



Piazza della Grammatica 1 • Antonella Olson & Eric Edwards, Presentatori e Capocomici

Gentili Ascoltatori, Dear Listeners,
Here's a transcript of "Great Caesar's Ghost!" our recent show about narrating in the past using the *passato remoto*, which you can hear by clicking on the following link:
<https://coerll.utexas.edu/ra/episode/ep02.html>

Hanno partecipato:

Marco Derisi

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Featured in this broadcast:

il Gatto Giulio Cesare

il Gatto Marco Aurelio

Colombina

il Gatto Nerone

Buon divertimento!

Transcript

Arlecchina parla con il Gatto Giulio Cesare

Arlecchina speaks with Julius Caesar the cat

Arlecchina: È vero che tu **conquistasti** anche la Gallia?

Arlecchina: Is it true that you even conquered Gaul?

Gatto Giulio Cesare: Certamente, pochi anni dopo **mi spinsi** anche fino al Tamígi. **Fui** un generale valoroso ed il senato romano mi **nominò** prima console e dopo dittatore.

Julius Caesar the Cat: Certainly, and a few years later I drove on as far as the Thames. I was a valiant general and the Roman senate named me first Consul and later Dictator.

Arlecchina: Mamma mia, che interessante! Come **fu** la tua vita privata?

Arlecchina: Gracious, how interesting. What about your private life?

Gatto Giulio Cesare: **Ebbi** una moglie e **mi legai** anche a Cleopatra, la bellissima regina d'Egitto.

Julius Caesar the Cat: I had a wife and I was also linked with Cleopatra, the incredibly beautiful queen of Egypt.

Arlecchina: Beh, tu **fosti** un uomo molto fortunato.

Arlecchina: My, you were a very lucky man.

Gatto Giulio Cesare: Sinceramente no. Il

Julius Caesar the Cat: Frankly, I wasn't,

mio figlio adottivo Bruto mi **pugnalo** a morte e mia moglie non **pianse** molto per la mia scomparsa. E io non ho mai imparato a camminare all'egiziana!

Il Gatto Marco Aurelio rivolge la parola ad Arlecchina

Gatto Marco Aurelio: Io **fui** l'imperatore Marco Aurelio. Non mi credi? In effetti, non ci **credette** neanche l'ultimo a cui ho parlato.

Arlecchina: Beh, se un gatto può parlare può pure essere un imperatore. E se sei davvero Marco Aurelio, so che la tua statua di bronzo **scampò** alla distruzione perché i papi pensavano che fosse Costantino, il primo imperatore cristiano.

Gatto Marco Aurelio: Non posso dire che mi **dispiacque**. E **fui** molto orgoglioso quando Michelangelo **decise** di metterla in cima al Campidoglio.

Arlecchina: Ma **facesti** anche dei film, non è vero? Ti **vidi** molto tempo fa in uno chiamato *Il Gladiatore*.

Gatto Marco Aurelio: Ma quello non ero io, bensì un attore... io, io **regnai** per quasi vent'anni e **morii** nel 180 dopo Cristo. Mio figlio Commodus non mi **uccise** mica.

Arlecchina: Oh, "la morte sorride a tutti; un uomo non può far altro che sorriderle di rimando".

Gatto Marco Aurelio: Bella la tua frase... Non avrei potuto esprimermi meglio io stesso.

Arlecchina: Lo **disse** una volta un mio amico filosofo...

really. My adopted son Brutus stabbed me to death and my wife shed few tears over my death. And I have never learned to walk like an Egyptian!.

Marcus Aurelius the Cat addresses Arlecchina

Marcus Aurelius the Cat: I was the emperor Marcus Aurelius. You don't believe me? In fact the last person I talked to didn't believe me either.

Arlecchina: Well, if a cat can talk then what's to keep him from being an emperor? And if you are really Marcus Aurelius, I know that your bronze statue escaped destruction because the popes thought it was Constantine, the first Christian emperor.

Marcus Aurelius the Cat: I cannot say that I was displeased. And I was quite proud when Michelangelo decided to place it at the top of the Capitoline.

Arlecchina: Now you made some movies, too, didn't you? I saw you once a long time ago in one called *The Gladiator*.

Marcus Aurelius the Cat: That wasn't me, but an actor... me, I reigned for almost twenty years and I died in 180 A.D. My son Commodus didn't really kill me.

Arlecchina: Oh, "Death smiles at everyone; all a man can do is smile back at her."

Marcus Aurelius the Cat: What a fine turn of phrase! I couldn't have said it better myself.

Arlecchina: A good philosopher friend of mine said it.

Colombina parla con il Gatto Nerone

Colombina: È vero che Lei **fece** cose orribili?

Gatto Nerone: Tutte fandonie! **Fui** un grande artista incompreso.

Colombina: Si dice che Lei **uccise** anche sua madre Agrippina.

Gatto Nerone: Quella **fu** una idea della mia seconda moglie, Poppea. Io prima le **dissi** di sì, per farla stare tranquilla, poi **mi dimenticai** di dare il contrordine...

Colombina: Allora sua madre **morì** per sbaglio?

Gatto Nerone: In un certo senso. Ