have been invented” we must also admit therefore, that history, “is somewhat more or other than either fact or fiction.”<sup>57</sup> It must educe itself to at least some degree from real events, but it can never escape the fetters of imagination, and this imaginative dimension inevitably reflects some form of moral framing relative to the individual. Even Collingwood, as a staunch modernist, could not escape this ethical dimension in his consideration of the purpose of history 70 years prior. In submitting that “it is generally thought to be of importance to man that he should know himself: where knowing himself means not knowing his personal peculiarities... but his nature,”<sup>58</sup> he also incorporates an unmistakably philosophical component to a discipline that was at the time flirting with

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 9.

<sup>55</sup>Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 40.

<sup>56</sup>Primo Levi, “Se questo è un uomo,” *Opere 1*, edited by Marco Belpoliti (Roma: La Biblioteca di Repubblica- Espresso, 2009), 3, quoted in White, *The Practical Past*, 38.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, 38.

<sup>58</sup>Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 10.

objective, scientific ideals.

Returning to more contemporary historians, while White does not make the case for a dismantling of the historical past, he does impress the necessity to embrace a more relevant and pragmatic history for the general populace. This is expressed first through a repudiation of the notion that history can ever be true; that innate within any reconstruction of the past is *fiction*. A term by which he specifically means “a kind of invention or construction based on hypothesis rather than a manner of writing or thinking focused on purely imaginary or fantastic entities,”<sup>59</sup> as no historian can ever bring the past into the present in its unadulterated entirety. Some level of interpretation must be applied to the past which will inevitably carry with it the shadow of the historian and further, that of the reader who is again interpreting the provided information through their own lens. History is not simply a fact gathering and affirming discipline. The component which gives the discipline its value “consists essentially of interpreting evidence”<sup>60</sup> to reconstruct past events. To many, from the earliest of Greek historians, who sought to preserve what was ‘good,’ valuable, or edify lessons for future generations,<sup>61</sup> to modern storytellers who render the past as a series of reminders on the fragility of civilization,<sup>62</sup> deriving ethics from that interpretation is that value.

Keith Jenkins, a fellow theorist and contemporary, continues White’s arguments and notes, that even if a historian were to have access to every fact of the past, the requisite methodological framework to confirm and select facts does not exist. He argues that truth “ultimately lies beyond method and evidence in ideology...talk of method as the road to truth is misleading. There is a range of methods without any agreed criteria for choosing.”<sup>63</sup> Consequently, in place of the question “What is history?” historians would find themselves better situated if they asked “Who is history for?”<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Jenkins continues, “if we do this then we can see that history is bound to be problematic because it is a contested term/discourse, meaning different things to different groups.”<sup>65</sup> The framing of this question, like the former from which it is juxtaposed, has no concrete

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<sup>59</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, preface XII.

<sup>60</sup>Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 10.

<sup>61</sup>Burrow, *A History of Histories*, 11-58.

<sup>62</sup>Dan Carlin, *The End Is Always Near: Apocalyptic Moments, from the Bronze Age Collapse to Nuclear Near Misses* (London, Harper Collins Publishers, 2019).

<sup>63</sup>Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 18.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 22.

answer. Instead, and importantly, it necessitates each history to be considered in relation to the audience for which it was created. To the most devout of modernist historians, such a degree of relativism would likely be sacrilegious, however, the thought to abandon the pursuit of a methodologically correct and (to the extent that it is possible) objective history is not uncommon. Some, such as Elizabeth D. Ermath consider it to be the most natural way to consider the past. She remarks on the idea of individually contingent histories as such: “obviously I am concerned, in any case, only with the world as my point of view orientates it: I shall never know any other. The relative subjectivity of my sense of sight serves me precisely to define my situation in the world.”<sup>66</sup>

The idea of history as a compass to one's place in world, while articulated in this manner by Jenkins in 1991, was already apparent to a large degree in the rising awareness of the value of public history, and its establishment as a subset of history in the nineteen-seventies as historians recognized opportunities to officially expand the purview of the discipline to the wider world. The term, defined by Robert Kelley in 1978, in its barest sense referred to the “employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia: in government, private corporations, the media, historical societies and museums, [and] even in private practice.”<sup>67</sup> Through decades of academic review and the practical implementation of public historians in wider society, it has been noted that, “the phrase ‘and the historical method’ soon disappeared from what became the fallback definition of public history,”<sup>68</sup> causing the application of the term to extend to a much broader demographic. Compounding this reduction in the definitional boundaries, with the rise of the internet the requisite of employment, although typically still implied, is also often no longer applicable, for as noted previously, financial barriers in the creation of public history have in some areas all but dissolved.

Public history is the face of history to the majority of individuals in the Western world. Yet, despite its now forty year history as a clarified subset of historical practice, the field

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<sup>66</sup>Elizabeth E. Ermarth, *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), 148. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv15r58bv>.

<sup>67</sup>Robert Kelley, “Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects,” *The Public Historian* 1, no.1 (October 1, 1978): 16. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3377666>.

<sup>68</sup>Rebecca Conard, “Complicating Origin Stories: The Making of Public History into an Academic Field in the United States,” in *A Companion to Public History* edited by David M. Dean (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 19.

of active public historians is small. In a short paper on the subject from 2020, Jock Phillips estimated that within New Zealand there are only “a total of 170-180 [gainfully employed] public historians in the country.”<sup>69</sup> One of the causes of this, J.M Winter argues, is that public histories “collective character stops many people from going into it,”<sup>70</sup> as this type of research inevitably curtails the authorial voice historians. For projects at the scale expected in many expressions of public history require more than one contributor, and, as the “fundamental ethos of the historical profession is individualistic”<sup>71</sup> there are sometimes difficulties in finding professional historians willing to take part. While likely accurate, this figure is clearly disparate in consideration of the extent of the history with which the public actually engages. Museums, cinema, games, television shows, historical sites, public holidays, and of course podcasts are all expressions of public history. In many cases however, these are produced or maintained by amateurs, or gainfully employed professionals who would be considered, or who consider themselves to be something other than historians. Today, history podcasts by themselves are a mainstay of public discourse to such a degree that they arguably have more influence on the daily lives of many citizens of Western countries, especially those who have grown up in an online world, than academic work on the same subjects do. Moreover, a corollary of the technology is that individuals can produce comprehensive and widely accessible public histories without relinquishing the authorial role. As the development of the internet has allowed for quick and reliable transfers of large amounts of data, the potential to produce and communicate public history has correspondingly increased. Yet, conspicuous in its absence is the attention academic historians have given the creators of these podcasts.

In some regards, the exchange of information through podcasting embodies many of the speculations that academics of the 1990’s put forth regarding the Internet’s future utility. In *Highway Of Dreams*, written by now Professor Emeritus of Communications at the Annenberg School for Communication, Michael Noll envisaged that as the technology of the internet developed, the “world’s knowledge will be instantly accessible from computer terminals over a packet-switched public data network that is friendly and easy

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<sup>69</sup>Jock Phillips, “The University and Public History,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 54, no.1 (2020): 113. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=azh&AN=143017744&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>70</sup>J. M. Winter, “Public History and Historical Scholarship,” *History Workshop Journal*, no.42 (Autumn, 1996): 169. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4289472>.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 169.

to use. Students will do their library research without ever going to a library. Books will all be stored at central data banks in a digital format and will be accessible over the telecommunication superhighway.”<sup>72</sup> While he makes clear that this was intended as a hyperbole,<sup>73</sup> a utopian view of free exchange of information through the web was a subject on the minds those who witnessed its rise. This has not happened of course. As many identified early, the free transfer of all information is a utopia in concept only;<sup>74</sup> for one, any who derive their income from the creation of this information would likely object if it was actually put into practice. The internet does however, proliferate information at an ever-increasing pace to a far broader audience than historians of the past had access. Podcasting is, admittedly, simply a new vehicle of public history, but it is one whose availability allows for easier, more straight-forward consumption than public histories until now.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the medium’s technical elements overturn many outdated assumptions about public history. The idea, for example, that “public history is publicly-funded history” and as such “no one else will pay the sums needed for public history projects: museums, exhibitions, television productions,”<sup>76</sup> has been made largely redundant in the online space. While only a product of recent years, as a consequence of payment platforms and crowd sourcing of income, creating public history has become a viable career. In this sense perhaps, podcasts have led to a new paradigm for public history, and one that may more closely resemble the dreams of past academics than they would have reasonably expected.

Outside of the historical scholarship, other disciplines within the humanities have paid comparatively more attention the digitization of communication in recent years; the field of teaching is particularly given to exploring new technology. As a consequence of the corona pandemic of 2020, research into this will also likely continue to accelerate in the coming years. In teacher of creative media and digital culture at Washington State University, John F. Barber’s paper, “Digital storytelling: New opportunities for humanities scholarship and pedagogy”<sup>77</sup> he outlines several technologies at the

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<sup>72</sup>Michael Noll, *Highway of Dreams A Critical View Along the Information Superhighway* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 7.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>74</sup>John Carlo Bertot and Patricia Diamond Fletcher, *World Libraries on the Information Superhighway: Preparing for the Challenges of the New Millennium* (Hershey: IGI Global, 2000).

<sup>75</sup>Tromans, “Casting into the Past,” 18.

<sup>76</sup>Winter, “Public History and Historical Scholarship,” 170.

<sup>77</sup>Barber, “Digital storytelling,” 3.

vanguard of information circulation in the digital world, including podcasts. Beginning with playwright David Mamet's assertion that drama, or storytelling, is the nature of perception and, "that it is a human need to construct, or have constructed for us, narratives about our lives that "order the universe into a comprehensible form," a cause and effect conclusion," *Barbers* explores the extent to which new media is and could be utilized to exert influence on today's culture. Podcasts, interactive narratives, multimedia works, games and trans-media approaches to teaching, sharing and creating culture have re-invigorated oral and aural storytelling as well as allow for us to "uncover and organize forgotten historical and cultural information into meaningful personal narratives about a place, a time and people."<sup>78</sup> Again, that podcasting currently has an established place in today's cultural discourse and will likely become increasingly more important in the future is a growing sentiment in other disciplines. The discipline of history, by having the ability to integrate narrative into its work so frictionlessly, is well positioned to take advantage of this.

Interestingly, historians are not entirely unaware of this fact either, however there is a noticeable overall failure to keep up with new popularized technology despite the elevation of older public mediums. Historians embrace, for example, a culture of cinematic review. The discourse around cinema as a medium for history is extremely comprehensive, some considering the disciplines of film and history as those in a "parallel orbit".<sup>79</sup> When public history is mentioned, it is likely that cinema would be among the first expressions of it to come to mind. Newer mediums have seen comparatively less attention despite the similarities with which they can present history; historical video games,<sup>80</sup> audiobooks and podcasts being perhaps the three most apparent. This is, of course, a result of the role that cinema has had historically in acting as an agent of the past, recreating, interpreting, and presenting it on-screen to audiences through a variety of styles and genres. Cinematic history has been the at the vanguard of popular history as a form of cultural exploration and expression, as well as harnessed as a means of propaganda. Today however, as evidenced by the engagement online, this

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>79</sup>Eleftheria Thanouli, *History and Film: A Tale of Two Disciplines* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 1-20. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=nlebk&AN=1881487&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>80</sup>Cyril Brom, Lukáš Kolek, Patřicia Martinkova and Vit řisler, "Can video games change attitudes towards history? Results from a laboratory experiment measuring short and long-term effects," *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* (August, 2021). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.1111/jcal.12575>.

dominance is at least in part giving way to new media. For example, Alexander Sokurov's somewhat well-known 2002 film *Russian Ark* received "150 user responses on Rotten Tomatoes, 164 on IMDB, and about 40 on Metacritic" as well as engagement on Twitter and 397 ratings on Amazon at the time of writing, many being lengthy reviews by "participants seeking undertake cultural work"<sup>81</sup> in exploring the films construction and messaging. These responses were explored in some depth by Jerome De Goot in *Consuming History*.<sup>82</sup> Most notably, the film also received several entries into academic journals, with historians as well writing on the films cultural impact.<sup>838485</sup> Comparatively however, *The History of Rome* podcast by Mike Duncan has received close to ten thousand ratings on the Apple Podcasts website,<sup>86</sup> and his related audiobook *The Storm Before the Storm: The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic*<sup>87</sup> had had over two thousand reviews by February 22, 2022, yet only a single academic article is directly concerned with the contents of this work.<sup>88</sup> This single comparison is not an argument to prove that there is an inequity in the relative importance that historians confer to cinema over other mediums so much as it is an example to highlight a fact that is apparent already. The relationship that history has with cinema is well established,

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81Jerome De Goot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 55.

82Ibid, 55-57.

83George Sikharulidze, "Rethinking Russian Ark," *Film International (Enskede, Sweden)* 10, no.4 (October, 2012): 101–108. doi:10.1386/fint.10.4-5.101\_1.

84Tim Harte, "A Visit to the Museum: Aleksandr Sokurov's 'Russian Ark' and the Framing of the Eternal," *Slavic Review* 64, no.1 (2005): 43–58. doi:10.2307/3650066.

85Yana Hashamova, "Two Visions of a Usable Past in (Op)Position to the West: Mikhalkov's The Barber of Siberia and Sokurov's Russian Ark," *The Russian Review* 65, no.2 (2006): 250–66.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3664400&site=eds-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3664400&site=eds-live&scope=site.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3664400&site=eds-live&scope=site)

86"The History of Rome: Customer Reviews," Apple, accessed 22 February, 2022,

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-history-of-rome/id261654474>. See Appendix 2 for screen capture at time of viewing.

87"The Storm Before the Storm: The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic Audible

Audiobook – Unabridged," Amazon, accessed 22 February, 2022, [https://www.amazon.com/The-Storm-Before-Storm-audiobook/dp/B0747X8KKT/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?](https://www.amazon.com/The-Storm-Before-Storm-audiobook/dp/B0747X8KKT/ref=sr_1_2?crid=UFTHBQE6XGW1&keywords=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast&qid=1644821342&prefix=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast%2Caps%2C291&sr=8-2)

[crid=UFTHBQE6XGW1&keywords=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast&qid=1644821342&prefix=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast%2Caps%2C291&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/The-Storm-Before-Storm-audiobook/dp/B0747X8KKT/ref=sr_1_2?crid=UFTHBQE6XGW1&keywords=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast&qid=1644821342&prefix=mike+duncan+history+of+rome+podcast%2Caps%2C291&sr=8-2). See Appendix 3 for screen capture at time of viewing.

88Benjamin J. Dueholm, "Lessons from Revolutions: The Relevance of Mike Duncan's History Podcast," *The Christian Century* 138, no.17 (August 25, 2021): 30–33.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=reh&AN=ATLAiREM210930000590&site=eds-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=reh&AN=ATLAiREM210930000590&site=eds-live&scope=site.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=reh&AN=ATLAiREM210930000590&site=eds-live&scope=site)

however as other mediums of cultural expression have gained popularity, the appreciation that historians show to cinema has not been concomitantly replicated.

While it is the case that discourse on podcasting within the historical scholarship is rare, an attempt has been made to address whether podcasting is “a new way of presenting the same information”, or “a fundamental shift in engagement” with historical material in graduate student Dom Tromans’ 2016 dissertation.<sup>89</sup> He argues, naturally, for the latter, and identifies various aspects of podcasts that not only impact how information is presented to the public, but how that public selects for, understands and consumes it. Most notably, Tromans takes pains to identify those facets of podcasting’s utility that are not mirrored by the written word, such as allowing the listener a “passive rather than active consumption,”<sup>90</sup> or that aural communication can, in cases, communicate more “layers of meaning”<sup>91</sup> than text; the dramatic, performative nature that is inseparable from the spoken word. Tromans also discusses the efforts, or lack thereof, to digitally store audio as a pedagogical tool in top universities throughout the United Kingdom, despite many years of recorded lectures and access to the technology. While he notes, American universities seem to be comparatively better in this regard, it is still clear that the true value of this resource is not being exploited in academia’s history departments. Any student who attended university during the restrictions adopted in response to the novel corona virus will attest to the convenience of re-watchable lectures. Consequently, Tromans’ paper highlights the extent to which the technology could be utilized as a new tool for education and expression if academia took a proactive approach to embrace the technology – a point that will be reinforced throughout this paper. What he provides little analysis on however, and Tromans himself laments this in his preface, is the contents of historical podcasts and how independent historical podcasters go about constructing and presenting their information. In part, it is that void which the following will attempt to fill, as podcasts, while undoubtedly a useful tool in historical education, are also effectively expanding the frontier of public history in very different ways.

The discipline of history is a product of artistic and philosophical components as much as from the pursuit of a scientific methodology that is so ubiquitous and valued

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<sup>89</sup>Tromans, “Casting into the Past,” 9.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid, 14.

throughout academia.<sup>92</sup> And post-modern literature reappraising the discipline suggests that the transition from modern to post-modern histories is epochal and incompatible with any scientific method of history. As such, history today is far more varied in its exposition, and it is necessary as well as inevitable for history to be “interminably open to new and disobedient approaches.”<sup>93</sup> Prophetically it seems, new technologies have done exactly that, with cinema, games and of course podcasts contrasting with academia's traditional approaches to exploring the past. Yet, while public history has become much more widely discussed in the past decades, there are still gaps in the historical literature on how and through which mediums these new histories are being presented. The extent to which historical information is communicated through the internet is simultaneously understood yet underutilized, despite, perhaps, it now achieving as close as we may ever come to the ideals of a publicly utilized information superhighway. New technology through which individuals throughout the world can connect, discuss, and understand the past in new ways.

Podcasting is in large part a culmination of all of these discussions. It draws, somewhat ironically, from both the very new and very old. The medium of podcasting allows for the expression of public history through a combination of those oral traditions that have been intimately tied with society since prehistory and technology that was in its incipiency barely two decades ago. The following two sections will explore in depth exemplars of historical podcasters and how they approach the presentation of history. While these two individuals are not by any means exhaustive of the different styles of historical podcasting, each is unique to such a degree that they do represent a variety of that which the medium can achieve and contribute to modern historiography. The first, Dan Carlin, from the perspective of ‘amateur’ history, and the second, Patrick Wyman, as one of the rare examples of academic historians engaging in the space.

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<sup>92</sup>White, *Metahistory*, preface X-XI.

<sup>93</sup>Keith Jenkins, *New Thoughts on an Old Discipline: Refiguring History* (London: Routledge, 2003), abstract.

### Chapter Three: Dan Carlin's "Hardcore History"

Dan Carlin's entry into podcasting coincided with the development of mass online communication that is now an integral part of information exchange today. This chapter primarily discusses Carlin's development as an oral historian throughout his career as a podcaster and what his success tells us about the influence of podcasting as a means of communicating public history.

In the early 2000's, social media had begun to establish a notable presence in the online world, quickly proliferating throughout the young, technically literate generation. The social networking website MySpace for example, had approximately 54 million users in 2006 and even surpassed Google's total visitors for a brief period the same year.<sup>94</sup> Facebook, founded in 2004, saw parabolic growth as the decade came to a close, with its user base expanding from 100 million in 2008 to 517 million two years later.<sup>95</sup> While comparatively obscure, podcasting was another emergent technology of communication burgeoning amidst many in the post-tech bubble space. An ever-growing catalogue of niche shows had introduced podcasting to the public dialogue to such an extent that 'podcast' was even coined word of the year by New Oxford American Dictionary in 2005.<sup>96</sup> From shows centered on current events, self-improvement, science, games, celebrities, music, comedy, fitness, health and nutrition, to abstract topics such as love, as the decade progressed, for every interest a person had, a podcast was created to discuss it at length.<sup>97</sup>

Today, if you were to disregard quality and engagement, a cursory glance at any large podcasting directory will display many thousands of podcasts of listed under the genre

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<sup>94</sup>Pete Cashmore, "MySpace, America's Number One," Mashable, last modified July 11, 2006, <https://mashable.com/archive/myspace-americas-number-one>.

<sup>95</sup>"Number of people using social media platforms, 2004 to 2010," Our World in Data, accessed November 3, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/users-by-social-media-platform?time=2004..2010&country=Facebook~Instagram~MySpace~Pinterest~Reddit~Snapchat~TikTok~Tumblr~Twitter~WeChat~Whatsapp~YouTube>.

<sup>96</sup>Oliver Skinner, "The Complete History of Podcasts," Voices, last modified July 21, 2020, <https://www.voices.com/blog/history-of-podcasts/>.

<sup>97</sup>Miranda Sawyer, "The 10 best lesser-known podcasts," The Guardian, last modified January 18, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2014/jan/18/10-best-lesser-known-podcasts-miranda-sawyer>.

of history. Consolidating this into those that see significant exposure would still leave hundreds of notable historical podcasts in the English language alone. Less than two decades ago however, a similar search would have been met with extremely limited results – ‘history’ perhaps being considered a rather incongruous word on the frontiers of new technology. Dan Carlin, the host of *Common Sense*, *Hardcore History* and its spin-off *Hardcore History: Addendum*,<sup>98</sup> and recent author of *The End Is Always Near*, was among those who first filled the vacuum. Carlin appeared in the podcasting space in 2005 with a political commentary and current events show *Common Sense* (a name which conveys the moderate and pragmatic approach with which the show attempts to explore contemporary issues), leveraging his experience as a radio host and journalist to produce quality online content with greater liberty to express his personal perspectives and creative style than in his previous occupation.<sup>99</sup> Like many early adopters, Carlin recognized potential in the utility provided by the internet to reach a large and very different audience to regular broadcasting networks, as well as the freedom yielded to the creator in choosing what to discuss and how to discuss it. Having dealt with amateur content throughout the 1990’s and facing difficulties finding co-operative financiers to invest in a similar venture, podcasting presented an opportunity to pursue what he saw as an imminent extension of modern media.<sup>100</sup> Currently, after seventeen years of publication, *Common Sense* has 322 installments, with the episodes fifty through to 322 being accessible and widely popular to this day.<sup>101</sup> Carlin entered into podcasting on the cusp of a period of parabolic industry growth yet before an overcrowding of the space, and this timing may have in part contributed to *Common Sense*’s early success. Regardless, it proved that the potential Carlin perceived in the technology could be actualized into a worthwhile pursuit, and less than a year after his debut, on July 27, 2006, he ventured outside the domain of contemporary political commentary and into

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<sup>98</sup>Dan Carlin, “Hardcore History: Addendum,” pilot episode released October 19, 2017, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

<sup>99</sup>Alex V. Cipolle, “Q&A With Hardcore History’s Dan Carlin Print Edition,” Eugene Weekly, last modified December 24, 2014,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180127025222/http://www.eugeneweekly.com/20141224/culture/qa-hardcore-history%E2%80%99s-dan-carlin>.

Carlin worked as a TV reporter, columnist and radio host during the late 1980’s and 90’s. His coverage of the 1992 LA Riots is mentioned frequently in news articles, and on occasion by himself, however copies of the original columns are unable to be sourced.

<sup>100</sup>Zachary Davis, “A Hardcore Conversation With Hardcore History’s Dan Carlin at Harvard’s Sound Education 2018,” Sound Education, July 28th, 2019, YouTube video, website, 14:10,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1obLWK4vjg>.

<sup>101</sup>Dan Carlin, “Common Sense With Dan Carlin,” pilot episode released 2005, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product-category/common-sense-with-dan-carlin/>.

the field of history, releasing what is now one of the most recognized podcasts of all time, *Hardcore History*.

Like *Common Sense*, *Hardcore History* quickly gained a cult following and saw positive responses almost ubiquitously throughout media. Among its accolades, the show was ranked fifth best podcast of all time by Slate Magazine in 2014,<sup>102</sup> and won the Podcast Awards' 'Best Educational Podcast' in 2015.<sup>103</sup> Today, *Hardcore History* boasts 67 episodes and over 143 hours of cumulative listening time.<sup>104</sup> While as a consequence of the nature of the mediums decentralized distribution and privately owned statistics, exact data is impossible to find, according to the New York Times, *Blueprint for Armageddon VI*, released May, 2015, reached more than 351,000 downloads within 24 hours of its release. Since that time the audience size has only grown,<sup>105</sup> and conservative speculation alongside a gathering of what little data is available publicly would suggest that today each episode has accumulated at least millions, if not tens of millions of views. Again, a number that will only increase going forward. In addition, Carlin's cognizance of the changing media landscape and his drive to constantly adapt and improve has contributed to his success. He engages dynamically with both audience and technology to remain relevant. This has garnered him considerable prestige over the last seventeen years and Dan Carlin now exists as a staple of the podcasting industry; with *Hardcore History* in particular holding seminal status in its genre. Carlin's appearances outside of his own shows (which will be discussed later) attest to this.

In spite of the shows accolades, initially Carlin intended the show simply as a way to tell stories about the historical occurrences he had a personal interest in without the constraints of traditional broadcasting. In particular, he was intent on utilizing

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<sup>102</sup>David Haglund and Rebecca Onion, "The 25 Best Podcast Episodes Ever," Slate, last modified December 14th, 2014, [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/ten\\_years\\_in\\_your\\_ears/2014/12/best\\_podcast\\_episodes\\_ever\\_the\\_25\\_best\\_from\\_serial\\_to\\_the\\_ricky\\_gervais.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/ten_years_in_your_ears/2014/12/best_podcast_episodes_ever_the_25_best_from_serial_to_the_ricky_gervais.html).

<sup>103</sup>"Past Winners," Podcast Awards, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.podcastawards.com/past-winners>.

<sup>104</sup>See Appendix 4. The cumulative total has been calculated based on the catalogue of podcasts available as of October 25, 2021. For an updated catalogue see <https://www.dancarlin.com/hardcore-history-series/>.

<sup>105</sup>Dave Itzkoff, "Obama Sets Download Record for Maron Podcast," New York Times, last modified June 23, 2014, [http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/06/23/obama-interview-sets-download-record-for-maron-podcast/?\\_r=0](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/06/23/obama-interview-sets-download-record-for-maron-podcast/?_r=0).

podcasting's 'white space' to reflect as he wanted on any given topic.<sup>106</sup> The show was aimed at like-minded individuals, and commenced, Carlin states, "under the assumption that if you're listening you already know the history, and so, all I did was have the conversations you used to have as a history major with your other history majors."<sup>107</sup> The pilot episode, *Alexander vs Hitler*,<sup>108</sup> a comparative discussion of modern societal perception of Alexander the Great and Adolf Hitler centered on the question: 'Who was worse?' embodies this pursuit. The episode falls between lecture and conversation, with listeners expected to earnestly consider some of the questions that Carlin raises, while for others, an anticipated response leads the 'conversation' forwards. He explores the warping that occurs through relativity bias, cultural predisposition and historical review and asks the audience to consider for themselves through which lenses they view certain characters in history, in a manner similar to a teacher guiding their students. Alexander he argued, has been romanticized to heroic status through much of history. He was spoken of Whiggishly by civilizations in times when their own territories were expanding; the Romans during Pax Romana or the colonial nations throughout the early modern era; yet was despised by civilizations in periods of expansions of civil liberties.<sup>109</sup> However, as much as we discuss Alexander's governorship or the military conquests themselves, historians are inevitably drawn to the mythology that has developed around his life. The progenitorial example, as recorded by Plutarch, is that upon meeting Diogenes, Alexander, "admired so much the haughtiness and grandeur of the man who had nothing but scorn for him, that he said to his followers, who were laughing and jesting about the philosopher as they went away, 'But verily, if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes.'"<sup>110</sup> Yet, it is a fact that *he was* Alexander, the King of Kings, and the hand will remain iron regardless of how much velvet history would wrap it with. Hitler comparatively, Carlin asserts, has transitioned from the label of a lunatic to something of an evil genius, and it is rare to find any historical literature concerning him that is not framed by a condemnation of his actions and beliefs.<sup>111</sup> The episode concludes by proffering several questions: are there not similarities in the atrocities that

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<sup>106</sup>Brian Rose, "Dan Carlin – Hardcore History – Part 1/2," London Real, last modified December 18th, 2020, YouTube Video, 29:31, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMXlgKHWSU>.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, 30:33.

<sup>108</sup>Dan Carlin, "Alexander vs. Hitler," Hardcore History, July 26, 2006, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-1-alexander-versus-hitler/>.

<sup>109</sup>Carlin, "Alexander vs. Hitler," 3:39.

<sup>110</sup>Plutarch, *Lives Volume VII: Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar* trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 261.

<sup>111</sup>Carlin, "Alexander vs. Hitler," 9:34.

these two men committed? If one were to introduce someone ignorant of the 20th century to these two individuals – withholding the abundance of photos, video and war memorabilia – which would they consider to be the more vicious or cruel? In another twenty-five hundred years, will people view Hitler with the detachment in which we examine Alexander today?

The contents of the episode are stimulating, and Carlin's cavalier approach to historical discussion confer both a freedom to his work and an accessibility to the audience which is not shared by academic texts; a fact of which Carlin is very aware. For instance, even if one were to ignore the methodological criticisms that could be levied at the comparison drawn between these two figures, to propose the moral comparison itself could be construed as extremely provocative. It is something that could be “rejected as being not only a misrepresentation of reality but... a violation of the victims’ [of the Holocaust] moral right to a true and accurate account of what they had experienced,”<sup>112</sup> and as such shouldn’t be asked, and almost certainly wouldn’t be asked by a licensed historian.<sup>113</sup> For the audience however, *Hardcore History’s* unorthodox approach to exploring history compels them to engage with the material. Carlin often monologues briefly on theoretical alternative histories (counter-factual histories), that are fascinating to the listener, but from which it is impossible to draw a cohesive argument with a substantive conclusion about the past. Stylistically, this is a defining element of the show, and it frequently recurs throughout. In almost all episodes, Carlin presents subjects in some variation of ‘what if’ questions. Sometimes these serve as a platform for short digressions into tangential but interesting thoughts, in other cases they serve as the inspiration for shorter episodes in their entirety. (*Blitz*) *History Under the Influence*, for example, questions how the abuse of alcohol or drugs could have changed the outcome of significant occurrences throughout history, and Carlin expects his audience to apply their own understandings of such impairments to imagine how different history could have been were it not for, ill-timed or ill-considered, consumption of recreational

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<sup>112</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, 26.

<sup>113</sup>White, “Truth and Circumstance: What (if Anything) Can Properly Be Said about the Holocaust?” in *The Practical Past*, 28.

An example of this can be found in the chapter “Truth and Circumstance,” wherein White considers the ethical obligations historians may have in conceptualizing the Holocaust in relation to its victims as an event with such “moral weight and ontological substance.” What questions historians should ask, as well as how the findings of these conclusions should be presented is in area of ongoing debate.

drugs.<sup>114</sup> *What if* Hermann Wilhelm Göring, commander of Hitler's Jagdgeschwader I, was not reliant on morphine?<sup>115</sup> *Would* Winston Churchill still have been Churchill without his excessive consumption of alcohol? A later show, *(Blitz) Old School Toughness*, is concerned with how the nature of a people's grit *could* have had an impact on the past; what *could* have happened *if* society was composed of weak people during the world wars<sup>116</sup> and how would our society today cope with such events? *(Blitz) Suffer the Children* derives its inspiration from DeMausian psycho-history, a field that has seen its share of skepticism,<sup>117</sup> and contemplates, aware of the anachronism, how widespread child abuse and parenting practices in earlier eras could explain some of history's brutality. Comparing this to Western society's values around raising children today, he wonders not only if the raising of children in this way led to what we now consider as atrocities of the past, but how our society and our practices could be viewed by future generations.<sup>118</sup> Carlin often asks the questions academic historians are unwilling or unable to ask. Each episode of his show is musing in nature, with the concrete elements of the past serving as a locus for reflection on the circumstances of today. However, each show also raises questions that not only do we not know the answer to, but we, almost assuredly, cannot know the answers to. They are questions that will perpetually remain stranded in speculation, questions that make for excellent conversation pieces with new perspectives from which to consider the past, but do not fit well into academic discourse.

Often, in the modern discipline of history, the terms 'philosophical' or 'theoretical' convey a critique. To assess the 'was' in history is, for the most part, firmer ground to stand on than what 'could have been' when piecing together the events that led to today. In the case of *Hardcore History* however, Carlin's less forensic approach serves as an asset to the show rather than a negative. By smoothing over the complexities of specifics, and not relying entirely on dense, rigorous arguments he creates a digestible

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<sup>114</sup>Dan Carlin, "(Blitz) History Under the Influence," *Hardcore History*, May 6, 2008, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-20-blitz-history-under-the-influence/>.

<sup>115</sup>Leonard Mosley, *The Reich Marshal: A Biography of Hermann Goering* (New York City: Doubleday, 1974), 104.

<sup>116</sup>Dan Carlin, "(Blitz) Old School Toughness," *Hardcore History*, April 27, 2010, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-33-blitz-old-school-toughness/>.

<sup>117</sup>Hans Jürgen Eysenck, *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2017). See Chapter 7 "Psycho-Babble and Pseudo-History," 171-192 for an overview of the criticism leveled at the discipline.

<sup>118</sup>Dan Carlin, "(Blitz) Suffer the Children," *Hardcore History*, December 9, 2009, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-31-blitz-suffer-the-children/>.

slice of historical knowledge wrapped in compelling ideas and questions. Consequently, *Hardcore History* contributes to modern historical discourse, at least in the public sphere, in at least two respects. First, it encourages public engagement in thinking about history by closely tying it in a clear manner to the audience and their lives today, reifying history as the listener attempts to compare their own experiences to those of people of the past. Second, it disregards a convention of modern historical discourse that is imposing to those without formal training: it challenges the *style* of questions that are typically asked by favoring the discussion of the topic itself over the pursuit of conclusion. While history is, as David Hackett Fischer defined, “a problem solving discipline,”<sup>119</sup> a problem proffered does not necessarily need to be resolved for it to be useful – in this case, it is the audiences own consideration of historical questions that renders it such.

A professor of media studies, Andrew J. Salvati writes that what Carlin practices is “history as a form of oral storytelling.” That, as “a kind of modern day Herodotus – Carlin constructs an experience of the past that is guided both by traditional historiographical tools (primary and secondary sources), and also by a sense of empathy for the people within the stories who ‘were raised with such different cultures influences, such different expectations than we were,’ but with whom we nevertheless share ‘our humanness.’”<sup>120</sup> According to Carlin, this subtle transformation from musing theorist to historical storyteller was in large part due to responses from the audience – a democratizing element of the podcasting space which will be explored in more depth later. While, in early episodes of *Hardcore History* he would largely speculate over small slices of history that were of interest to him, the audience would then express their desire for context – reaching out through comments or email and requesting the background for each topic.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, later episodes expanded to include more extensive historical information regarding occurrences and people of the past, and shifted from amusing diversions to a more comprehensive historical purview. The evolution towards a more comprehensive historical narrative took place gradually however, with shows extending to roughly one hour in length from 2006 to 2008. For comparison, from the 2006 pilot episodes sixteen minute runtime, in July of 2008 he

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<sup>119</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *Historians Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), Introduction XV.

<sup>120</sup>Andrew J. Salvati, “Podcasting the Past: Hardcore History, Fandom and DIY Histories,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 22, no.2 (2015): 237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2015.1083375>.

<sup>121</sup>Rose, “Dan Carlin – Hardcore history – Part 1/2,” 30:50.

released his first three part series, *Punic Nightmares I*,<sup>122</sup> regarding the Roman and Carthaginian conflicts, which when totaled, add to more than three and a half hours and reference twenty-five separate historical texts. As of 2021, his most recent work, a chronicle of the Japanese experience through the Second World War, *Supernova in the East*,<sup>123</sup> surpasses twenty-six and a half hours in length and refers to eighty-six historical texts, several of which were written by those party to the events.<sup>124</sup> Carlin believed originally that audiences would not enjoy the lengthier episodes, and again, credits their feedback with the change in length, remarking that a common response to his belief that nobody wants to sit down and listen for 60 minutes was simply a feature of the medium: “we have pause buttons.”<sup>125</sup>

Carlin’s most recent show, *Supernova in the East* is the result of *Hardcore History*’s style and pursuit having developed over 15 years. It exemplifies what is arguably most valuable about Carlin’s current work: an expansive historical narrative that both engages and entertains while relaying the past. Naturally, as concision necessitates, significant omissions must be made in summarizing, however, in the interests of expressing the extent of considerable scope that Carlin endeavored to include in this work an outline has been detailed below. The introductory segment of *Supernova* opens with Carlin considering how the culture of the Japanese made them so distinct from other nations throughout the world, why they were so susceptible to radicalization and the defining aspects of Japan’s particular brand of until-death nationalism. Following this, he continues on to explore the impact of social-Darwinist theory on the Japanese political mind, and provides an overview of historical Japanese hierarchical structure through several centuries of development; lingering particularly on the ideal of the samurai and the divine element that Emperor Showa, Hirohito, possessed. Carlin describes and compares the structures within both the Japanese government and its military as a premise from which to justify Japanese decision-making as the story continues. He then goes on to explore several significant occurrences leading up to the war: beliefs of racial supremacy both globally and within Japan, the advent of Japanese war propaganda, both

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122Dan Carlin, “Punic Nightmares I-III,” *Hardcore History*, first episode released July 27, 2008, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-21-punic-nightmares-i/>.

123Dan Carlin, “Supernova in the East I-VI,” *Hardcore History*, first episode released July 14, 2018, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-62-supernova-in-the-east-i/>.

124The texts noted being: Hiroo Onoda’s *My 30 Year War*, Winston Churchill’s recollections, and James Jones’ *The Thin Red Line*.

125Rose, “Dan Carlin – Hardcore history – Part 1/2,” 28:16.

the practical and perceived consequences of the First World War by the Japanese before finally ending on how China and various Western countries reacted to the invasion of Manchuria. This is the first four hours and thirty-one minutes of *Supernova's* story. From parts two through five Carlin discusses the Rape of Nanking, the beginning and full duration of the Second World War, the experience of the Japanese (from politicians and military personnel to citizens of Japan), the economic considerations of war, the West's response to Japanese expansion, development of new military technology, and Western soldiers' perspectives of the Japanese among many other things. Lastly, in the sixth installment, he retells Japan's gradual loss of islands throughout the Pacific and the experiences of soldiers involved in these specific battles, before spending a significant length of time exploring the decision to drop the atomic bomb, the personal experiences of those who lived in Hiroshima, and the Emperor's ultimate surrender.

Throughout the show, Carlin does not attempt to disguise his interest in the extremes of the human experience, and compares the lives of people who existed during this time to our own. In regards to the experiences recorded by Corporal James Jones who saw combat at Guadalcanal in 1942, Carlin states, "I always am fascinated with the extremes of the human experience... what James Jones talks about there [Guadalcanal], what this war put human beings into...and what those situations did to them."<sup>126</sup> Another soldier, Hiroo Onoda, was a Japanese second lieutenant who surrendered in 1974, 29 years following Japan's official surrender and the end of the war. In his case, Onoda personifies the extremes of Japanese national devotion, and acts as reference point that Carlin returns to repeatedly. His interest, however, is not simply that such fanatical beliefs are embodied in Onoda and similar soldiers, but that the development of this trait could be entirely attributed to the circumstances of the world in which they were raised, and consequently, if a similar set of circumstances were to arise again it is not unimaginable that such a type of people would arise with it. He argues thus:

There is a certain understanding that what happened in Japan can happen again. It will happen differently – never looks the same. But, look at the elements involved, and wonder if you can't imagine them being filtered, instead of through a Japanese cultural filter, the cultural filter of your society. But used the same way and turned to the same kind of uses, and maybe turning out the same kind of intensity that the Japanese really

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<sup>126</sup>Dan Carlin, "Supernova in the East V," Hardcore History, November 14, 2020, podcast, website, 1:08:43. <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-66-supernova-in-the-east-v/>.

seem to exude all throughout this story.<sup>127</sup>

Carlin stresses the suffering that people endured, and questions how inevitable the actions taken by individuals involved in the war were throughout the duration of the show; when considering the options available to them, did these individuals really have any choice at all? Add to this the effects that propaganda and the lack of concrete information had on those Japanese citizens and soldiers, and choices that may seem reasonable from our perspective today could have been inconceivable at the time (and vice-versa); the things that an individual does not know are often as important or even more important than the things which they do. He states, pulling the audience with him into the narrative, that:

We've talked endlessly, haven't we, about people who get caught in the gears of history. Right? The place you're born in, the time you're born in – a lot of people in all these second world war armies are just human beings put in extreme situations where they're expected to behave a certain way and they often have limited options. What's more sometimes they don't even see that they have such limited options because they were raised in an environment with customs with carrots and sticks in their society that sort of set them on a path.<sup>128</sup>

As Onoda recalls of February 20, 1974, “What he [Japanese tourist Norio Suzuki] said corresponded perfectly with what I had long regarded as enemy propaganda and was completely different from the way I had sized things up myself,”<sup>129</sup> he “did not really believe what he said about the war being over...the strategic command had not rescinded my orders; that meant simply that they wanted me to stay on the island.”<sup>130</sup> Again, this was 29 years after Japan’s surrender.

While the historical discipline has largely distanced itself from “the older, rhetorically structured mode of historical writing [that] openly promoted the study and

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127Dan Carlin, “Supernova In the East I,” Hardcore History, July 14, 2018, podcast, website, 19:08. <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-62-supernova-in-the-east-i/>.

128Dan Carlin, “Supernova in the East III,” Hardcore History, October 25, 2019, podcast, website, 1:36:06. <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-64-supernova-in-the-east-iii/>.

129Hiroo Onoda, *No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War* trans. Charles S. Terry (New York: Kodansha International/USA Ltd., 1974), 200.

130Ibid, 208.

contemplation of the past as propaedeutic to life in the public sphere,”<sup>131</sup> it is clear that *Hardcore History* embraces this artistic, ‘ethical’ component. In reconstructing the world that the people of Japan inhabited through his narration, he not only guides the audience to understand and relate to this period of history but to develop their own perspectives and interpretations of events. As with earlier podcasts, “what if” questions and the lead-ins to counterfactual theorizing of alternate versions of history are scattered throughout all of *Supernovas*’ episodes and invite his audience to imagine what they would or could do if facing similar circumstances with similar information to those in Japan at that time. Inevitably however, Carlin’s manifests his own views through the narrative, and the episodes are as much an encouragement for the audience to contemplate on the past as they are an expression of Carlin’s own beliefs. Much in the way Thucydides ubiquitously embeds the idea of fear being a primary driver of conflict within his *Peloponnesian War*, the most common point that Carlin iterates throughout *Supernova*, is that moral choice is relative to circumstance, or more accurately, to *perceived* circumstance. He argues, regarding the choice to drop the atomic bomb that:

Everyone instantly understood the import of this, you know, moral issue known as nuclear weapons and this almost Shakespearean question of: to atomic bomb or to not atomic bomb? What is not helpful, useful, satisfying, or in any way instructive for the next time we might consider using such a weapon is to take it out of the context of the times. Because you end up creating a moral choice that never really existed for the people who had to make it, and then judging them on that.<sup>132</sup>

While ethical history may be considered antiquated, the post-modern influence on Carlin’s style of presentation is clear as he explicitly reminds the audience to be self-conscious in considering the ideas presented. Consequently, the narrative is not just an exploration of – for lack of a better word – the ‘lessons’ of the past, but also and again, a counterpoint to the audiences conception of the present.

However, in spite of the depth and content of today’s *Hardcore History*, Carlin is insistent on the distinction between his work and that which he regards as the work of ‘real’ historians. His awareness of this difference, he believes, is made more apparent

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<sup>131</sup>White, *The Practical Past*, 8.

<sup>132</sup>Dan Carlin, “Supernova in the East VI,” *Hardcore History*, June 8, 2021, podcast, website, 5:36:56. <https://www.dancarlin.com/product/hardcore-history-67-supernova-in-the-east-vi/>.

because he earned a Bachelor's Degree in History from the University of Colorado, Boulder.<sup>133</sup> It helped him, he believes, to recognize the difficulties in any reasonably accurate interpretation of the past, without providing him with an extensive academic background and the training that would give credibility or authority to his voice.<sup>134</sup> Fellow podcaster and professor of history, Patrick Wyman refers to this as the distinction between the initiated, those who are specialists in their field, and “already have a deep grounding in that material” and the uninitiated, outsiders, who are often not acquainted with the specialized language, or minutiae of historical methodology.<sup>135</sup> In Carlin's case, he frequently warns of issues in interpreting historical occurrences – such as contemporary bias or the uncertainty in having only fragmented information being available to draw upon – but also insists on propriety by reminding the audience of his own fallibility in reporting historical occurrences in spite of the time and effort put into constructing each episode. He labels himself a fan of history, stating in one interview, “I'm not qualified to do a history podcast. As a history major there is one thing you know, and that's that you're not a historian.”<sup>136</sup> It is likely that this view has been compounded by his experience in journalism and political commentary which share some significant overlaps with the study of history. It is a matter of course to any journalist, or even to any consistent observer of current events that to navigate contemporary news is to delve into a labyrinth of murky facts, a myriad of agendas, endless opinions, and the knowledge that for everything we are aware of in today's world of communication, there is so much more that will never be disclosed – which is perhaps the reason why Carlin is so cognizant of what information people did and did not have access to in the past. Add to that the veil of time, behind which information is often lost, or, depending on the biases and circumstances of those who recorded it, sometimes added, and it would be strange if anyone had confidence that they knew with absolute certainty the truth of occurrences that have vanished into yesterday.

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133Dan Carlin, “University of Colorado Boulder Spring Commencement Speech 2020,” University of Colorado Boulder, accessed December 12, 2021,

<https://www.colorado.edu/commencement/2020/05/16/dan-carlin-spring-2020>.

134“Dan Carlin | The New Golden Age of Oral Historical Storytelling | Talks at Google,” Talks at Google, accessed October 23, 2017, YouTube video, 36:10, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_zgctx6nmCw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zgctx6nmCw).

135Patrick Wyman, “The Ebb and Flow of History,” *Tides of History: Rise of the Modern World*, July 20, 2017, podcast, website, 9:39, <https://wonderly.com/shows/tides-of-history/episode/5629-the-ebb-and-flow-of-history/>.

136“Dan Carlin, in Conversation,” Brown Media Institute, October 11, 2017, YouTube video, website, 6:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy9ALLsdesA>.

In line with his perception of authority on the contents covered in *Hardcore History*, the vast majority of Carlin's references are derived second hand, from other historians' accounts of events. In some regards, *Hardcore History* could be summarized as a compilation of existing historiography compiled by Carlin and presented as an engaging narrative. First-hand accounts, excerpts from local newspapers, clips of radio broadcasts, recorded speeches and so on, are comparatively rare. While it is not that *Hardcore History* fails to accommodate these elements, they are often not derived from the original source themselves, and are instead, found within the contents of an historian's text. When discussing the linguistic quirks of General Douglas MacArthur, for (a rather extreme) example, Carlin quotes a line from historian James Scott's *Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila*. Scott, in turn was quoting Franklin D. Roosevelt, who stated that McArthur "talks in a voice that might come from an Oracle's cave."<sup>137</sup> It is information that has been passed through two other individuals aside from the source. This is not to say that the information presented is inaccurate or misrepresentative at all, however to note that the views put forth within the show are often entirely dependent on those conveyed by existing historiography surrounding a subject, and are not manifest from the interpretations of Carlin alone. Of *Supernova's* eighty-six texts for example, with the exception of Hiroo Onoda's *Thirty Year War*, James Jones'<sup>138</sup> *The Thin Red Line* and Churchill's recollections of his perspectives and decisions during the war,<sup>139</sup><sup>140</sup> the remaining sources are all secondary. This means the history presented in *Hardcore History* is influenced both by the selection of the historians which Carlin has read, as well as by his personal parsing and prioritizing of information he views as more valuable. To a degree this gives a borrowed credibility to his work, as in many cases, he has the leeway to allow other historians justify the arguments put forth in lieu of himself. Nevertheless, it is clear that Carlin never fully steps out of the way, directing the narrative forward through the choice of references to what he finds most interesting or engaging.

Similarly, an unavoidable issue that *Hardcore History* does face is in the presenting of two perspectives equally, while one may be far less supported by evidence than the other, if not thoroughly debunked. This is not a result, in many cases, of Carlin's

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<sup>137</sup>Carlin, "Supernova in the East III," 3:05:50.

<sup>138</sup>James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (London: Sceptre, 1988).

<sup>139</sup>Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986).

<sup>140</sup>Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate 4* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1986).

ignorance of the disparate consideration with which historians versed in a specific sequence of events would give each perspective, but an unintentional consequence of his use of qualifying statements. For, while it is the case that Carlin refers to historians to support his narrative, it is impossible for him to communicate accurately these historians' backgrounds, their credibility on a topic, or the depth of the research they had undergone to develop their opinion. This is to say that, with the exception of some historians who Carlin makes particular note of their achievements, such as the aforementioned participants in *The Second World*, for the most part, when Carlin quotes an historian the audience can, often without consequence simply hear, "*Historian A* who authored *Book A* believes that... while on the other hand, *Historians B* and *C* share the opinion that..." and so on, giving little consideration as to which would be a more credible conclusion. In some cases of course, with particularly controversial subject matter, Carlin does attempt to notify the audience of historical consensus. In *(Blitz) Suffer the Children* for example, he takes note of the controversy surrounding the field of psycho-history itself, establishing initial skepticism before encouraging the audience to immerse themselves in the ideas, stating that psycho-history is "a fringe sort of side to the history debate...but you can see, I would think, some connection between the way those people in earlier times were raised and the fact that they turned out to be different people [to us]"<sup>141</sup>. Later in the same episode Carlin expresses his own disbelief at the proposed records of mass infanticide as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century in what we would typically consider to be the civilized world.<sup>142</sup> However, despite Carlin's notes of skepticism, the audience is expected to consider for themselves what they believe to be true with an often incomplete or heavily weighted selection of information. In *(Blitz) Suffer the Children*, it is easy to come away not just acknowledging that infanticide did occur, for that is undeniable, but to think it was a ubiquitous, everyday occurrence; "apparently though, it was so common though, that when you read what the sources have to say its hard to believe...a priest in Italy in 1527 talking about walking down the streets of his Italian city and quote: 'the latrines resound with the cries of children who've been plunged into them.'"<sup>143</sup> In more direct words, the audience is not always provided with the latitude to reconcile the indefinite speculations of history presented to them with their own beliefs of how the world could have been, as the information is not presented in its entirety. Moreover, and this is no fault of Carlin's, podcasting (in its

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<sup>141</sup>Carlin, "(Blitz) Suffer the Children," 7:09.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid, 12:49.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid, 21:11.

current form) lacks the framework that professional literature has of access to countering or supplemental views. Listeners of podcasts must reach outside of the medium and into the spiderweb of literary sources that reference and draw upon each other to form a more complete recreation of the past. Perhaps best asserted by Carl L. Becker, “to select and affirm even the simplest complex of facts is to give them a certain place in a certain pattern of ideas, and this alone is to give them special meaning.”<sup>144</sup> Carlin’s compilation histories affirm and add special meaning to not just the occurrences, the facts of the past, but to the historians’ perspectives he draws upon, inevitably shaping the perspectives of his listeners through what is included and omitted. And while this is unavoidable even in the most comprehensive of modernist histories, it is the narrative style and linear form of Carlin’s audio histories that exacerbates the dilemma.

A more unique aspect of *Hardcore History* that is of interest is found in Carlin’s use of analogies. They are an expression of his personal understanding of historical events, and help in relating the shows subject matter to the listener. Comparisons to modern popular culture such as Star Wars and superheroes appear occasionally throughout the show. These are not ornamental either. They color the narrative by emphasizing the characteristics of a moment or individual that Carlin is particularly concerned with and “serve to control conceptualization”<sup>145</sup> of the past to the audience. In one case for example, Carlin draws parallels between Emperor Hirohito and The Incredible Hulk, an alter-ego of Bruce Banner and a superhero-esque character from the Marvel comic series. Typically, Banner is portrayed as a meek scientist, but when angered he transforms into an unstoppable monster, akin to a force of nature. His purpose was to illustrate that, if Hirohito – considered a deity at this time and in theory the individual with the most political power in Japan – were to have taken up a more active role in the build up to the First World War and manage the dysfunction between the military and parliament, nobody knows the extent to which he could have changed the outcome of the war. While throughout this time period the Emperor rarely engaged in politics, Carlin muses that just as Bruce Banner becomes The Incredible Hulk when he becomes angry, if something sparked Hirohito’s action, could Japan’s trajectory towards war have been slowed or altered? Caution must be observed however, in accepting these at face

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<sup>144</sup>Carl L. Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian address,” *American Historical Review* 37, no.2 (1932): 233. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/37.2.221>

<sup>145</sup>Fischer, *Historians Fallacies*, 246.

value. For while the image of Hirohito as a deity can overlap with The Hulk in some regards, it is clearly lacking in others. For one, it is a known quantity that the fictional Banner can transform and become superhuman, but whether Hirohito could have actually taken control of Japan if he had so desired to is very much unknown; a political realist would likely argue in the negative. These comparisons also have the effect of creating an illusion of the ‘perfect analogy,’ an historical fallacy detailed in Fischer’s work on the subject of historical methodology that connects “a partial resemblance between two entities to an entire and exact correspondence. [That] it is an erroneous inference from the fact that *A* and *B* are similar in some respects to the false conclusion that they are the same in all respects.”<sup>146</sup> Every modern analogy that Carlin utilizes carries with it the luggage that is associated with that idea, and “by promoting an unconscious or inchoate inference into the realm of rationality within a single mind,”<sup>147</sup> a listener can easily misinterpret the central ideas that Carlin is trying to convey. Moreover, if we are to continue to consider the case of Hirohito’s political power as anything more than a figurehead, the audience is inevitably left with an unclear, ethereal presence throughout the remainder of the narrative that may, or may not, have influence on any other individuals decision making. He has, in essence, created a character with unclear limitations from which the audience can at any time derive their own conclusions. As Beckermen notes, “since history is not a part of the external material world, but an imaginative reconstruction of vanished events, its form and substance are inseparable: in the realm of literary discourse substance, being an idea, *is* form; and form, conveying the idea, *is* substance.”<sup>148</sup> If an idea is indeterminate, it follows that that the substance is as well – producing a history that is more pliable, more interpretable than the sources from which it is derived. Imagination, however, is what allows the audience to immerse themselves in the past, as it were, and allows for a different, more visceral, and more relatable understanding of the time than if no analogy was made: “as Humboldt said, the historian must use his ‘imagination’ to ‘reveal the truth of an event by presentation, by filling in and connecting the disjointed fragments of direct observation’.”<sup>149</sup>

The few professional historians who have commented on his work reinforce these and

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<sup>146</sup>Ibid, 247.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid, 244.

<sup>148</sup>Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” 233.

<sup>149</sup>White, *Metahistory*, 193.

Carlin's own concerns to varying degrees. Dr. Graydon Tunstall, specialist in the history of the First World War, upon reviewing *Hardcore Histories: Blueprint for Armageddon* commended him for the presentation of the information, its contents, and its depth. Yet, he expressed concern for unintentional omissions, commenting that Carlin's treatment of the Battle of the Somme "missed 'major points,' like the effect of the terrain on armies," and lightly admonished Carlin's neglect to aggregate all pertinent historical detail.<sup>150</sup> While omission of relevant information, unintentional or otherwise, is an inevitable consequence of any discourse regarding the already vanished and largely unknowable past, the issue is perhaps exacerbated by the ambitious breadth of many of the episodes of *Hardcore History* as well as Carlin's choice not to (or inability to) employ peer-review. Similarly, as the production of podcasts is Carlin's full time occupation, variety of subject matter and time constraints in the production of episodes are both necessary to his ongoing success as an independent creator – both of which construct limitations around the extent to which he can pursue any particular topic. Of interesting consequence however, is that *Hardcore History's* popularity seems to have mitigated these barriers to some degree. As Carlin has become increasingly successful, a parallel increase in the length of production time can be observed, and tirelessly producing regular monthly episodes is no longer of paramount importance. Episodes now often have gaps of several months between releases. Moreover, with each new podcast Carlin's own knowledge of history develops; as it naturally would for anyone immersed in a subject for any length of time. He then applies this more comprehensive perspective to some topics, revisiting and refining the ideas presented. The dropping of the atomic weaponry, for example, has been discussed at length in *(Blitz) Logical Insanity*, *(Blitz) The Destroyer of Worlds*, as well as in *Supernova in the East's* conclusion, with each episode further evolving Carlin's views.

Sentiment analogous to Tunstall's criticism was echoed by an unnamed professor of history, who, Carlin recalled, explained that "I don't have a problem with you [referring to Carlin], but I have a problem with people who try to do what you do sometimes. Because not everybody approaches it the same way."<sup>151</sup> Specifically: not everyone who conveys history with the intent of educating about the past is clear in their omissions or

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<sup>150</sup> Benjamin Hart, "America's Best History Teacher Doesn't Work At A School," HuffPost, last modified November 17, 2015, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dan-carlin-hardcore-history\\_n\\_5643b5b5e4b08cda34875511](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dan-carlin-hardcore-history_n_5643b5b5e4b08cda34875511).

<sup>151</sup> Rose, "Dan Carlin – Hardcore history – Part 1/2," 33:36.

embellishment, especially within a medium which allows anybody with a microphone and an internet connection to broadcast to the world. The habitual employment of qualifying phrases in regard to unknowns or speculation are something that again shares overlap with journalism, an occupation which relies on words such as ‘allegedly’ or ‘according to’ not only to protect reporters from lawsuits, but to maintain their reputation as a reliable source of information.<sup>152</sup> Contrasting this, Carlin has met with the ire of critical audience members who believe that the distinction between the history presented and his personal opinions are not drawn cleanly enough. This point, however, is moot when considering that this was never the intent of the show; Carlin is not Nietzsche's mirror, “accustomed to submitting to whatever wants to be known... a passage and reflection of forms and events not his own,”<sup>153</sup> nor does he try to be. The history he presents is intended as a framework for personal musings. Perhaps however, this criticism does suggest a vacuum in the podcasting sphere for a more modernist approach.

Another historian, Dr. Leif Jerram voiced that Carlin’s approach is lacking in the substantive questions that constitute proper historical investigation,<sup>154</sup> yet strongly praises his “ability to wrangle complex strands of historical record into an easily digestible narrative.”<sup>155</sup> He also however, noted in passing that “there are different historians for different purposes,” although he personally would not practice history in that way.<sup>156</sup> His perceptive assessment, identifies both aspects of Carlin's work that differentiate it from academic history while elevating its value to the audience. The lack of substantive questions, as discussed previously, firmly deviates from standard academically taught method of asking clear historical questions that can be at least adequately responded to with a well reasoned argument. As such, episodes end almost ubiquitously with more questions asked than are resolved; although this could be considered not so much a flaw in Carlin's work as a feature. Salvati, referenced earlier, argues that “through its alternative and interactive approach to the historical past, *Hardcore History* opens up new domains for exploring the plurality of historical

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<sup>152</sup>Brown Media Institute, “Dan Carlin, in Conversation,” 18:20.

<sup>153</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* trans. R.J Hollingdale (London: Penguin Group, 2014), 152-153.

<sup>154</sup>Leif Jerram, post to “What do history professors think of Dan Carlin's Hardcore History podcast?” Quora, December 23, 2015, <https://www.quora.com/What-do-history-professors-think-of-Dan-Carlins-Hardcore-History-podcast>.

<sup>155</sup> Benjamin Hart, “America's Best History Teacher.”

<sup>156</sup>Jerram, post to “What do history professors...?”

expression, and the ways in which digital technologies can afford spaces for users to make sense of the past on their own terms.”<sup>157</sup> Carlin's histories, in this sense, are arguably the newest iteration of Becker's ‘everyman history’, a utilitarian “creation, a personal possession which each one of us, Mr. Everyman, fashions out of his individual experience, adapts to his practical or emotional needs, and adorns as well as may be to suit his aesthetic tastes,”<sup>158</sup> creating and reinforcing our perception of the world around us. Carlin guides the audience through the historical narrative, alludes to his own thoughts and conclusions, and then departs, leaving them with open-ended questions of which to apply their own moral and intellectual sensibilities.

Further commentary on Carlin's work is difficult to find, perhaps due to the relative recentness of podcasting technology and its disconnect from academic circles. However, similarities can be observed when comparing Carlin to past historians who likewise existed on the fringes of academic history that might assist in clarifying the role Carlin is playing in today's historiography. Barbara Tuchman, for example, cemented herself in 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography for her work on character driven popular history and received both praise and criticisms that parallel Carlin. Her 1962 book, *The Guns of August*, was lauded by the public from its publication yet was met with critique, often very scathing, by professional historians. The sentiment has not changed, with historian Samuel R. Williamson Jr. as recently as 2013 directing appreciation at Tuchman's “ability to engage the reader, to present a sweeping narrative, and to display both irony and a sense of the sardonic,”<sup>159</sup> while still considering the rigor of the history presented as “seriously flawed.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, it is the consensus that another of her works, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, expresses “a harnessing of her proven skills of narrative and characterization to give us a work packed with colourful drama... and the engrossing minutiae of daily lives.”<sup>161</sup> Yet Bernard Bachrach, an accomplished historian in his own right, stated that “nothing of value – either new data or useful interpretations – has emerged from Tuchman's seven years of research”<sup>162</sup> and castigates

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157Salvati, “Podcasting the Past,” 238.

158Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” 228.

159Samuel R. Williamson Jr., “Fifty Years on: ‘The Guns of August,’ Always Popular, Always Flawed,” *Sewanee Review* 121, no.1 (2013): 4, doi:10.1353/sew.2013.0001.

160Ibid, 1.

161J. J. N. McGurk, “A Distant Mirror (Book Review),” *History Today* 29, no.6 (June,1979): 411, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,uid&db=hlh&AN=4874682&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

162Bernard S. Bachrach, “A Distant Mirror (Book Review),” *American Historical Review* 84, no.3

what he perceived as an attempt to write the twentieth century into the fourteenth. It seems evident after more than five decades of evaluation, that academic critique of Tuchman is often derived from differing ideas of what is most important to how history should be practiced and presented. To one audience, the prioritization of engagement, narrative and *general* accuracy of historical fact is key, so long as the ideas communicated remain correct and justified. For the other, a more scientific exploration of the past is regarded as of paramount importance; facts should be explored, arranged, and argued in a rigorous manner. However scarce, similar comments have been made of *Hardcore History*, and parallels in their approach to the discipline are clear. To some degree, it is likely that alongside the length of time Tuchman's works have been publicly available, the relative closeness of written history to the academic community has contributed to her work meeting such intense polarizing of opinion following its popularization. However, what can be applied accurately to both is the sentiment that they are not "historian's historian[s]" but "layperson's historian[s] who made the past interesting to millions of readers."<sup>163</sup> And, as Professor Sidney Fay astutely commented to Williamson Jr., "she has got the history wrong, but historians need to write like Tuchman or we will be out of business."<sup>164</sup> Perhaps Carlin's success serves as a similar warning.

Before concluding this chapter it is also worth briefly discussing the spin-off series *Hardcore History: Addendum*, within which Carlin interviews other historians, public figures and even participants with first-hand experience of certain historical events. The show consists of 17 episodes to date, with 14 guests from varying backgrounds.<sup>165</sup> These include professional historians Peter Hart,<sup>166</sup> Sir Max Hastings<sup>167</sup> and Dan Jones,<sup>168</sup> a selection of history authors who have written on topics related to Carlin's previous

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(June, 1979): 724, doi:10.2307/1855427.

<sup>163</sup>Oliver B. Pollak, "Barbara W. Tuchman January 30, 1912–February 6, 1989," *The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*, last modified December 31, 1999, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/tuchman-barbara-wertheim>.

<sup>164</sup>Williamson, Jr., "Fifty Years on," 4.

<sup>165</sup>See Appendix 5 for a full list of the episodes, guests, release date and duration as of January 2022.

<sup>166</sup>Dan Carlin, "Exposing the Hart of The Great War," *Hardcore History Addendum*, April 12, 2018, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

<sup>167</sup>Dan Carlin, "On The Vietnam War with Sir Max," *Hardcore History Addendum*, October 30, 2018, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

<sup>168</sup>Dan Carlin, "Powers, Thrones and Dan Jones," *Hardcore History Addendum*, November 5, 2021, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

podcasts, several popular history podcast hosts, participants of recent events (namely, the aforementioned Sir Max Hastings for his involvement as a soldier in the Vietnam War and former U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak),<sup>169</sup> as well as two immensely famous public figures: actor and history enthusiast Tom Hanks<sup>170</sup> and head of SpaceX and entrepreneur Elon Musk.<sup>171</sup> For the purpose of organization, Carlin's interviews with professional historians will be discussed in comparison to Patrick Wyman further down, however it is prudent here to take note of some the other individuals featured, as it reflects to some degree the cultural significance that these podcasts have in today's world. First, Carlin's interviews of those who have experienced events of recent history leave a permanent public record of their reflections on these events. They are a direct dialogue between Carlin and guest, and unlike traditional written biographical or autobiographical history, any editorializing occurs in real time with the participant necessarily being required to respond naturally in the conversational setting. The interviews are long, often over an hour in duration with little or no editing of the contents – this again in contrast to traditional televised or radio media interviews wherein it is expected that the final product may be reduced to a two or three minute edit; or at least deconstructed and presented in a broken series of parts. This means that these interviews serve not only to preserve a piece of the past, but allow his guests to extensively express what they have taken from their experiences to the world without the various filters of an historian's selective editing or limitations of the written word. In addition to this, emotion can be captured through audio that is lost on the page. As a consequence, in some sense the audience, and any future historian for that matter, is able to act as something of a spectral interviewer without means to direct the conversation, but with the ability to analyze the guests responses alongside Carlin.

This brings us to our final note on *Hardcore History*, the component of the show which is paramount to understanding both why it has seen such success and why it has such an important place in contemporary historiography: Carlin's ability to take the audience with him through audio. This is also, in some regards a summary of the parts presented above, as it is derived from the compilation of Carlin's charisma and passion, his

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<sup>169</sup>Dan Carlin, "A Four-Star Conversation," *Hardcore History Addendum*, March 8, 2018, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

<sup>170</sup>Dan Carlin, "Wolf Pack Hunting with Hanks," *Hardcore History Addendum*, July 9, 2020, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

<sup>171</sup> Dan Carlin, "Engineering Victory with Elon," *Hardcore History Addendum*, December 13, 2021, podcast, website, <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>.

response based relationship with the audience, clear use of language, and questioning, imaginative style of exploring the subject matter. Carlin is an entertainer first and an historian second. Each episode is constructed to present the information in a way that engages with the audience without overwhelming them in technicality or detail, and Carlin has a clear instinct for choosing the information that achieves this. However, that does not detract from its value in today's historiography. Carlin is stepping back into the roots of history as a practical, ethical discourse while standing on the shoulders of the collective work of modern, professional historians who have produced a body of work unprecedented in scope and rigor. His role as a researcher, interpreter, and communicator provides an example of what the new wave of public historical discourse may look like.

The history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world. The history that does work in the world, the history that influences the course of history, is living history, that pattern of remembered events, whether true or false, that enlarges and enriches the collective specious present.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," 234.

## Chapter Four: Patrick Wyman's "The Fall of Rome" and "Tides of History"

If Dan Carlin is representative of amateurs practicing history within the podcasting space, Patrick Wyman serves as a comparable representative from academia; acting as a bridge between highly technical, specialist academic works and a wider public audience. He states, in his alumni profile for the University of Southern California Dornsife Department of History that the training he received “is the foundation for my professional life as a history podcaster and writer. Every day, I rely on the skills in research and organization that I was taught over the course of my Ph.D. Doing history for popular audiences isn't the same as writing for academics, but doing it well is no less rigorous. It requires precisely the same ability to weigh evidence, think critically, and pick and choose arguments.”<sup>173</sup> Despite the difference in history related credentials, like Carlin, Wyman also has a history of work in media, “covering mixed martial arts and boxing from 2013 to 2018.”<sup>174</sup> In its content, sports journalism is significantly different than political commentary. The technical skills required however, in researching, compiling and presenting information overlap, and as with Carlin, Wyman's introductory steps into podcasting also began naturally through his journalistic work, co-hosting series on mixed martial arts *Heavy Hands*<sup>175</sup> from October of 2014. This show presented to what was at the time still a niche field, initially “had just a few hundred downloads per month.”<sup>176</sup> Strikingly however, within three years of release, it was reported that the show received over “100,000 monthly downloads.”<sup>177</sup> Today, although podcasting has replaced sports journalism as his primary form of employment, he still self-publishes articles on Substack regularly, and is a known contributor to various online news outlets such as the *Washington Post*, *Vice*, *Deadspin*, *Mother Jones* and others; often on subjects relating to his current academic work.

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173 Patrick Wyman, “Patrick Wyman | Ph.D. 2016,” USC Dornsife Department of History, accessed October 2021, <https://dornsife.usc.edu/hist/patrick-wyman-ph-d-2016/>.

174“Patrick Wyman,” Hatchet Book Group, accessed February 17, 2022, <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/contributor/patrick-wyman/>.

175Patrick Wyman and Connor Ruebusch, *Heavy Hands*, pilot episode released September 4, 2013, podcast, website, <https://heavyhands.libsyn.com/>.

The first episode with Patrick Wyman released October 22, 2014.

176Alexandra Klausner, “MMA fighting made me a better historian,” *New York Post*, last modified May 10, 2017, <https://nypost.com/2017/05/10/mma-fighting-made-me-a-better-historian/>.

177Ibid.

Wyman completed his doctoral dissertation on the decline of the Western Roman Empire, in 2016.<sup>178</sup> This subject, and its accompanying arguments as to why the Roman Empire declined is one of the most extensively discussed topics within historical scholarship. Tangled debates on cause and consequence reach at least as far back as Montesquieu's 1734 manuscript and later, the volumes of Edward Gibbons' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* which commenced their publication in 1776,<sup>179</sup> and are ongoing with modern writers such as Peter Heather, Mary Beard, Chris Wickham and so on, today. As such, even with an established historical background this subject matter is complex and weighty; translating it into a straightforward narrative even more so. However, having developed an engaging style of oral presentation through his first show, Wyman combined his credentials and experience to release the first of a 31 episode long series, *The Fall of Rome* on August 4, 2016.<sup>180</sup> With his doctoral paper as its foundation, the show explores various reasons as to why the Western half of the Roman Empire saw such decline throughout the period of 376 to roughly 550AD. A second historical podcast titled *The Tides of History*<sup>181</sup> began to release concurrently on July 20, 2017. While his initial show on Rome concluded with a final interview episode on April 3, 2018, being both thematically similar and sharing some initial content, *Tides of History* served as an immediate successor and has continued up to the present time. It now consists of a cumulative total of 216 episodes organized into 5 seasons: Rise of the Modern World, The Later Middle Ages, Early Modern Explosion, Prehistory, and Classic Tides.<sup>182</sup>

For both series, episodes are typically between 40-55 minutes in length and are intended

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178Patrick Wyman, "Letters, Mobility, and the Fall of the Roman Empire" (PhD Thesis, University of Southern California, 2016). <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2070186971?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.

179Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* trans. David Lowenthal (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999). Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836).

It is to these two works which we in large part we owe the foundations for today's discourse on the causes of the Roman Empire's decline. While the arguments put forth by both works have faced displacement in recent years by those with access to a relative plenitude of information from which to draw, they are still widely read and serve in large part as a measure with which to compare any work on this time period in history.

180Patrick Wyman, "The Fall of Rome," pilot episode released August 4 2016, podcast, website, <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/>. See Appendix 8 for complete list.

181Patrick Wyman, "The Tides of History," pilot episode released July 20, 2017, podcast, website, <https://wonderly.com/shows/tides-of-history/>.

182See Appendix 9 for complete list.

to be, for the most part, listened to in the order in which they were released. While *The Tides of History* series touches on a much wider range of topics than *The Fall of Rome*, its objective is similar, with Wyman's stated goal being to explore the great shifts of history over extended periods of time; those "things that rocked the very foundations of the world."<sup>183</sup> Some of the episodes are available for free on various platforms, however the plurality of those released to date are locked behind a subscription based paywall exclusive to the Amazon subsidiary podcasting network Wondery. Like Carlin's, both of Wyman's shows, have met with positive public responses. *The Fall of Rome* received an average score of 4.8/5 across more than 2,000 reviews on the Apple Podcasts store,<sup>184</sup> *Tides of History*, perhaps as a consequence of its exclusivity, has received an average of 4.7/5 across a much smaller number of 256 ratings.<sup>185</sup> Reports on both shows from outlets of written journalism are rare however, with many of the responses, praise and criticisms that each has seen instead coming from within the podcasting sphere itself. An early commentator on Wyman's work, the creator of the popular *Everyday Moments in History* Youtube series, expressly noted that Wyman's ability to put his listener into the world of the past was "done marvelously with the *The Fall of Rome* series."<sup>186</sup> Written responses from journalistic sources regarding his recent, and similarly well received book *The Verge*,<sup>187</sup> published in July of 2021, are more common. One reviewer's description of the piece as an "excellent extension of his work on his podcast,"<sup>188</sup> is reflective of the perception generally held about his oral work as well. Likely, as Wyman's first written work is increasingly reviewed, or as he begins to contribute more to the written body of historical literature in the future, a more formalized commentary on his two history podcasts will also become more common.

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<sup>183</sup>Wyman, "The Ebb and Flow of History," 4:02.

<sup>184</sup>"The Fall of Rome Podcast: Customer Reviews," Apple Inc., accessed February 18, 2022, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/id1141563910?see-all=reviews>. See Appendix 6 for a screenshot of the web-page as viewed.

<sup>185</sup>"Tides of History: Customer Reviews," Apple Inc., accessed February 18, 2022, <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/tides-of-history/id1257202425?see-all=reviews>. See Appendix 7 for a screenshot of the web-page as viewed.

<sup>186</sup>"Interview: Historian Patrick Wyman – New 'Tides of History,' podcast," interview by Invicta, 4:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN2vrNhhIP8>.

<sup>187</sup>Patrick Ries, "The 'Great Men of History' Are Great at Getting You Killed," Rolling Stone, last modified, July 28, 2021. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/the-verge-patrick-wyman-jeff-bezos-european-history-1202656/>.

<sup>188</sup>Michael A. Gold, "Reviewing Patrick Wyman's 'The Verge: Reformation, Renaissance, and Forty Years That Shook The World'," Medium, last modified August 9, 2021, <https://michaelagold.medium.com/reviewing-patrick-wymans-the-verge-reformation-renaissance-and-forty-years-that-shook-the-c563e20a2624>.

As a consequence of his academic background Wyman approaches history in a much more circumspect, structured manner than Carlin. His considerations of the nature of evidence explored, historical causality, methodology, and the effect of his chosen style of presentation are all markedly more comprehensive. In the introductory episode of *Tides of History* however, he makes clear that one of the reasons for which he commenced the show was to bridge a gap between academia and the public. He states:

In graduate school, we were never taught to talk to a general audience or even really encouraged to do it – we supposed to write for specialist academics. Essentially we were making our work inaccessible to the broader public... explicitly cutting yourself off from interested people who might like to know more about the past... I think history should be useful, it should try to explain why the world is the way it is and why it's changed over time, it should strive to give people examples and comparisons with which to think both about the past and the present day.<sup>189</sup>

It is, arguably, this conscious decision which makes Wyman's role in today's historical discourse so interesting. As, while Wyman may not yet carry the perceived authoritative voice on history that decades of practicing the discipline typically attests to (age suggesting both a breadth of experience and knowledge that an individual in their thirties is unlikely to have acquired), as he has the benefits of both a formal education in history as well as an innate understanding of technology and how public audiences consume information, he is situated rather uniquely between both worlds.

This idiosyncrasy is expressed in several ways. Unlike Carlin, Wyman makes clear that the history being presented is that from “archaeology, genetics, forensic analysis, climate science, and of course, written texts,”<sup>190</sup> which he himself has extensively compiled and constructed – as opposed to secondary sources primarily functioning as each shows foundation. This is reflected further in the confidence Wyman has in expressing skepticism towards ideas, or challenging other historians in a much more assertive manner than Carlin. In articulating the role the Hunnic Empire had on the Romans decline for example, Wyman stresses that while they certainly contributed, they

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<sup>189</sup>Wyman, “The Ebb and Flow of History,” 4:35.

<sup>190</sup>Patrick Wyman, “Introduction,” *The Fall of Rome*, August 4, 2016, podcast, website, 4:50. <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-introduction/>.

were but one of many causes. He then indicates the works of Peter Heather, a recognized specialist in the history of the Western Roman Empire and the Goths of late antiquity,<sup>191</sup> whose view, as laid out in Heather's *The Fall of the Roman Empire : A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* is that:

It is the fundamental thesis of this book that there is a coherence to the process of western imperial disintegration that unites this final collapse with the earlier losses of territory. This coherence stems from three lines of argument. First, the invasions of 376 and 405-8 were not random events, but two moments of crisis generated by the same strategic revolution: the rise of Hunnic Power in central and Eastern Europe... Second, while some sixty-five years separate the deposition of Romulus Augustulus from the latest of these invasions, the two phenomena are causally connected...The third line of the argument concerns the paradoxical role played by the Huns in these revolutionary events...this was the straw that broke the western Empires back.<sup>192</sup>

Wyman, invoking the credibility of his own extensive research on this subject matter responds to this assertion directly, stating “I think he’s wrong. The Roman state in the West was crumbling anyway, and the Huns didn’t make the Romans mismanage the Goths entry into the Empire in 376, or fail to bottle up the Vandals in Gaul or Iberia before they took North Africa... the Huns didn’t put a succession of weaklings and incompetents on the Imperial Throne in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There were really deep, structural issues at play here.”<sup>193</sup> This type of engagement with other historians works is not unique to a single instance either, as Wyman calls into question the perspectives of others intermittently throughout the show. He notes, for example, that the political scientist Edward Luttwak’s assertion that an increased interest in fortification caused a

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<sup>191</sup>Brian Murdoch, *Early Germanic Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 166.

<sup>192</sup> Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 434, 435. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=nlebk&AN=474365&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>193</sup>Patrick Wyman, “The Fall of Rome: Attila and the Empire of the Huns,” *The Fall of Rome*, December 12, 2016, podcast, 52:59. <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode5610-attila-and-the-empire-of-the-huns/>.

shift towards a more centralized strategy of defense and depth<sup>194</sup> is “up for debate.”<sup>195</sup> In another instance, he disagrees with the relative importance of the peace agreements of the Romans and Goths of 382, arguing that this event has “taken on out-sized significance in the history of barbarians within the Roman Empire”<sup>196</sup> as many historians portray the treaty as the first agreement of its type, with the Romans and barbarian peoples coming to negotiate on relatively equal terms. In Wyman’s view, “the sources are incomplete, and what they imply more than anything is closer to unconditional surrender on the part of the Goths than neutral agreement,”<sup>197</sup> a perspective which he justifies over the course of an episode. In spite of the perceived amateur quality of the podcasting medium, these are clear examples that Wyman does not treat it as such; he acts and argues as an accredited historian would, with the conviction of an individual qualified to present and justify his own stance on an issue. Consequently this has the dual effect of not only increasing the listeners perception of Wyman as a credible source, but elevating the medium of podcasting to one that is ‘different than’ rather than ‘subordinate to’ traditional written histories.

Another vestige of the academic experience apparent in Wyman’s work is expressed by the clear specificity of the intended topic that is usually put forth at the outset of each series or episode, much in the way an abstract of a dissertation, or the initial framing of a chapter of an academic book is constructed. He includes, for example, in the opening episode of *The Fall of Rome* an explanation as to how and why both the specific time period and geographical regions with which he is concerned have been determined, as

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<sup>194</sup>Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the first century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 127-190.

Luttwak argues that this shift, led initially by Deocletian at the end of the third century, was “the fundamental change in the overall strategy of the empire, which now required that troops be static to hold fixed points in support of the mobile forces that were to maneuver between them” (173), and that there were “two preconditions for a successful defense-in-depth strategy: first, the organization of a resilient network of fortifications laid out in depth; and second, the deployment of sectoral forces sufficiently powerful to deal effectively with local threats” (176) both of which were implemented throughout this period.

<sup>195</sup>Patrick Wyman, “The Late Roman Army, Barbarians, and the Frontier,” *The Fall of Rome*, January 13, 2017, podcast, website, 18:11.

<https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-the-late-roman-army-barbarians-and-the-frontier/>.

<sup>196</sup>Patrick Wyman, “The Goths and the Beginning of Rome’s End,” *The Fall of Rome*, August 11, 2016, podcast, website 33:33, <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-the-goths-and-the-beginning-of-romes-end/>.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 34:06.

well as what exactly is implied by the term ‘fall’.<sup>198</sup> Similarly, following a dramatic opening sequence with aural overlay which will be discussed below, many episodes open with comprehensive descriptive sections that again clarify the temporal, geographical, environmental and human dimensions of what is being explored, before moving into its particulars. Compounding this is that Wyman’s podcasts are also released episodically, similar to chapters in a book or a series of lectures with clear direction and progression, as compared to Carlin’s more movie-like style of presentation. The audience is expected to be aware of the context in which each topic is being discussed and each episode builds upon to the next to form a cogent argument as to what led to the Empires decline.

In consideration of his audience however, Wyman’s podcasts invoke a mixture of academic and common language, designed to retain accuracy and nuance while reducing the difficulty of specialist terminology to an un-inducted listener. Wyman takes pains to define the historical terminology that casual listeners are unlikely to come across in everyday life. An early example of this is Wyman’s clarification of the term ‘teleology,’ when he notes in passing on the reason why *The Fall of Rome* does not conclude in 476 upon the deposition of Romulus Augustus that, “to focus too much on Romulus Augustus, a weak and inconsequential figure by any reasonable metric is to engage in something called teleology. We’re picking an event and reading a great deal more into it than really anybody at the time did.”<sup>199</sup> While the historical discipline is not particularly known for suffocatingly specialized vernacular, clarification of uncommon terminology still contributes immensely to the accessibility of his shows without detracting from the complexity of the arguments presented. Moreover, through explanations of terms such as teleology, a general audience is also exposed to the theoretical considerations that historians have in interpreting the past. Wyman, in this respect, is acting as a public professor of *how* to critically consider history as well as a narrator of it.

As the title *Tides of History* suggests, Wyman’s approach to history is significantly beholden to Fernand Braudel, the Annales School, and their conception of the *longue durée* and its accompanying paradigm, as Wyman too attempts to “convey simultaneously both that conspicuous history which holds our attention by its continual

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<sup>198</sup>Wyman, “Introduction,” 17:59.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid, 8:26.

and dramatic changes – and that other, submerged, history, almost silent and always discreet, virtually unsuspected either by its observers or its participants, which is little touched by the obstinate erosion of time.”<sup>200</sup> He shares with Braudel a similar distrust of *histoire evenementielle*, those “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.”<sup>201</sup> Instead preferring, over the history of events, reconstruction of the past that stresses the gradual changes of society, those transitional periods of history that were considered by Braudel to indicate deep changes in the enduring structures of history, rather than “of rupture and catastrophe.”<sup>202</sup> In the tenth episode of *The Fall of Rome* for example, Wyman takes time to summarize the compositional changes of the Roman Army over the course of several centuries,<sup>203</sup> in the episode following, he explains how the shift in climate from a warm optimum in the first and second centuries that “allowed more, and more varied kinds of land to be brought under cultivation across the Empire”<sup>204</sup> negatively impacted the Roman Empire as the average temperature slowly decreased until the seventh century. Examples like this are replete throughout the entirety of the show. Times when he does reference a particular occurrence are often accompanied by a warning of the teleological implications that asserting the importance of the particular event in question may have; for as important as we may consider an event today, it may not have been interpreted by those who existed at the time in the same way or with the same weight as we do now. This introduces his listeners to a method of understanding the past that does not fall easily into the traditional narrative structures that dominate public histories. However, the oralization of this scientific approach to history, that, by its definitive structures and trends is so difficult to portray outside of the written page, are expressed through Wyman’s podcasts in a way that engages the listener without corrupting the Annales’ axiomatic principals.

That is not to say that he entirely disregards the importance of specific events entirely. Wyman spends lengthy periods of time building up to and explaining major events or

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200Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II: Volume One* trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 16.

201Ibid, 21.

202Olivia Harris, “Braudel: Historical Time and the Horror of Discontinuity,” *History Workshop Journal*, no.57 (Spring, 2004): 167. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25472731>.

203Wyman, “The Late Roman Army,” 14:00.

204Patrick Wyman, “The Roman Economy Before the Fall,” *The Fall of Rome*, February 2, 2017, podcast, website, 6:43, <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-the-roman-economy-before-the-fall/>.

the life of notable individuals, such as the Battle of Adrianople of 378,<sup>205</sup><sup>206</sup> the leadership of King Theoderic in the late fifth century,<sup>207</sup> or the life of Attila the Hun and his invasions from 441 on-wards.<sup>208</sup> While expanding to such a degree on these historic occurrences may appear to be in conflict with the Braudellian ethos, Wyman consistently clarifies that it is the cumulative, interlinked effect of each of these people's lives and event's that mark the Western Roman Empire's gradual decline. They are both an illustration of the changes occurring across the Roman Empire as well as a factor to it. This is not particularly controversial – Braudel himself was “not immune to a ‘catastrophist’ vision of history which recognizes and privileges such moments” in time either.<sup>209</sup> However, for both historians it is the relative weight that we give to these surface disturbances that is important. Wyman, for his part defends this approach as a necessary component of presenting popular history. He states, in the closing minutes of a question and answer episode that, “I think that we as humans understand things narratively and that if you want to get people to understand history you need to engage them through a narrative form, because that's how we understand things,” and goes on to recognize that “you could tell much different stories than the ones I choose to tell. I think its important to acknowledge that you could take the same information that I have and present it much differently.”<sup>210</sup> This comment was made both in regard to the style in which history is presented as well as the weight with which an historian gives each aspect of past events. These past events however, are what allow the audience to orient themselves through the narrative, and are key to presenting history to a public audience in a manner that appeals enough for them to continue listening.

Despite the explicit Braudellian influence however, Wyman embraces one particular method of presenting history that takes narrativization to an extreme. He creates and

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205Wyman, “The Barbarian World.”

206Wyman, “The Goths and the Beginning of Rome's End.”

207Patrick Wyman, “Ostrogothic Kingdom or the Western Empire Reborn?” The Fall of Rome, April 27, 2017, podcast, website, <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-the-ostrogothic-kingdom-or-the-western-empire-reborn/>.

208Patrick Wyman, “How the Eastern Roman Empire Survived Attila the Hun and the Disastrous Fifth Century,” The Fall of Rome, February 20, 2018, podcast, website, <https://wonderly.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-how-the-eastern-roman-empire-survived-attila-the-hun-and-the-disastrous-fifth/>.

209Harris, “Braudel: Historical Time and the Horror of Discontinuity,” 161.

210Patrick Wyman, “Listener Mail: Your Questions, Our Answers,” Tides of History, September 6, 2018, podcast, website, 41:10, <https://wonderly.com/shows/tides-of-history/episode/5629-listener-mail-your-questions-our-answers/>.

inserts entirely fictional characters with accompanying backstories and lives into many episodes, effectively presenting a miniaturized historical novel for lengthy sections of many episodes. Wyman describes these characters and stories as “reconstructions of the lives of hypothetical people,” those nameless individuals that have disappeared with the past.<sup>211</sup> In practice, these are essentially short stories centered around a single protagonist's life, with family and friends, occupations, exploits, hopes and fears, and so on being fully derived from Wyman's imagination. They are however embedded into factual historical settings and events, explicitly to create “fiction with the purpose of grounding our abstract concepts in something concrete based on our best understanding of these things as they happened.”<sup>212</sup> Arguably, it is this utter fictionalization of history that best represents a practical way in which the ideas of White and Jenkins on historicization can be achieved. For, when in consideration of occurrences of the past, often “what is at question is the nature of the event, its relative novelty, the scope and intensity of its impact, and its meaning or what it reveals about the society in which it took place,”<sup>213</sup> and not the minutiae, as concrete as it may be, of those elements of the past that hold little practical value. In so far as it is possible to do so, Wyman arrives at an expression of each of these aspects not corrupted by the contentious nature of factual detail through his use of fiction. And, moreover, Wyman's characters achieve this without subjecting an interpretation of the past to teleologization or implying a great man narrative. And without the that emphasis on elements that catastrophize a narrative, an *histoire evenementielle* cannot be constructed.

To expand on this through example, in the early episodes of *The Fall of Rome* Wyman introduces his audience to a male Goth born in 340AD by the name of Wulfila, ‘little wolf,’<sup>214,215</sup> in the center of what is now known as the “*Sântana de Mureș—Chernyakhov* archaeological zone,” north of the Danube River somewhere in the “broad rolling plains and gentle hills just to the east of the Carpathian Mountains.”<sup>216</sup> Wyman describes Wulfila's birthplace as such:

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211Wyman, “Introduction,” 35:04.

212Ibid.

213White, *The Practical Past*, 46.

214Wyman, “The Barbarian World,” 10:57.

215Peter J. Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool University Press, 1991). This character is perhaps inspired by the Gothic missionary Ulfilas, who existed during the same period and is recorded to have translated the Bible into Gothic.

216Wyman, “The Barbarian World,” 19:55.

Goths in Wulfila's village would have used Roman ceramics and glassware, they would have drunk Roman wine, and as we mentioned, they would have used Roman money for all their needs. Many of the older men would have been veterans of the Roman Army who had returned home after their service, and Wulfila would have known young men who had left home to fight for glory and pay... It is likely that a great many people in Wulfila's village would have spoken Latin in addition to their native Gothic and whatever else they spoke... Dwellings were built in neat rows along a main street within the village... fields of millet, barley and wheat surrounded these villages and cattle, sheep, goats and pigs were the most common domestic animal.<sup>217</sup>

He goes on to expand on the culture, customs, architecture, ethnicity, status, types of jobs, how an individual's identity may have developed itself in relation to the world, and most importantly, the extent of Roman influence present during the time Wulfila would have existed. As the show progresses, so does Wulfila's life. Taking after his father and grandfather before him, Wulfila joins the Roman Army in the middle of the 350's. For a fixed term of roughly a decade, he fought as far north as the forests of what is now known as Germany, or as far south as Iran. Wulfila learned discipline and horsemanship, as well as something resembling Latin during this time, and expanded his horizons through traveling from battle to battle, before returning home in his mid to late twenties. During Wulfila's life, Wyman notes, he would have experienced the attempted overthrow of Emperor Valens in by Procopius 365, and experienced the political unrest under his rule.<sup>218</sup> As a consequence of this, Wulfila likely fought against the Empire and found employ under the Gothic King Athanaric around the year 369:

He has been a warrior all his life, and he's just now edging into middle age, he's getting a little bit old, he's not quite as strong or as quick as he once was, and a lifetime of horseback riding, fighting and hard labor is taking its toll, he has scars on his face and injuries that have never healed right, he's starting to get arthritis in his hands, but still he's good at what he does.<sup>219</sup>

To summarize two episodes of intermittent story, upon Athanaric's terrible series of defeats throughout the early 370's by the Huns, like many of the Goths, Wyman states

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid, 20:30.

<sup>218</sup>Wyman, "The Goths and the Beginning of Rome's End," 11:05.

<sup>219</sup>Wyman, "The Barbarian World" 36:33.

that Wulfila would have fled to the mountains to escape the turmoil. With a lifetime of war and nothing to show for it, Wulfila would likely have been among those of the Thervingi Goths who, with the acquiescence of the Romans, agreed to settle within the fortified borders of the Empire as a taxable farmer and potential frontier soldier. However, with the execution the leaders of the Thervingi, Alivivus and Fritigern's attendants and the failure of the good faith agreement, Wulfila would join the rebellion that culminated in the death of Emperor Valens at the Battle of Adrianople in 378. Following the rebellion and its eventual suppression and negotiation of terms by Theodosius I, Wulfila would once again find himself in a group allied with the Romans, and continue in the only role he knew, serving as a soldier until his death.

This character humanizes the otherwise distant past, assisting the listener in submerging themselves to some degree in the atmosphere of that era, much as Carlin's requests of his audience to imagine what it would be like if they themselves were there in the past. Wyman uses Wulfila to illustrate to the listener what a Gothic soldier may have experienced and believed during that time. He speaks of their response to the failure of Emperor Valens governance, and the perceived betrayal of their reintegration within the Empire as "rational, if righteously angry,"<sup>220</sup> and inevitably draws from Wulfila's perspective an ethical dimension with which the audience can empathize. Similarly, the descriptions of the effect years of conflict would have had on both its Gothic and Roman participants are highlighted by the individualization of the experience; the effect that constant war would have had in wearing down an individuals body and mind for example. The reality that both parties were not simply foes at war, and instead, if not always aligned, always a presence within the worlds of each other is also brought forth more vividly by Wulfila's experiences. Importantly though, as Wulfila is entirely fictional, he serves as a placeholder for other Gothic men who would have in essence, Wyman argues, experienced similar things. And, as the character is constructed upon the admission that it is fiction, it also renders this story to the audience in such a way that is inherently and unambiguously an interpretation. Jenkin's advocacy of the "radical historicisation of history," that an historian develops and acknowledges a self-conscious interpretation of history is fully realized in this respect,<sup>221</sup> for both Wyman and his readers are made clear that this character is a manifestation of Wyman's own imagination of how the past likely would have been experienced. Moreover, as Wulfila

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<sup>220</sup>Wyman, "The Goths and the Beginning of Rome's End," 27:23.

<sup>221</sup>Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 82.

is not a protagonist in a traditional sense, that Wulfila never existed as an individual does not change the events of the past or how they occurred at all. He was not a great leader or strategist, nor an individual with era changing accomplishments, like taking the life of Emperor Valens. Instead he serves simply as the tether that connects the audience to the *human experience*, reifying an historical essence that is not conveyed in the simple objective reconstruction of events.

Assisting the use of fictional protagonists, Wyman often employs a selection of artificial background noise related to that which he is discussing, adding drama and atmosphere to each episode to further the immersion of listeners in his history. When discussing war for example, sounds of swords clashing, armor jangling, fire burning, hoof-beats pounding, or the muffled, inaudible shouts of combatants are overlaid by Wyman's vocalization of events. When Wyman describes a port city or harbor the audience can hear the sounds of waves breaking, ropes stretching taught, sails billowing or wood knocking. This creates a depth of audio that is processed by the listener on two levels: the narrative itself, and the aural dimension that cannot be replicated by the written word. In an interview regarding the creation of narrative history with fellow historical podcaster Mike Duncan, Wyman states that:

There's a real world there. There are real sensations and feelings that go along with that. They may not necessarily be our own, they may be engaging with the world in a dramatically different way than we are. They may understand the things that they are seeing, smelling, experiencing and feeling much differently than us, but that it is nevertheless real... It feels viable to latch onto something we know must have happened. We know that there must have been armor jangling because... we know that there are bells ringing... that lots of feet marching together make a sound... and I don't think that I am overstepping my bounds as an interpreter of the past in giving some life to that.<sup>222</sup>

While the written word (of which this interview was discussing) can describe these sensory experiences, podcasting allows for them, if artificially, to some degree to be recreated, taking the listener one step further into the atmosphere of past events while still remaining anchored by the main draw of the work: the history itself. In this regard,

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<sup>222</sup>“Patrick Wyman presents the Verge in conversation with Mike Duncan,” Powell's Books, last modified July 23, 2021, Youtube video, 13:25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTQq1A7vov0>

segments of Wyman's episodes that draw heavily upon these aural elements find themselves somewhere between a simple description of the past and a 'cinematic' presentation of it. Unlike cinema however, podcasts allow their creators to withdraw these immersive elements without disrupting narrative flow. Background noises fade away as Wyman transitions into evidence based commentary on the underlying superstructures of the Roman world, such as the functioning of the Roman economy or the inseparable nature of Gothic and military identity. As such, Wyman's inclusion of various sound effects adds another layer to his history, elevating rather than corrupting the essence of the past being presented.

Moving away from narrative style, another component of Wyman's shows that cannot go unaddressed are the episodes interspersed throughout each season that consisting of interviews with other historians. As noted previously, while not entirely unique to podcasts, as radio and television broadcasts have featured historians frequently throughout their lifetimes, podcasts may be the medium in which long-form interviews are the most compatible. Wyman in particular, among history podcasters, embraces this to its full extent; with 65 official interview episodes with various historians or specialists in subjects tangential to history to date, as well many more co-hosted episodes with similarly credited individuals, compared with Carlin's ten interviews with those more specifically involved in history. His first interview, released April 24, 2017, was with Mike Duncan, a fellow podcaster and historian similarly known for his work on the history of the Roman Empire. The May 18, 2017 episode "Why Didn't Rome Rise Again?" marked his first interview with a fully academically accredited historian in Professor Walter Scheidel. And, while other interviews did take place in between, on April 3, 2018 Wyman concluded *The Fall of Rome* by interviewing historian Kyle Harper and discussing several of the environmental factors at play in the Empires downfall.<sup>223</sup> Alongside historians, Wyman also invites experts in subjects tangential to history, such as geneticists, prize winning journalists, economists and authors. These interviews are almost entirely unscripted, although the subjects and likely many of the questions are prepared in advance. Typically, these interviews follow a format of Wyman asking a question, receiving an extended answer from his guest, before drawing

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<sup>223</sup>Patrick Wyman, "Interview: Historian Kyle Harper on Disease, Climate and the Fall of the Roman Empire," *The Fall of Rome*, April 3, 2018, podcast, website. <https://wondery.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/episode/5610-interview-historian-kyle-harper-on-disease-climate-and-the-fall-of-the-roman-empire/>.

attention to elements of the answer that Wyman finds of particular interest. He then expands on these elements and then directs into another question. As a consequence each interview follows a rather more structured formula than Carlin's *Addendum* episodes, however as with Carlin's shows they also allow for a fluidity that mimics natural dialogue between individuals. This unpolished, more ordinary style of discussion than is compiled in written texts on history break down many of the barriers to engagement for a public audience, allowing professional historians access to a broad audience who may otherwise not have the impetus to do so.

Often, these interviews are specifically in response to a book that the guest had previously written. However, to be clear, the interviews are not reviews of the works in question, but rather, discussions regarding elements of them and how each respective historian came to form conclusions on their subjects. Of the three historians mentioned by name above, the interview with Mike Duncan centered around, *The Storm Before The Storm: The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic*<sup>224</sup> that was due for release in the immediate months following. Professor Walter Scheidel's 2017 work, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*<sup>225</sup> was a focal point of his episode. And similarly, Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*,<sup>226</sup> served as a basis for the shows 38 minute runtime. Alongside advertising the publications of historians and guests to Wyman's audience, these interviews always to some extent act as an extension of the scope of Wyman's work. In the final addendum-esque episode to *The Fall of Rome* for example, Wyman and Harper discuss the natural forces involved in Rome's decline; elements of climate and disease which, while mentioned within several episodes, were not explored in great depth. For example, the fact that the Justinian Plague of the 6<sup>th</sup> century was caused by the same bacterium as the Black Death of the 14<sup>th</sup> was only confirmed as recently as 2013,<sup>227</sup> and Harper's specialization in the subject matter allowed him to expound more thoroughly on the consequences of this, stating that "one

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224Mike Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm* (New York City: PublicAffairs, 2017).

225Dan Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Spectacular Fall of God's Holy Warriors* (London: Penguin Publishing Group, 2017).

226Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

227Michaela Harbeck, Lisa Seifert, Stephanie Hänsch, David M. Wagner, Dawn Birdsell, Katy L. Parise, Ingrid Wiechmann, et al., "Yersinia pestis DNA from Skeletal Remains from the 6th Century AD Reveals Insights into Justinianic Plague," *PLOS Pathogens* 9, no.5 (May 2, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.ppat.1003349>.

of the insidious facts about Bubonic Plague... is it isn't just a one off. The plague explodes in a pandemic event in an initial wave, but then it recurs every ten years, fifteen years, over the course of the next two centuries."<sup>228</sup> This, he concludes, may account for the fact that the demographics of those affected by the Bubonic Plague, like the Black Death, did not rebound as was typical with other forms of mass mortality in the Roman Empire of centuries prior. Harper's awareness of avant-garde methodologies involved in deconstructing genomic data or paleo-climate records taken from ice cores and tree rings also augment Wyman's previous information, exposing his audience to the newest historical thought around specific subjects. In short, these types of interviews serve as an extension of Wyman's own work, as well as an introduction to connected works that contain information too distant from or otherwise excluded from the initial history presented in his main show.

Of course, while the alternative-take on the subject matter at hand and the immediate benefits historians receive by this online publicity is valuable, arguably more important is that these interviews contribute to the historiography by reducing the ambiguity of perspectives of authors through conversation. The listener is exposed to how each historian arrived at the conclusions they did and the process by which they constructed their interpretation of the past. Jenkins argued nearly two decades prior that "our real need is to establish the presuppositions that historians take into the past. Thus, It would be more constructive (though again ultimately impossible) to try and get into the minds of historians rather than the minds of the people who lived in the past and only emerge through the minds of, strictly speaking, the historians anyway...not so much 'all history as the history of past people's minds' then, but 'all history as the history of historians minds.'"<sup>229</sup> The way in which these interviews are structured and conducted go some distance in achieving this end. Wyman asks, for example, in an interview with Peter Mancall regarding the beliefs of those living in the early modern Atlantic period about the new world, how the visual representations from the era express this: "If we are trying to get into the heads of the people who made [those visual sources] and are viewing them in that period, how far can we do that? How much of their mental landscape is just going to be so fundamentally foreign to us that we can't necessarily reconstruct it?"<sup>230</sup> In response, Mancall explains that he derived some of his conclusions

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<sup>228</sup>Wyman, "Interview: Historian Kyle Harper," 12:59.

<sup>229</sup>Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 56.

<sup>230</sup>Patrick Wyman, "Interview: Historian Peter Mancall on Monsters, the Atlantic World, and Early

from the process by which the primary sources were constructed. Sixteenth century watercolor portrait paintings by John White that were sent back to England had, originally, blank backgrounds. These were then entirely artificially filled in by Theodorus de Bry in 1590 during the paintings conversion to engraving plates<sup>231</sup> to make the process of colonization “seem more appealing to potential colonization, especially colonization by the English or by other protestants”<sup>232</sup> by presenting the native tribes as a something akin to pre-civilized Britons that can be positively shaped by colonial influence. That this change was made he argues, evidences the way in which those individuals who remained in the old world imagined of the new and constructed perspectives and superstitions about that which they had no direct experience of. While, this justification is of course present within Mancall’s published work on the subject matter,<sup>233</sup> the nature of this style of interview requires him to reactively justify and articulate the conscious decisions made in reconstructing the past in the manner he did; a process that is often opaquely implicit within historical texts themselves, and left to the readers own derivative interpretation. Consequently, these interviews permanently contribute to the historiographical record a more transparent explanation of the way in which historians consider, weigh and compile their evidence into published historical works.

Interviews, however, are not the only means by which Wyman acts as a conduit for academic and popular historical discourse. As a subcategory of his main shows, he also releases much shorter, fifteen to thirty-five minute, *Tides of History Book Club* episodes. To date, there are fourteen installments in the series,<sup>234</sup> although some episodes covering several different works. While these are of a similar nature to formal book reviews published by academic historians, intended as brief review, critique and ultimately a recommendation of an historical text, they are generally more comprehensive in their contents. Wyman typically introduces a book’s subject and purpose, any particular elements of it he enjoyed or criticisms he may have of the work, the background of the historian, as well as the level of familiarity that a reader would need in order to engage

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Modernity,” December 29, 2017, podcast, Website, 18:27, <https://wondery.com/shows/tides-of-history/episode/5629-interview-historian-peter-mancall-on-monsters-the-atlantic-world-and-early-modernity/>.

<sup>231</sup>See Appendix 10 for a comparison of an original water color paintings and its engraving.

<sup>232</sup>Wyman, “Interview: Historian Peter Mancall,” 21:20.

<sup>233</sup>Peter C. Mancal, *Nature and Culture in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>234</sup>See Appendix 9.

with the work. In the episode “Chris Wickham and the Legacy of Rome” for example, he describes several works of the author: *Framing the early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (2005), *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (2009), and *Medieval Europe* (2016). While historians have commented widely on Wickham’s “often-astonishing breadth and analytical depth,”<sup>235</sup> “impeccable scholarship,”<sup>236</sup> “emphasis on political and socio-economic development,”<sup>237</sup> as well as the application of both literary and archaeological evidence throughout each text, in Wyman’s review, he includes these perspectives while tailoring each work to the expected variety of individuals listening. He compares each text’s narrative structure and complexity, bluntly advising that despite its comprehensive approach *Framing the early Middle Ages*’ 900 pages are likely “not going to be a pleasure read.”<sup>238</sup> Comparatively, he considers the *Inheritance of Rome* to be “much more targeted at a general audience” as “a more popularized version of a lot of the threads that Wickham picks up in *Framing the Middle Ages*,”<sup>239</sup> and highly recommends *Medieval Europe* to be consumed simply as a “concise, comprehensive look at the middle ages from beginning to end.”<sup>240</sup> Wyman not only gives an overview and critique these three works, but also lays out a pathway for casual readers of history to consider in purchasing and consuming these texts. And, while the above example is restricted to a single author, in other episodes Wyman presents a similarly structured series of reviews from several different writers. As a result, his listeners are aware of which texts are more accessible, as well as those that may hold appeal for individuals who already have a background in the material, encouraging them to engage with a more academically composed reconstruction of the

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235Marios Costambeys, “Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800 – Chris Wickham,” *Economic History Review* 59, no.2 (2006): 417.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3805957&site=eds-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3805957&site=eds-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3805957&site=eds-live&scope=site).

236Charles West, “The Inheritance of Rome,” *History Today* 59, no.4 (2009): 63.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edb&AN=37251790&site=eds-live&scope=site/)

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237Jonathan R. Lyon, “Medieval Europe by Chris Wickham (Review),” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 48, no.2 (2017): 247. [https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edspmu&AN=edspmu.S1530916917200092&site=eds-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edspmu&AN=edspmu.S1530916917200092&site=eds-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edspmu&AN=edspmu.S1530916917200092&site=eds-live&scope=site).

238Patrick Wyman, “Tides of History Book Club: Chris Wickham and the Legacy of Rome,” Tides of History, June 3, 2018, podcast, website, 7:05,

<https://wonderly.com/shows/tides-of-history/episode/5629-tides-of-history-book-club-chris-wickham-and-the-legacy-of-rome/>.

239Ibid, 7:24.

240Ibid, 8:13.

past.

Like Carlin, Wyman's primary goal is to engage with his audience, however, he approaches this in a way that is much more in line with traditional academic practice. While the concerns and considerations he has in interpreting the past emanate from his academic background, the style with which he presents his ideas is clearly one designed for public consumption. In placing his own conclusions on the past at the forefront of his episodes, and challenging with evidence the works of other historians, Wyman illustrates that podcasting, as a medium, can have authority and utility beyond simply communicating history in an interesting way. His interviews with other historians compound this, and manifest both as a direct contribution to the historiography and as a primary source from which we can access the mind of historians and how they constructed their Histories. As well as this, by combining the Braudellian ideas of a long, slowly changing past, with his entirely fictionalized character narratives Wyman's *The Fall of Rome* and *Tides of History* are a unique historical experience that is innately self-aware. In this regard, Wyman could be considered an exemplar for other historians looking to enter into the podcasting space; a bridge between academic history and the public.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

Historical film, television, video games, and even novels prioritize presentation so as to retain audience interest while communicating history. Consequently, popular history has become “a staple of entertainment and leisure”<sup>241</sup> in the Western world today. This is not to suggest that public audiences cannot engage critically with academic histories if they are so inclined, rather, that it is unrealistic to expect non-specialists to apply the amount of time, or have the same determination to interpret historical information with the rigor that would be expected of those professionally employed to do so. Public historians have noted that “members of the public do not necessarily have the same view of what makes a given historical narrative or source authentic as an historian would.”<sup>242</sup> This is often as a result of preconceived notions as to how the past ‘should’ or ‘might’ have been, influenced by “nostalgia, emotion, and memory,”<sup>243</sup> as well as their own worldviews and prior experiences shaping how information received is interpreted. For example, the popular view of the First World War British Army as “lions led by donkeys... [with] the supreme commander, Douglas Haig, [as] the most asinine of them all,”<sup>244</sup> is an image which, “despite rehabilitation attempts by numerous historians, remains for many the incompetent Haig from Blackadder.”<sup>245</sup> In contrast to typical expressions of popular history, texts written by academic historians are constructed with the expectation that they will (and should), inevitably face criticism from fellow scholars who are just as versed in the subject matter. Written arguments to this purpose are designed to be watertight, and any holes that can be poked through in the process of peer review should provide opportunities to construct more refined and complete ideas about the past. As such they are often lengthy, difficult to understand without an understanding of the surrounding literature, and largely irrelevant to the ordinary lives of the wider public. However, while still susceptible to inaccuracies and editorializing, the content of academic histories is not compromised by editorial processes, and the prioritization of entertainment that other forms of history, especially digital, may

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<sup>241</sup>Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton, *Doing History* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 163.

<sup>242</sup>Melinda Haunton and Georgie Salzedo, “‘A Duty, an Opportunity and a Pleasure’: Connecting Archives and Public History,” *Archives & Records* 42, no.1 (Spring 2021): 44.  
doi:10.1080/23257962.2020.1843417.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>244</sup>G.J. De Groot, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928* (Routledge, 1988), 1. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.4324/9781003119531>.

<sup>245</sup>Haunton and Salzedo, “‘A Duty, an Opportunity and a Pleasure,’” 45.

exhibit. History podcasts, while most often constructed as popular history, are situated somewhat uniquely between these worlds. They can appeal to wide audiences as a popular form of public history while facilitating the sharing of complex, non-reductive information in a similar manner to written discourse, without suffering to the same extent as film and television the distortions of the past that editing techniques and extensive dramatization can cause.<sup>246</sup> The final comment in my thesis expands on podcasting's role in the practice of history further, particularly in regards to three inherent components of the medium. First, podcasts are a disruptive force in historical discourse in the public sphere and have created a new class of public intellectuals with significant cultural influence. Second, podcasting's technological framework is foundationally democratic, changing the nature of the relationships between historians and their audience. And third, the format of podcasts aids in the presentation of history as a *reified experience*; this is demonstrated in both of the above historians' work. These features are elaborated on below.

### Part One: Disruptive Technologies, Podcasting and Penny Histories

Paralleling the rise of podcasts in several ways, chapbooks, later known as Penny Readings, were a form of popular public literature in England from the early sixteenth century onward that dramatically changed the information that public audiences had access to.<sup>247</sup> There are some obvious differences between the two mediums of course. For one, as the precariously literate working class of England, “to whom chapbook literature made its appeal,”<sup>248</sup> transitioned slowly into consuming written works, it marked a shift away from the oral tradition, whereas the rise of podcasts are indicative of the opposite: a re-emergence of the power of the voice. They do however, share similarities, such as the inexpensive costs of production, the fact that both mediums originated as a result of new technology that challenged traditional norms of expression, and the broad audiences to which they were and, in the case of podcasts, are, marketed. Tailored to their audiences, the contents of chapbooks were intended to be of a popular nature, and, as in podcasts as well, this often took the form of history. At their core,

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<sup>246</sup>Eleftheria Thanouli, *History and Film : A Tale of Two Disciplines* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 57.

<sup>247</sup>E. Victor, *Popular Literature, A History and a Guide: From the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>248</sup>Edward Moxon, *Moxon's Standard Penny Readings*, edited by Tom Hood (London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1871), 119.

chapbooks regarding ‘history’ “were tangible expressions of a deeply rooted folk culture which had laid hold upon men's imaginations long before the invention of printing;”<sup>249</sup> the contents often being composed of myth, ballads, quasi-history, and stories of an imagined past of England. Critically, they were described as a useless “pass-time,”<sup>250</sup> as “the past that does exist in these stories is a kind of composite, fabricated past, a very long time ago, a past strongly related to the ‘Once upon a time’ of fairy stories.”<sup>251</sup> However, even if the literature presented was to a large extent fiction, chapbooks assisted in maintaining and proliferating an inherited ‘past’ from which individuals could draw upon and derive shared cultural identity. This was composed from the values, ethics, and beliefs about the world passed down until that point through the oral tradition. Historical podcasts are a similar phenomenon, modernizing the sharing of information through a new technology that furthers cultural discourse and inclusion. However, while chapbooks in large part derived their contents from cultural mythos and poetic traditions, historical podcasts have their roots in the substantial academic literature that has been rigorously debated for the past two centuries.

In 1871 Edward Moxon commented that chapbooks “have rapidly grown into general popularity, and have done an incalculable amount of good. They have familiarized with the treasures of our literature many who formerly had as little inclination possible an opportunity to read for themselves.”<sup>252</sup> They also however, as a consequence of their success, were a disruptive contribution to the social discourse of the era. Chapbooks faced several challenges from established secular powers, as well as the Church, “who saw popular literature as a threat to established values.”<sup>253</sup> The relative affordability of this literature and its wide proliferation meant that the lower class public had access to information that was previously unavailable to all but those privileged by class or profession. And, as much of the historical fiction was presented as morally didactic,<sup>254</sup> it resulted in shifts in public beliefs about the structure of society and moral obligations,

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<sup>249</sup>Ibid, 108.

<sup>250</sup>Ibid, 17

<sup>251</sup>Margaret Spufford, “Portraits of Society: Popular Fiction in 17th-century England,” *History Today* 32, no.2 (February, 1982): 13. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=f5h&AN=4865387&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>252</sup>Moxon, *Moxon's Standard Penny Readings*, vi.

<sup>253</sup>E. Victor, *Popular Literature*, 161.

<sup>254</sup>Diane Hoeveler, “Gothic Chapbooks and the Urban Reader,” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 42, no.3 (Summer 2010) 156. [https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=english\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=english_fac).

particularly with regards to established class structure. Consequently, the upper classes of English society censured chapbooks and other nonreligious publications “as playing a disruptive role in the distribution of cultural materials that encouraged the working classes in their misguided and even dangerous social aspirations.”<sup>255</sup> Although the conceptual particulars of the pre-industrial class based society cannot be appropriately applied to the modern world, podcasts have faced similar criticisms from those of similar status in today’s society in its recent rise, with both established media and political figures commenting negatively about the space.<sup>256</sup> This has resulted in instances of podcasting platforms unilaterally removing shows from their websites,<sup>257</sup> subscription service platforms removing creators,<sup>258</sup> as well as, more recently, discussions regarding regulation and control of the information published online.<sup>259</sup><sup>260</sup> Both phenomena evidence the challenges podcasting poses to traditional methods of public discourse as a disruptive new technology. The medium provides pathways for those without extensive resources to be active participants in creation of collective culture and history; a modern day iteration of the “battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.”<sup>261</sup> They contribute significantly to the creation and maintenance of a shared social consciousness, and when tied with the historical discipline, go further still in connecting the public to the past in an unprecedented way, having a lasting impact on the way in which public audiences understand the past, today’s world, and themselves in relation to it.

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<sup>255</sup>Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>John Bowden, “White House urges Spotify to take further action on Joe Rogan: ‘More can be done,’” *Independent*, last modified February 3, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/joe-rogan-spotify-covid-white-house-b2005488.html>.

<sup>257</sup>“Censorship Abound. Should Podcasters Be Worried?” *Podcast Business Journal*, last modified January 12, 2021, <https://podcastbusinessjournal.com/censorship-abound-should-podcasters-be-worried/>.

<sup>258</sup>Nellie Bowles, “Patreon Bars Anti-Feminist for Racist Speech, Inciting Revolt,” *New York Times*, last modified December 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/24/technology/patreon-hate-speech-bans.html>.

<sup>259</sup>Ashley Carman, “Can Anyone Moderate Podcasts? Apple, Spotify, and the impossible problem of moderating shows,” *The Verge*, last modified February 12, 2021, <https://www.theverge.com/22273071/podcast-moderation-apple-spotify-podbean-steve-bannon>.

<sup>260</sup>Nihal Krishan, “Podcast censorship is the next free speech battleground, Republicans say,” *Washington Examiner*, last modified February 1, 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/podcast-censorship-is-the-next-free-speech-battleground-republicans-say>.

<sup>261</sup> M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 131-3.

As noted in the introduction to this paper, the podcasting industry has also materialized a class of public intellectuals in more recent years, and the current popularity of academically inclined podcasts reflected in consumption statistics suggest that there is significant desire for real discussion about complex ideas. Jordan Peterson, clinical psychologist and professor emeritus of the University of Toronto, as well as a recognizable figure within this new group, conceptualized this desire and its corollary as a technological revolution, remarking that online discussion through podcasts have “turned the spoken word into a tool that has the same reach as the printed word, so it’s a Gutenberg revolution in the domain of video and audio.”<sup>262</sup> In a different interview he also posits that unlike with televised media, in podcasts there is no need to reduce a “complex event into a short sound bite and entertain everyone,” and continues to describe what he interprets as a public desire for “genuine conversation”.<sup>263</sup> This desire appears to be supported empirically, perhaps marking a reversal in the trend of a diminishing number of credible public intellectuals recent years that Richard Posner (controversially) concluded in 2001.<sup>264</sup> It also however, presents one issue that has yet to be critically addressed: the overlap between public prominence and perceived credibility, a likely correlation that has unfortunately, at least in the digital space seen little investigation. One tangential study on this subject found that negative comments on digital media leads to a noticeable distrust towards its contents.<sup>265</sup> The reverse however, whether or not popularity confers credibility, was noted as unclear, and something that could use further research. In the above cases, Carlin, and more-so Wyman, are representative of rather balanced historical inquiry; or at least inquiry with effort made to not conceal their conscious biases from the audience. It may also be the case that this long-term commitment to honesty and clarity has culminated in audience loyalty and directly contributed to their success in the medium. Comparatively, many other podcasts purport a particular interpretation of historical events, from a variety of often political agendas without clear reference to established argument. As such, both

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<sup>262</sup>Joe Rogan, “Joe Rogan Experience #1139 – Jordan Peterson,” The Joe Rogan Experience, accessed March 10, 2022, YouTube video, 05:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Xc7DN-noAc>.

<sup>263</sup>Joe Rogan, “Joe Rogan Experience #1070 – Jordan Peterson,” The Joe Rogan Experience, accessed March 10, 2022, YouTube video, 2:08:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T7pUEZfgdI>.

<sup>264</sup>Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>265</sup>T. Franklin Waddell, “What Does the Crowd Think? How Online Comments and Popularity Metrics Affect News Credibility and Issue Importance,” *New Media & Society* 20, no.8 (2018): 3080. doi:10.1177/1461444817742905.

Carlin's and Wyman's approach to their work perhaps also provide a point of reference for ethical historical practice in the ever-growing public forum.

### Part Two: Democratizing History, Audience and Peer Interaction

While a disruptive force, podcasts also inherently democratize the process of creating and interpreting the past. For one, the contents of both chapbooks and podcasts were and are, in large part tailored to their intended markets. However, as a consequence of the connectivity afforded by the internet, podcasts are far more of a product of their audience than its obsolete relative ever was. As has been noted, any individual has the ability to produce and release their own work to the world, and this reduction of barriers to entry allows for a far greater variety of people, voices, and opinions than any time prior. This representation however, is not an entirely equal phenomenon. By default, established personalities within the space, as well as organizations or individuals with public fame or the ability to advertise themselves through other means have an inherent advantage over those who are unknown, more easily reaching a much wider audience. In spite of this, however, podcasting is still a medium with far more equal access than technology that preceded it. Another central democratizing element is expressed through the crowd-sourced voting systems that dictate (typically) the success of a creator. Most platforms promote and advertise popular shows, individuals can leave reviews at any time, and discussions about a show, both online and in real life lead to more downloads and, cyclically, more exposure; which again, raises the issue of prominence and credibility. Furthermore, unlike the limited shows and select broadcasting times of traditional radio, listeners can at any time choose to stop listening or to select a different show. As such, "the difference between a podcast and a radio programme can thus be likened to a book in comparison to a newspaper, the value in the item is not measured by its circulation but by its individual merits;"<sup>266</sup> merits that are determined by a comparatively more decentralized means than anything preceding it.

As creators often operate within the digital space, it is also not uncommon to see direct communication between them and their audience. Carlin, for example, has created four 'Ask Me Anything' threads on the social media website, *Reddit*, to date, with his most recent one, January 15, 2021, receiving over eleven hundred responses concerning

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<sup>266</sup>Tromans, "Casting into the Past," 27.

Carlin's thoughts on current events, the future of the show, and clarifications of ideas discussed in previous installments.<sup>267</sup> Similarly, both Carlin and Wyman have, and regularly use, *Twitter* accounts to engage with their core fan base, allowing them to engage often and react quickly to responses to their work. Outside of written responses, both podcasters frequently appear on other podcasting shows or have performed at public events in the past. Carlin hosted a TED talk in June of 2015<sup>268</sup> and took part in a live interview with accompanying question and answer session at Google in October of 2017<sup>269</sup> among a variety of other appearances on various podcasts. Wyman has similarly been featured on other podcasters' shows. He has also released the episodes "Listener Mail: Your Questions, Our Answers"<sup>270</sup> (September 6, 2018), and "Prehistory Mailbag! Archaeology, Language, and the Advantages of Farming"<sup>271</sup> (October 15, 2020), in which he directly addressed audience questions and expanded upon the ideas they inquired about. These types of engagements allow for creators to amend or clarify information not clearly presented in their previous work while also providing them an opportunity to effectively 'crowd-source' unfiltered feedback, often resulting in subtle shifts in each show's trajectory. This interaction between creator and audience in producing and circulating a show evidences the democratic substructure that underlies the medium, and in turn, suggests potential for the democratization of historical discourse.

Interestingly, what has been pointed out as "the negotiation that lie at the heart of [methodologically] oral history [that] prefigure the public history relationship between audiences and historians"<sup>272</sup> also plays out in the oral presentation of history to a similar degree. What was originally "a negotiation of the narrators and interviewers frame of reference"<sup>273</sup> is mirrored in the negotiation between the history podcaster and their audiences respective desire to present or engage with a particular construction of

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267"Dan is in the house," Reddit, accessed February 26, 2022, online forum, [https://www.reddit.com/r/dancarlin/comments/kxlmz3/dan\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_house/](https://www.reddit.com/r/dancarlin/comments/kxlmz3/dan_is_in_the_house/).

268Dan Carlin, "The New Media's coming of age | Dan Carlin | TEDxMtHood," TEDx Talks, June 4, 2016, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K57kcs15DY>.

269"Dan Carlin | The New Golden Age," Talks at Google.

270Wyman, "Listener Mail."

271Patrick Wyman, "Prehistory Mailbag! Archaeology, Language, and the Advantages of Farming," October 15, 2020, podcast, website, <https://wonderly.com/shows/tides-of-history/episode/5629-prehistory-mailbag-archaeology-language-and-the-advantages-of-farming/>.

272Jo Blatti, "Public and Oral History," *The Journal of American History* 77, no.2 (September, 1990): 615. doi:10.2307/2079195.

273Ibid, 622.

historical narrative. On a macro-level, this is reflected in whether an audience exists or not for a particular series, with consumers expressing their interest, if not with their wallet, then with their time. Similarly, clear micro-level parallels can be seen in audience engagement through message board posts, emails, and (most directly) in public interviews with podcasting hosts; interviews that often end with questions from audience members that can lead to observable changes in the direction of a particular show.

It is also the case that podcasters operate symbiotically with each other. Carlin noted, for example, that the beginning of the technology's growth was different from traditional media in that individual podcasts were not competing for an already accounted for share of the market. Instead, featuring on others podcasts and engaging with their work was a way to share "experience and grow each other's audience."<sup>274</sup> It was productive therefore, to invite other podcasters on to your show and vice versa as the fans of each show would then be introduced to another series that they may also have an interest in. Communities would then cumulatively grow and succeed together, and like gravity, pull in more and more views the larger that space became. Today this trend continues. It is far more common to have podcasters feature on other shows than to make appearances outside of the space. Peterson commented on this fact as well, remarking of the podcasters he has interacted with that, they "inhabit the same technological space more than the same ideological space."<sup>275</sup> This seems to be true of podcasters broadly, and as such suggests that the current state of the medium is suited for those lengthy dialogues which bring together and contrast various ideas and arguments; those "collaborative contexts that increase ability to create and communicate."<sup>276</sup> Consequently, this open forum accommodates Jenkins suggestion to take the "discourse of history in the direction of that kind of radical, open-ended democracy that grasps the impossibility of enacting a total historical/historicizing closure of the past whilst recognizing that its re-figured ways of figuring out 'will never have been good enough.'"<sup>277</sup> History podcasters are *by default* encouraged by both consumers and their peers to engage in new and potentially challenging discourse about the past and their own interpretations of it.

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<sup>274</sup>London Real, "Dan Carlin – Hardcore history – Part 1/2," 25:08.

<sup>275</sup>Joe Rogan, "Joe Rogan Experience #1139 – Jordan Peterson," 3:16:32.

<sup>276</sup>John F. Barber, "Digital storytelling: New opportunities for *humanities scholarship and pedagogy*,"

*Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3 (January 15, 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1181037>.

<sup>277</sup>Jenkins, *Refiguring History*, 5.

### Part Three: Reifying History, Past Presenting and the Essence of History

Both of the podcasters considered in this thesis favor a presentation of history that tends towards accessibility without, insofar as they are able, compromising the historical information presented. Accessibility and appeal is, of course, aided by personal charisma and the choice of subject matter explored, more importantly however, it is achieved by both podcasters through their presentation of a *reified experience* of the past. To this end, both employ to some degree a partial ‘fictionalization’ of the history presented. For Carlin, this is apparent both in his consideration of counter-factual histories (which are by definition fictional), as well in his requests of listeners to imagine what it would be like to ‘walk a mile in the moccasins’ of individuals from the past. These communicative strategies require from the audience an understanding of the history presented alongside theoretical engagement with the narrative, creating an immersive past that each listener constructs within their minds as he speaks. In Carlin’s case the audience derives practical value from the direct comparison of their own experiences to the imagined experiences of others in the past. And, as Carlin’s focus is so often on those who have endured extreme events during their lives, these comparisons are sharp, containing cautionary commentary on the capabilities of mankind. The relative difficulties of the lives of past individuals, their achievements and failures, and the relationship that ethics and morality have to circumstance are all implicit, regardless of whether Carlin vocalizes his personal opinions or not. For Wyman, a reification of the past is overtly manifest in the entirely fictionalized character driven stories throughout his work and supplemented by the incorporation of atmospheric aural media. Wyman’s audience is able to both empathize and contrast their own experiences with these characters that, while not real, embody a collection of past experiences that almost certainly were. The additional background noise also contributes a subtle realism to the world being spoken of, contributing to the experiential element of his style of telling history. For both podcasters, this assists in holding their audiences’ attention and increases their level of engagement without subverting the history presented.

In his work, *Sublime Historical Experience*, Ankersmit argues that within objects from antiquity, “the past itself can have been said to have survived the centuries and still be

present;<sup>278</sup> they provide a fleeting glimpse of a non-discursive representation of the past, an authentic slice of reality that has been preserved. Eelco Runia, in *Moved by the Past*, conceptualizes this as the “presence”<sup>279</sup> of history, and argues that can it is also communicated through historical writing. He also however, identifies the process by which this is arrived at as a result of the metonymical component of language, stating that:

“Historical reality is incomparably more absent and incomparably more inaccessible than we like to think.... the presence of the past does not primarily reside in the intended story or the manifest metaphorical content of the text, but in what story and text contain in spite of the intentions of the historian.”<sup>280</sup>

That is to say that it is possible to derive the presence of the past from the understood contiguities of what is overtly stated in historical narrative. On this subject White has written less abstractly. He argues, using the events of the Holocaust as example, that the “historical import of the Final Solution” wasn’t that it occurred, nor was it the tragic details of the events themselves, but that it was incomprehensible “within the parameters of traditional beliefs about society.”<sup>281</sup> Moreover, it is not just that the “essence” of this historical event is unable to be captured by the scientific method, but that recognizing this essence is not a function of modernist methodology at all.<sup>282</sup> If the typical construction of academic history is “fundamentally not so much a method but a form of etiquette”<sup>283</sup> that has been enforced by professional historians through the years, then it would follow that, while Carlin and Wyman’s approach in presenting history may be unorthodox, it still achieves that which historical discourse, at its heart, is intended to do: “not [to] create the world...[but to] appropriate it and give it all the meaning it has.”<sup>284</sup> Through their storytelling, speculation and explicit fictionalization of past events they convey a very real historical presence. It is exactly this historical presence,

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278Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 115.

279Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 54.

280Eelco Runia, “Presence,” *History and Theory* 45, no.1 (2006): 27.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3590722&site=eds-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3590722&site=eds-live&scope=site.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.cookie.url.uid&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3590722&site=eds-live&scope=site)

281White, *The Practical Past*, 80.

282White, *The Practical Past*, 80.

283Ibid, 37.

284Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 6.

the *essence* of the past that derives from ontological fact a contemporary, practical, and often ethical utility, which history podcasts appear to have observed and attempted to capture.

While the potential utility of podcasts has been explored in some depth in the preceding discussion, there is one glaring omission throughout this paper of the medium's capability: the ability to embed audio files from real world events that occurred from the end of the nineteenth century on-wards. Carlin, due to the variety of subject matter and time periods he addresses does embed audio quotations on rare occasions. However, it is to a negligible degree when considering the utility this may have; especially in assisting the listener in experiencing the past. For example, due the wide sharing of audio files online, it is possible for anyone to listen to complete radio broadcasts transmitted live on the date of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, November 22, 1963. And, throughout the radio broadcast of that particular day, a listener can clearly hear the concern, confusion, anxiety and sorrow in the voices of reporters, broadcasters, and guests on the show as they both relay what information they had at that time and their reactions to the people of America.<sup>285</sup> The finality of the historic announcement, "The President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy is dead. The president is dead. Let us pray,"<sup>286</sup> is not done justice by words on the printed page. Another example of this, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's broadcasting of Britain's declaration of war on September 3, 1939<sup>287</sup> contains within it a solemnity that again, is not nearly so manifest when transcribed. Not limited to radio broadcasts or speeches, any event recorded in audio carries with it a part of the atmosphere of the time when it occurred, and to present it thus narrows and vivifies the imaginative recreation of the past in the listener's minds. For "tone and volume range and the rhythm of popular speech carry implicit meaning and social connotations which are not reproducible in writing."<sup>288</sup> They are however, reproducible in podcasts.

It is likely that many occurrences going forward, momentous or trivial, will be

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<sup>285</sup>"JFK's Assassination," ABC Radio Network, accessed February 14, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXvbcEH3joU>.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid, 54:56.

<sup>287</sup>"British Declaration Of War 1939 - Complete Broadcast," BBC, accessed February 12, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQcaFI6m6DQ>.

<sup>288</sup>Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) eds. R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 2015), 50. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315671833>.

increasingly recorded in a similar fashion. This is especially so as almost everybody carries with them a device that can record audio at any time, that only takes only seconds to activate, and for the many people who utilize cloud storage technology, is uploaded immediately to an online server to be stored for an indefinite duration. These recordings, already commonly used as evidence in legal cases, compose a significant portion of modern journalism's primary resources, and are likely featured in the courses of some history professors. For to have original recordings of events themselves incorporated within historiography as a foundational, accessible resource from which to call upon has immense value in a study of the past. This value has not yet been realized, however, podcasts have the potential to do so, giving historians the ability to directly incorporate less reductive sources into their arguments, adding nuance and detail that audiences can more easily recognize. Moreover, the medium does not require the accompanying aesthetic elements that television shows or films do to retain interest. As such, the only necessary editing for the majority of these inclusions would be the selection of which audio to use – an edit that is already the standard practice in written texts; preserving to a greater degree the authenticity of the source included. Consequently, this allows for the creation of podcasts, like those above, that would fall closer to traditional historical discourse than the artistic representations found in cinema or television, while retaining the indelibly human component of “genuine emotion... without losing anything of their truth.”<sup>289</sup> For “oral sources are oral sources,” and while it is the case that “scholars are willing to admit that the actual document is the recorded tape... almost all go on to work on the transcripts, and it is only transcripts that are published;”<sup>290</sup> transcripts that inevitably inherit to some extent, the two dimensional properties of the paper they are printed on.

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<sup>289</sup>Madame de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie vol. 1*, 198.

<sup>290</sup>Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 49.

## Conclusion

As a successor to radio and a widely popular information sharing technology, podcasts denote a revival of the oral tradition, providing a platform to both enthusiasts of history and professional historians to reach wide audiences. Moreover, given the medium's increasing proliferation, it is likely that historians will become increasingly motivated to engage with this technology in the future. While historical podcasts share similarities with amateur histories of the past, they also draw from the reserves of established historical literature, amalgamating in a definitively new, and unique form of historical discourse.

Carlin's *Hardcore History* and Wyman's *The Fall of Rome* and *Tides of History* illustrate the broad potential for this new medium to run parallel to modern historiography as an interpreter of history and a supplement to existing genres of the discipline for popular consumption. Carlin, with his entertaining and imaginative approach to history demonstrates what a new wave of amateur led public historical discourse might look like. He engages with his audience without overwhelming them in technicality or detail, while communicating ideas primarily derived from the collective work of modern historiography. Furthermore, less confined by the traditional expectations of academic inquiry, Carlin is able to examine and interpret the past in a manner professional historians are often reluctant to do so, presenting practical, ethical, often speculative, but unfailingly immersive histories to his audience. Wyman, as an accredited historian, functions as a bridge between academic history and public audiences in a more scholarly and authoritative manner. He accessorizes the slowly evolving structures of Braudellian thought that form the foundation of his histories with fictionalized character narratives and aural media only possible in a digital format to manifest unique histories that are both academic in nature yet accessible to lay audiences. Wyman's interviews with other historians directly showcase their works to a wide audience, while at the same time casting a light on their approaches to reconstructing the past. Through these methods both historians redraw the boundaries of how the past is considered and presented.

The technology of podcasting itself has also brought with it several disruptive elements

to historical discourse. It has revived features of communication that had been lost in written literature, such as the performative elements of storytelling and the ability to converse in fluid, concurrent dialogue. This allows historians to add new dimensions to their presentation of history, assisting in projecting the *essence* of the past into the present. In addition, podcasts are an inherently democratic medium, removing barriers to entry and elevating those histories with wide appeal in a manner unprecedented in long-form historical discourse.

However, while this dissertation has noted some of the consequences of this development, it is unfortunately not exhaustive. One example noted above that deserves further exploration is the potential correlation between popularity and credibility. Establishing clear parameters on what credibility entails would be among the first of the challenges to overcome. A related issue that has also gone unaddressed and is worthy of further investigation is the consequences of the ‘diffusement of responsibility’ that is inherent in collaborative podcasting projects, such as interviews or casual conversations with historians, as well as the potential for amateurishness to become an apology for mistakes that may go uncorrected. As podcasting does not have the established system of peer review that scholarly historical does, this may be an underlying issue in the utility of podcasts as an authoritative source of historical information that many people may expect. Finally, while it falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, it would also be worth exploring the breadth of cultural representation among popular podcasts, especially in the context of a revival of oral traditions that may not have been captured to the same degree as European history in written discourse. It is clear however, that podcasts do constitute an important part of today’s public historical discourse, perhaps even to the extent of a technical revolution, and historians should take note.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Nielsen Cable Network TV Viewing Estimates (retrieved February 3, 2022)

Prime broadcast network TV | **Cable network TV** | Syndication network

Week of January 17, 2022

RANK	PROGRAM	NETWORK	VIEWERS (000)	RATING
1	NFL WILDCARD L (ARIZONA/LA RAMS)	ESPN	8,832	7.1
2	MONDAY NIGHT KICKOFF L (WILD CARD KICKOFF)	ESPN	5,741	4.9
3	FIVE, THE	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	4,203	4.1
4	FIVE, THE	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,842	3.8
5	TUCKER CARLSON TONIGHT	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,731	3.7
6	FIVE, THE	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,720	3.6
7	HANNITY	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,664	3.5
8	HANNITY	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,517	3.5
9	FIVE, THE	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,515	3.4
10	TUCKER CARLSON TONIGHT	FOX NEWS CHANNEL	3,489	3.3

Source: Nielsen. Total Day Cable Programs. Viewing estimates on this page include Live viewing and DVR playback on the Same Day, defined as 3am-3am. Ratings are the percentage of TV homes in the U.S. tuned into television.

## Appendix 2: History of Rome, Apple Podcasts Customer Reviews (retrieved February 22, 2022)

### Apple Podcasts Preview

The History of Rome

#### Customer Reviews

**4.8** out of 5

9.8K Ratings



Joshee.ward, 02/12/2022

##### One of my favorite history podcasts

While my first impression was that this would be dry, I was happily wrong! The fleshing out of personalities and perfectly placed humor made Roman history very, very enjoyable. [more](#)



Litening210, 02/06/2022

##### Watching in 2022

Very well done, among the best when it comes to history podcast.



ersmed, 02/03/2022

##### Phenomenal History of Rome Podcast.

If you have any hint you may be interested in learning about the history of the Roman Empire, this is a foundational podcast that one could not heap enough compliments on. [more](#)



Chimaera04, 02/01/2022

**Bravo Zulu**  
Bravo Zulu



Little Tiger 🐅, 01/11/2022

##### Mike Duncan has other podcasts

I love this podcast and you should check out revolutions. It's by Mike Duncan too.



hermes in Houston, 01/10/2022

##### What a gem to find.

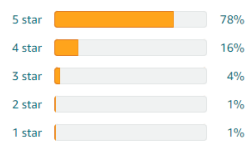
Great stuff Mike. Hope 2022 will be better for you.

Appendix 3: The Storm Before the Storm The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic Audible Audiobook, Amazon Customer Reviews (retrieved February 22, 2022)

Customer reviews

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

2,026 global ratings



^ How are ratings calculated?

To calculate the overall star rating and percentage breakdown by star, we don't use a simple average. Instead, our system considers things like how recent a review is and if the reviewer bought the item on Amazon. It also analyzes reviews to verify trustworthiness.

Appendix 4: Dan Carlin, Hardcore History Episode List (as of December 28, 2021)

Release dates recorded have been retrieved from the official Dan Carlin website. For reasons unknown (perhaps as a result of re-uploading or timezone differences), these do not appear to be entirely accurate. What is reported to be a correct date of release is marked with a \* and a note to the alternative source Podpedia, which in turn derived its data from the currently inaccessible Dan Carlin's Hardcore History Archive.

Official Dan Carlin Website: <https://www.dancarlin.com/hardcore-history-series/>

Podpedia: [https://podpedia.miraheze.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Dan\\_Carlin%27s\\_Hardcore\\_History\\_episodes](https://podpedia.miraheze.org/wiki/List_of_Dan_Carlin%27s_Hardcore_History_episodes)

Dan Carlin's Hardcore History Archive: <http://www.dancarlin.com/disp.php/hharchive>

Episode number	Episode Title	Length	Release date
01	Alexander Versus Hitler	16 minutes	July 27, 2006
02	Guns and Horses	34 minutes	September 12, 2006
03	The Organization of Peace	42 minutes	October 12, 2006 *October 4, 2006
04	Romancing the Tribes	31 minutes	October 24, 2006
05	Meandering Through The Cold War	48 minutes	November 14, 2006
06	Shield of the West	59 minutes	December 8, 2006
07	The X-History Files	31 minutes	December 27, 2006
08	Scars of the Great War	40 minutes	January 27, 2007
09	Darkness Buries the Bronze Age	33 minutes	16 October, 2007 *February 16, 2007
10	The What-Ifs of 1066	47 minutes	March 13, 2007

11	Thoughts on Churchill	53 minutes	April 11, 2007
12	Steppe Stories	58 minutes	May 8, 2007
13	Bubonic Nukes	47 minutes	June 13, 2007
14	The Macedonian Soap Opera	49 minutes	July 18, 2007
15	Desperate Times	41 minutes	August 30, 2007
16	Nazi Tidbits	59 minutes	October 17, 2007
17	Judgment at Nineveh	1 hour 4 minutes	December 14, 2007
18	A Fly on James Burke's Wall	44 minutes	January 2, 2008
19	Apache Tears	1 hour 18 minutes	March 14, 2008
20	(Blitz) History Under the Influence	40 minutes	May 6, 2008
21	Punic Nightmares I	1 hour	July 27, 2008
22	Punic Nightmares II	1 hour 18 min	September 17, 2008
23	Punic Nightmares III	1 hour 35 minutes	October 30, 2008
24	Classical Hanson	35 minutes	November 21, 2008
25	The Dyer Outlook	59 minutes	January 20, 2009
26	(Blitz) Addicted to Bondage	1 hour 4 minutes	February 3, 2009
27	Ghosts of the Ostfront I	1 hour 6 minutes	April 19, 2009
28	Ghosts of the Ostfront II	1 hour 30 minutes	June 17, 2009
29	Ghosts of the Ostfront III	1 hour 30 minutes	August 10, 2009
30	Ghosts of the Ostfront IV	1 hour 39 minutes	October 10, 2009
31	(Blitz) Suffer the Children	58 minutes	December 9, 2009
32	Globalization Unto Death	1 hour 32	February 27, 2010

		minutes	
33	(Blitz) Old School Toughness	1 hour 2 minutes	April 28, 2010 *April 27, 2010
34	Death Throes of the Republic I	1 hour 23 minutes	June 27, 2010 *June 28, 2010
35	Death Throes of the Republic II	1 hour 35 minutes	August 29, 2010
36	Death Throes of the Republic III	1 hour 42 minutes	October 29, 2010 *October 31, 2010
37	Death Throes of the Republic IV	1 hour 27 minutes	January 27, 2011 *January 28, 2011
38	Death Throes of the Republic V	1 hour 27 minutes	March 31, 2011 *April 1, 2011
39	Death Throes of the Republic VI	5 hours 27 minutes	June 29, 2011 *June 30, 2011
40	(Blitz) Radical Thoughts	2 hours 40 minutes	October 12, 2011 *October 13, 2011
41	Thor's Angels	4 hours 6 minutes	January 19, 2012
42	(Blitz) Logical Insanity	2 hours 30 minutes	March 31, 2012
43	Wrath of the Khans I	1 hour 49 minutes	June 13, 2012 *June 14, 2012
44	Wrath of the Khans II	1 hour 38 minutes	July 31, 2012
45	Wrath of the Khans III	1 hour 30 minutes	September 23, 2012
46	Wrath of the Khans IV	1 hour 33 minutes	November 13, 2012
47	Wrath of the Khans V	2 hours 8 minutes	January 13, 2013
48	Prophets of Doom	4 hours 28	April 22, 2013

		minutes	
49	The American Peril	4 hours 6 minutes	July 25, 2013
50	Blueprint for Armageddon I	3 hours 7 minutes	October 29, 2013
51	Blueprint for Armageddon II	3 hours 20 minutes	January 30, 2014
52	Blueprint for Armageddon III	3 hours 54 minutes	April 24, 2014
53	Blueprint for Armageddon IV	3 hours 56 minutes	August 17, 2014
54	Blueprint for Armageddon V	4 hours 30 minutes	December 30, 2014
55	Blueprint for Armageddon VI	4 hours 17 minutes	May 5, 2015 *May 6, 2015
56	Kings of Kings	3 hours 37 minutes	October 29, 2015
57	Kings of Kings II	4 hours 18 minutes	March 20, 2016
58	Kings of Kings III	5 hours 3 minutes	August 7, 2016
59	(Blitz) The Destroyer of Worlds	5 hours 53 minutes	Anuary 25, 2017 *January 24, 2017
60	The Celtic Holocaust	6 hours	August 9, 2017 *August 10, 2017
61	(Blitz) Painfotainment	4 hours 34 minutes	January 28, 2018 *January 29, 2018
62	Supernova in the East I	4 hours 28 minutes	July 14, 2018
63	Supernova in the East II	4 hours 2 minutes	January 12, 2019
64	Supernova in the East III	4 hours 53 minutes	October 25, 2019

		minutes	*October 24, 2019
65	Supernova in the East IV	3 hours 58 minutes	June 3, 2020
66	Supernova in the East V	3 hours 32 minutes	November 14, 2020 *November 13, 2020
67	Supernova in the East VI	5 hours 46 minutes	June 8, 2021

Appendix 5: Dan Carlin, Hardcore History Addendum Episode List (as of January 2, 2022)

Release dates recorded have been retrieved from the official Dan Carlin website.

Official Dan Carlin Website: <https://www.dancarlin.com/addendum/>

Episode number	Episode Title	Length	Guest	Release Date
01	Imperial Germany vs Nazi Germany	52 minutes		October 19, 2017
02	Rome Through Duncan's Eyes	1 hour 8 minutes	Mike Duncan, History Podcaster	December 12, 2017
03	A Four-Star Conversation	1 hour	Merrill McPeak, Four-Star General and former U.S. Air Force Chief-of-Staff	March 8, 2018
04	Exposing the Heart of The Great War	57 minutes	Peter Hart, Historian	April 12, 2018
05	Nightmares of Indianapolis	53 minutes		September 24, 2018
06	On The Vietnam War with Sir Max	1 hour 24 minutes	Sir Max Hastings, Historian and War Correspondent	October 30, 2018
07	Hardcore History On Fire	1 hour 42 minutes	Danielle Bolelli, History Podcaster	February 18, 2019
08	Caesar at Hastings	2 hours		June 7, 2019
09	Glimpses of Olympias	3 hours 31 minutes		January 30, 2020

10	Strangelove Whisperings	1 hour 1 minute	Fred Kaplan, History Author	March 2, 2020
11	Toronto Redux	1 hour 59 minutes	Jeff Marek, Radio Host and Podcaster	May 4, 2020
12	Wolf Pack Hunting with Hanks	1 hour 2 minutes	Tom Hanks, Actor	July 9, 2020
13	Gladwell and the Bomber Mafia	1 hour 1 minute	Malcolm Gladwell, Author and History Podcaster	April 27, 2021
14	The Game of War	1 hour 15 minutes		August 2, 2021
15	The Supernova Coda	1 hour 11 minutes	Ian W. Toll, History Author	October 25, 2021
16	Powers, Thrones and Dan Jones	1 hour 32 minutes	Dan Jones, Historian	November 5, 2021
17	Engineering Victory with Elon	1 hour 41 minutes	Elon Musk and Bill Riley, SpaceX	December 13, 2021

## Appendix 6: The Fall of Rome, Apple Podcasts Customer Reviews (retrieved February 18, 2022)

### Apple Podcasts Preview

#### The Fall of Rome Podcast

#### Customer Reviews

**4.8** out of 5

2K Ratings



★★★★★

jpc82, 02/15/2022

##### Great podcast

Very knowledgeable and easy to follow. Goes into great depth! We'll worse a listen for ancient history fans.

★★★★★

DeuceDoubleG, 02/05/2022

##### Great podcast

If you like history, you will love this podcast. Level of detail is spot on.

★★★★★

ersmed, 02/03/2022

##### If you love Dan Carlin, you must try Patrick...

This is a fantastic, in-depth focus on the Fall of Rome. I have spent a couple years trying out dozens of history podcasts and find Patrick Wyman to be at least in the top [more](#)

★★★★★

\_ryjo\_, 01/07/2022

##### Title mismatch

Hi, starting with the Gladiator bonus episode, it seems like the episode titles are a mismatch to the content. The titles are one in advance of the content. The content is fantastic, [more](#)

★★★★★

jmillersix, 11/15/2021

##### Great

This is a really thoughtful and well researched program. Well the parallels for modern history are troubling, the presenter does an amazing job providing depth and pace.

★★★★★

ChaChaCheema, 09/12/2021

##### Wow!

I had plans! A solid list of tasks I needed to do! Unfortunately, all fell to pieces. My plans (for not learning anything really lasting this morning, but savoring this quiet and soft [more](#)

Appendix 7: Tides of History, Apple Podcasts Customer Reviews (retrieved February 18, 2022)

Apple Podcasts Preview

Tides of History

Customer Reviews

4.7

out of 5

256 Ratings



Climsoc, 12/02/2022

SW

My favourite history podcast, thank you Patrick for your always nuanced and entertaining history telling.



I get more info from wikipedia, 14/08/2021

Patrick is the most deadset of deadset leg...

One of the best history podcasts out there along with Alex Cruikshanks' "History of Yugoslavia".

[more](#)



mac bris, 19/11/2021

Good content, way too many ads

Like all wondrous podcasts, there are too many ads to enjoy the content which is quite good.



billapter, 30/07/2021

Tides is great!

Excellent narrative history



DMSSVD, 27/06/2021

Lockdown binge worthy

If you are looking for something to accompany the cooking, carpentry and cleaning that does along with a period of Covid lockdown then this is highly recommended.



stewartglass, 16/05/2021

deep

In-depth, well researched, and digestibly presented

Appendix 8: Patrick Wyman, The Fall of Rome Episode List (as of February 21, 2022)

List compiled from the official Wondery website: <https://wondery.com/shows/the-fall-of-rome-podcast/>

Episode number	Episode Title	Length	Release date
01	Introduction	36 minutes	August 4, 2016
02	The Barbarian World	39 minutes	August 11, 2016
03	The Goths and the Beginning of Rome's End	41 minutes	August 26, 2016
04	The Gothic Sack of Rome	46 minutes	September 2, 2016
05	Just How Screwed Up Was the Later Roman Empire?	46 minutes	September 14, 2016
06	The Catastrophic Fall Of Roman Britain	48 minutes	September 30, 2016
07	The Three Transformations Of Roman Gaul	55 minutes	October 20, 2016
08	The Vandals and the Fall of Roman Africa	49 minutes	November 23, 2016
09	Attila and the Empire of the Huns	55 minutes	December 12, 2016
10	The Late Roman Army, Barbarians, and the Frontier	55 minutes	January 13, 2017
11	The Roman Economy Before the Fall	42 minutes	February 2, 2017

12	The Fall of the Roman Economy	43 minutes	February 16, 2017
13	The Unraveling of the Roman World	46 minutes	March 2, 2017
14	The Calamitous Fifth Century – A Narrative History	43 minutes	March 16, 2017
15	The Death of the Roman Political System	44 minutes	March 30, 2017
16	The Kingdom of the Visigoths	43 minutes	April 13, 2017
17	Ostrogothic Kingdom or the Western Empire Reborn?	47 minutes	April 27, 2017
18	The Warlords of Northern Gaul and the Rise of the Franks	48 minutes	May 11, 2017
19	Why Didn't Rome Rise Again? An Interview with Professor Walter Scheidel	33 minutes	May 18, 2017
20	The Anglo-Saxon Migration, the North Sea World, and the Birth of England	51 minutes	May 25, 2017
21	Rome's Legacy and the Barbarian Kingdoms	42 minutes	June 8, 2017
22	The Brilliance of Saint Augustine. An Interview with Elizabeth Bruenig	42 minutes	June 15, 2017
23	Could the Roman Empire Have Survived?	37 minutes	June 22, 2017
24	Tides of History: The Roman City	38 minutes	October 24, 2017

25	Tides of History: The Decline and Fall of the Roman City	33 minutes	November 14, 2017
26	Tides of History: How Latin Became the Romance Languages	50 minutes	December 14, 2017
27	Tides of History: Why Didn't The Eastern Empire Fall	40 minutes	February 6, 2018
28	Tides of History: How the Eastern Roman Empire Survived Attila the Hun and the Disastrous Fifth Century	50 minutes	February 20, 2018
29	Tides of History: Justinian the Great and the Reconquest of the Western Empire	46 minutes	March 6, 2018
30	Tides of History: Natural Disasters and the End of the Roman Empire	43 minutes	March 20, 2018
31	Interview: Historian Kyle Harper on Disease, Climate and the Fall of the Roman Empire	38 minutes	April 3, 2018

Appendix 9: Patrick Wyman, Tides of History Episode List (as of February 21, 2022)

List compiled from the official Wondery website: <https://wondery.com/shows/tides-of-history/>

Episode number	Episode Title	Length	Release date
Season 1: Rise of the Modern World			
01	The Ebb and Flow of History	19 minutes	July 20, 2017
02	The Rise of the State	44 minutes	July 20, 2017
03	Why Didn't the Eastern Roman Empire Fall?	40 minutes	August 10, 2017
04	How the Eastern Roman Empire Survived Attila the Hun and the Disastrous Fifth Century	50 minutes	August 17, 2017
05	Interview: Podcaster and Author Mike Duncan on the End of the Roman Republic	40 minutes	August 24, 2017
06	The Military Revolution, 1350-1650	49 minutes	September 7, 2017
07	Life as a Mercenary in the Military Revolution	50 minutes	September 14, 2017
08	Interview: Dr. Jennifer Raff on DNA and History	33 minutes	September 21, 2017
09	Interview: Historian Dan Jones on the Knights Templar	43 minutes	October 5, 2017
10	The Roman City	37 minutes	October 12, 2017
11	The Decline and Fall of the Roman City	33 minutes	October 19, 2017
12	Interview: Christianizing the Roman Empire with Professor Lisa Bitel	43 minutes	November 2, 2017
13	The Rise of Capitalism and The Early	49 minutes	November 9, 2017

	Modern Economic Explosion		
14	Big Business, Small Business, and the Rise of Capitalism	49 minutes	November 16, 2017
15	How Latin Became the Romance Languages	50 minutes	November 23, 2017
16	Justinian the Great and the Reconquest of the Western Empire	43 minutes	December 7, 2017
17	Natural Disasters and the End of the Roman Empire	42 minutes	December 14, 2017
18	Interview: Actor Gary Oldman from "Darkest Hour" on History and Film	30 minutes	December 21, 2017
19	Interview: Historian Peter Mancall on Monsters, the Atlantic World, and Early Modernity	47 minutes	December 29, 2017
20	Interview: Historian Kyle Harper on Disease, Climate and the Fall of the Roman Empire	38 minutes	January 4, 2018
21	The Renaissance	46 minutes	January 11, 2018
22	Life in Renaissance Florence Premium	49 minutes	January 25, 2018
23	Decline, Fall, or Transformation? Premium	39 minutes	February 8, 2018
24	Why Did the Roman Empire Fall, and Why Does It Matter?	41 minutes	February 15, 2018
25	Interview: Historian Keith Pluymers on Environmental History and Political	52 minutes	February 22, 2018
26	Gutenberg and the Printing Press Premium	45 minutes	March 8, 2018
27	Interview: The Washington Post's Lillian Cunningham on Presidents and the Constitution	35 minutes	March 15, 2018
28	The Printing Press and the	46 minutes	March 22, 2018

	Information Revolution		
29	Medieval Exploration and the Age of Discovery	50 minutes	April 5, 2018
30	Columbus, Da Gama, and the Age of Discovery	57 minutes	April 12, 2018
31	Interview: Historian and Author Roger Crowley on the Portuguese Voyages to India	42 minutes	April 19, 2018
32	Tides of History Book Club: Five Great Popular Histories	33 minutes	May 3, 2018
33	Martin Luther and the Early Reformation	51 minutes	May 17, 2018
34	Tides of History Book Club: The Old West Premium	25 minutes	May 18, 2018
35	John Calvin, Henry VIII, and the Counter-Reformation	55 minutes	May 24, 2018
36	1346: Europe on the Brink Premium	50 minutes	May 31, 2018
37	Tides of History Book Club: Chris Wickham and the Legacy of Rome	17 minutes	June 3, 2018
Season 2: The Later Middle Ages			
01	Historian and Friend of the Show Keith Pluymers on Rebellions and Popular Politics in Early Modern	57 minutes	June 14, 2018
02	Tides of History Book Club: Roger Crowley Takes Us To The High Seas	16 minutes	June 17, 2018
03	The Black Death Premium	51 minutes	June 21, 2018
04	Europe After the Black Death	50 minutes	June 28, 2018
05	The Hundred Years War: Origins and the Triumph of England	1 hour 2 minutes	July 12, 2018
06	The Hundred Years War: Agincourt,	59 minutes	July 19, 2018

	Joan of Arc, and the Rise and Fall of English Power in France		
07	Historian William Chester Jordan on the Great Famine and the High Middle Ages	26 minutes	July 26, 2018
08	Tides of History Book Club: Getting Medieval with Dan Jones	17 minutes	July 29, 2018
09	The Effects of the Hundred Years War	54 minutes	August 9, 2018
10	Chivalry	51 minutes	August 16, 2018
11	Interview: Economist Jared Rubin on Islam, Christianity, and the Rise of the West	48 minutes	August 23, 2018
12	Tides of History Book Report: The Guns of August	21 minutes	August 26, 2018
13	Listener Mail: Your Questions, Our Answers	43 minutes	September 6, 2018
14	Peasants and the Medieval Countryside	54 minutes	September 13, 2018
15	Peasants' Rebellions and Resistance	51 minutes	September 20, 2018
16	Interview: Historian Christopher Dyer on Peasants and the Medieval	46 minutes	September 27, 2018
17	Tides of History Book Club: Silk Roads	14 minutes	September 30, 2018
18	The Trials and Tribulations of the Late Medieval Church	47 minutes	October 4, 2018
19	Heresy, Witch Hunts, and Inquisition	47 minutes	October 11, 2018
20	Archaeology and Why It Rules	34 minutes	October 18, 2018
21	Holy War and the Rise of the Ottomans	55 minutes	November 1, 2018
22	The Fall of Constantinople and the Tragic End of the Byzantines	58 minutes	November 8, 2018

23	Beer, Brewsters, and Women's Work: An Interview with Judith Bennett	45 minutes	November 15, 2018
24	George Washington and the End of the Revolution: An Interview with Author Nathaniel Philbrick	38 minutes	November 29, 2018
25	Vlad the Impaler and the Legend of Dracula	54 minutes	December 6, 2018
26	Archaeology Rules with Raksha Dave!	36 minutes	December 12, 2018
27	The Reformation, Live from Boston	40 minutes	December 20, 2018
28	The Wars of the Roses	1 hour	January 10, 2019
29	The Wars of the Roses, II	1 hour 4 minutes	January 17, 2019
30	Civil Wars and Political Breakdowns in Late Medieval Europe	56 minutes	January 24, 2019
31	Game of Thrones and Late Medieval Politics	47 minutes	February 7, 2019
32	The Rise and Fall of Burgundy	1 hour 2 minutes	February 14, 2019
33	The Troubled Inheritance of Mary of Burgundy and Dynastic Consolidation	50 minutes	February 21, 2019
34	Civil Servants, State Finance, and the Rising State	53 minutes	March 7, 2019
35	Who Was Christopher Columbus? With Professor Felipe Fernandez-Armesto	43 minutes	March 14, 2019
Season 3: Early Modern Explosion			
01	1492: A Guided Tour of Europe on the Brink	54 minutes	March 21, 2019
02	Historical Fiction and the Wars of the Roses: An Interview with Philippa	47 minutes	April 4, 2019

	Gregory		
03	Queen Isabella of Spain and the End of the Reconquista	56 minutes	April 11, 2019
04	The Spanish Inquisition, the Expulsion of the Jews, and the Rise of Spain	52 minutes	April 18, 2019
05	Minisode: Messianic Rulers and Military Revolutions in Spain	22 minutes	April 25, 2019
06	The Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Gilded Age: An Interview with Stanford's Professor Richard White	47 minutes	May 2, 2019
07	The Rise and Fall of the Medici Bank	57 minutes	May 9, 2019
08	Jakob Fugger: The Richest Man Who Ever Lived?	56 minutes	May 16, 2019
09	Minisode: Banking	15 minutes	May 23, 2019
10	Classic Tides: Life in Renaissance Florence	54 minutes	May 30, 2019
11	Machiavelli's Laboratory: The Politics of Renaissance Italy	57 minutes	June 6, 2019
12	Condottieri: War for Profit in Renaissance Italy	55 minutes	June 13, 2019
13	Why Bother with the Seventeenth Century? An Interview with Professor Keith Pluymers	47 minutes	June 20, 2019
14	Minisode: Military Revolutions	18 minutes	June 27, 2019
15	The Italian Wars, Part 1	1 hour 3 minutes	July 4, 2019
16	Walls throughout History: An Interview with Professor David Frye	43 minutes	July 11, 2019
17	The Italian Wars, Part 2	54 minutes	July 18, 2019
18	Book Club: Summer Reading	12 minutes	July 25, 2019
19	The Experience of the Italian Wars	48 minutes	August 1, 2019
20	Boxing, Race, and the Gilded Age:	37 minutes	August 8, 2019

	An Interview with Professor Louis Moore		
21	The Origins and Rise of Venice	55 minutes	August 15, 2019
22	The Rise of Printing and the Invention of News: An Interview with Professor Andrew Pettegree	48 minutes	August 29, 2019
23	The Crusades: An Interview with Dan Jones	49 minutes	September 5, 2019
24	We Join Professor Sheilagh Ogilvie's Guild (And You Should, Too!)	42 minutes	September 12, 2019
25	Why Rome Never Rose Again: An Interview with Professor Walter Scheidel	43 minutes	September 19, 2019
26	The Crusades: An Interview with Dan Jones, Part 2	45 minutes	October 2, 2019
27	The Venetian Empire	53 minutes	October 10, 2019
28	The Commercial Revolution	42 minutes	October 17, 2019
29	Persecution, Toleration, and the Rise of Modernity: An Interview with Historian Mark Koyama	53 minutes	October 31, 2019
30	Medieval Merchants	46 minutes	November 7, 2019
31	Was the Protestant Reformation Inevitable?	48 minutes	November 14, 2019
32	The End of the Crusades and the Fall of Acre: An Interview with Historian Roger Crowley	56 minutes	November 21, 2019
33	Minisode: Is Netflix's "The King" Good History? And Winter Reading Recommendations!	29 minutes	November 27, 2019
34	The Life of Margaret, Brewer of London	45 minutes	December 5, 2019
35	Leah Interviews Dr. Patrick Wyman,	37 minutes	December 12,

	PhD, about his upcoming book		2019
36	The Last Battle of the Wars of the Roses	51 minutes	December 19, 2019
37	The Dawn of the Age of Exploration	44 minutes	January 9, 2020
38	The Rising Tide of the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1481	49 minutes	January 16, 2020
39	Pilgrims, Puritans, and the Battle for New England: Interview with Historian Peter Mancall	51 minutes	January 23, 2020
40	The Ottomans, the Mamluks, and the Clash for Control of the Muslim World	48 minutes	February 6, 2020
41	The Ottomans, the Safavids, and the War for the Muslim World, 1501-1514	1 hour 1 minutes	February 13, 2020
42	Pirates! With Leah Sutherland	42 minutes	February 20, 2020
43	Suleiman the Magnificent and the Apex of the Ottoman Empire	49 minutes	March 5, 2020
44	Suleiman the Magnificent and Ottoman Decline	45 minutes	March 12, 2020
45	Classic Tides: The Black Death Revisited	52 minutes	March 17, 2020
46	American Nations, American Union: Interview with Colin Woodard	48 minutes	March 19, 2020
47	Classic Tides: Plague, Climate, and the End of the Roman World	43 minutes	March 26, 2020
48	Genetics and the Transformation of Prehistory: Interview with Spencer Wells and Razib Khan	40 minutes	April 2, 2020
49	Pandemics in History	47 minutes	April 9, 2020
50	The Rise of Charles V	52 minutes	April 16, 2020
51	Mike Duncan on Pandemics, Revolutions, and COVID-19	1 hour 16 minutes	April 23, 2020

52	Charles V and the Failure of Empire	53 minutes	April 30, 2020
53	The Battle for the Mediterranean	50 minutes	May 7, 2020
54	Malta, Lepanto, and the End of an Era	51 minutes	May 14, 2020
55	John Maynard Keynes and His Legacies: Interview with Author and Journalist Zach Carter	47 minutes	May 28, 2020
56	Alaric, the Goths, and the Sack of Rome: Interview with Professor Douglas Boin	45 minutes	June 4, 2020
57	The Globalization of the Year 1000: Interview with Professor Valerie Hansen	36 minutes	June 11, 2020
58	Did I End My Early Modern Series in the Right Place? Interview with Keith Pluymers	57 minutes	June 18, 2020
Season 4: Prehistory			
01	Bone, Stone, and Genome: Understanding Humanity's Deep Past	47 minutes	July 2, 2020
02	The Ghosts of Archaic Humans	47 minutes	July 9, 2020
03	Ancient DNA and the Human Story: Interview with Geneticist Eske Willerslev	43 minutes	July 16, 2020
04	Trapped in Ice: The Paleolithic World	45 minutes	July 30, 2020
05	Who Were the First Americans?	51 minutes	August 6, 2020
06	New Insights on the First Americans: Interview with Professor Jennifer Raff	52 minutes	August 13, 2020
07	How Should We Understand the Deep Human Past? Interview with Professor John Hawks	57 minutes	August 27, 2020
08	After the Ice: The Younger Dryas, the Mesolithic, and the Birth of a New	50 minutes	September 3, 2020

	World		
09	The First Farmers	50 minutes	September 10, 2020
10	How Did People Domesticate Animals? An Interview with Professor Greger Larson	1 hour 2 minutes	September 17, 2020
11	The Neolithic Revolution: Europe's First Farmers	49 minutes	October 1, 2020
12	Megalithic Europe	54 minutes	October 8, 2020
13	Prehistory Mailbag! Archaeology, Language, and the Advantages of Farming	1 hour 3 minutes	October 15, 2020
14	The Lost Civilization of Old Europe: The Copper Age and the First Cities	50 minutes	October 29, 2020
15	Who Were the Proto-Indo-Europeans?	51 minutes	November 5, 2020
16	Ötzi the Iceman: The Neolithic Ice Mummy	43 minutes	November 12, 2020
17	Neanderthals, Our Closest Kin: Interview with Dr. Rebecca Wragg	44 minutes	November 19, 2020
18	Why Were There So Many Neolithic Farmers? And What Can Big Data Do For Archaeology? Interview with Professor Stephen Shennan	45 minutes	December 3, 2020
19	East Asia in Prehistory	47 minutes	December 10, 2020
20	Neolithic China and Jomon Japan	46 minutes	December 17, 2020
21	Agriculture, Migration, and the Births of Language Families: Interview with Professor Peter Bellwood	40 minutes	December 31, 2020
22	The Americas from Foraging to	47 minutes	January 7, 2021

	Agriculture, 10,000 BC-4000 BC		
23	Agriculture and Complex Societies in the Americas, 4000-1500 BC	50 minutes	January 14, 2021
24	Alcohol and Agriculture in Prehistoric East Asia: Interview with Professor Li Liu	51 minutes	January 21, 2021
25	What is Civilization?	42 minutes	January 28, 2021
26	Mesopotamia at the Dawn of History	44 minutes	February 4, 2021
27	Egypt Before the Pharaohs	46 minutes	February 11, 2021
28	Uruk and the Rise of Civilization	49 minutes	February 18, 2021
29	Hunter-Gatherers, Archaeology, and Prehistory: Interview with Professor Robert Kelly	59 minutes	February 25, 2021
30	Egypt and the Rise of the Pharaohs	50 minutes	March 4, 2021
31	Understanding Prehistory Through Ethnography	49 minutes	March 11, 2021
32	Languages of the World in 3000 BC	48 minutes	March 18, 2021
33	North America After the Ice Age: Interview with Professor Shane Miller	58 minutes	March 25, 2021
34	Ancient Tattooing: Interview with Aaron Deter-Wolf	47 minutes	April 1, 2021
35	Ancient Egypt in Context: Interview with Professor David Wengrow	58 minutes	April 8, 2021
36	The Invention of Agriculture in New Guinea	43 minutes	April 15, 2021
37	Bananas, Civilization, and Ancient Farming in New Guinea: Interview with Professor Tim Denham	44 minutes	April 22, 2021
38	Ancient South Asia	44 minutes	April 29, 2021
39	The Indus Valley Civilization	50 minutes	May 6, 2021
40	Achilles, Gilgamesh, and Epic Poetry: Interview with Professor	48 minutes	May 13, 2021

	Michael Clarke		
41	The Yamnaya Culture and the Proto-Indo-European Migrations	44 minutes	May 20, 2021
42	Cuneiform Literature, Medicine, and Mental Health: Interview with Dr. Moudhy Al-Rashid	42 minutes	May 27, 2021
43	Indo-European, Migration, and the Corded Ware Culture	47 minutes	June 3, 2021
44	The Bell Beaker Phenomenon and the Rise of the Bronze Age	51 minutes	June 10, 2021
45	The Archaeology of Human Bones and the Iberian Copper Age: Interview with Dr. Jess Beck	1 hour	June 17, 2021
46	Ancient DNA, Indo-Europeans, and the Steppe: Interview with Professor David Anthony	59 minutes	June 24, 2021
47	The Bronze-Age Steppe and the Emergence of the Indo-Iranians	51 minutes	July 1, 2021
48	The Lives of Herders on the Ancient Steppes: Interview with Professor Alicia Ventresca Miller	55 minutes	July 8, 2021
49	Iran, Central Asia, and the Caucasus Mountains	54 minutes	July 15, 2021
50	Patrick Wrote a Book! With Leah Sutherland and Rachel Kambury	52 minutes	July 19, 2021
51	The Verge" Audiobook Sneak Peak: Mercenaries and the Military Revolution	1 hour 8 minutes	July 20, 2021
52	Cities, States, and Living in Ancient Mesopotamia	50 minutes	July 29, 2021
53	Colonies and the Quest for Resources in Early Modern Europe: Interview with Dr. Keith Plumbers	56 minutes	August 5, 2021

54	Mike Duncan and Patrick in Conversation at Powell's Books: "The Verge," Ancient Rome, and Doing History	1 hour 4 minutes	August 12, 2021
55	Sargon of Akkad and the World's First Empire	50 minutes	August 19, 2021
56	Mike Duncan on the Marquis de Lafayette and His New Book, Hero of Two Worlds	48 minutes	August 26, 2021
57	The Early Aegean Bronze Age and Minoan Crete	48 minutes	September 2, 2021
58	Weldon	41 minutes	September 9, 2021
59	Mycenaean Greece and Minoan Crete	52 minutes	September 16, 2021
60	When Did Things Happen in the Ancient World? Interview with Professor Sturt Manning	58 minutes	September 23, 2021
61	Old Kingdom Egypt	49 minutes	September 30, 2021
62	Ancient Nubia and the Kingdom of Kush: Interview with Dr. Geoff Emberling	42 minutes	October 7, 2021
63	Egypt's Middle Kingdom	53 minutes	October 14, 2021
64	Interview with Shane Miller and Jessi Halligan on the White Sands footprints	50 minutes	October 21, 2021
65	Ancient Nubia	48 minutes	October 28, 2021
66	The Hyksos – Foreign Kings in Ancient Egypt: Interview with Dr. Anna-Latifa Mourad	46 minutes	November 4, 2021
67	Writing a New History of the Middle Ages: Interview with Dan Jones on	55 minutes	November 11, 2021

	Powers and Thrones		
68	Bronze Age Europe	47 minutes	November 18, 2021
69	Stonehenge	44 minutes	November 25, 2021
70	Mike Parker Pearson on Stonehenge and British Prehistory	44 minutes	December 2, 2021
71	Hammurabi's World - The Near East in the Age of Fragmentation	52 minutes	December 9, 2021
72	The Rise of the Late Bronze Age Empires: The Hittites, Mittani, and Assyrians	47 minutes	December 16, 2021
73	Hittites, Trojans, and the Late Bronze Age World: Interview with Professor Trevor Bryce	45 minutes	December 23, 2021
74	Li Liu on the Rise of States in China	40 minutes	December 30, 2021
75	The Rise and Fall of China's First States	41 minutes	January 6, 2022
76	Encore: How Latin Became the Romance Languages	51 minutes	January 13, 2022
77	The Dawn of History in China	41 minutes	January 20, 2022
78	The Complicated World of the Bronze Age Near East: Interview with Aaron Burke	46 minutes	January 27, 2022
79	The Shang Dynasty, Oracle Bones, and the Roots of Chinese History	47 minutes	February 3, 2022
80	The Genetic Origins of Indigenous Americans: Interview with Professor Jennifer Raff	42 minutes	February 10, 2022
81	Who Were the Human Sacrifices in Shang China? Interview with Dr. Christina Cheung	41 minutes	February 17, 2022

82	Africa and the Many Cradles of Humanity	43 minutes	February 17, 2022
Season 5: Classic Tides			
01	Classic Tides   Peasants and the Medieval Countryside	54 minutes	October 22, 2020
02	Classic Tides   Peasants' Rebellions and Resistance	53 minutes	November 26, 2020
03	Classic Tides   Europe After the Black Death	52 minutes	December 24, 2020
04	Classic Tides   Boxing, Race, and the Gilded Age: An Interview with Professor Louis Moore	36 minutes	February 9, 2021

Appendix 10: Comparative Image of "Old Indian Man" (1585-1586) by John White  
and "An aged manne in his winter garment" (1590) by Theodorus De Bry

[http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white\\_debry\\_html/jamestown.html](http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/jamestown.html)

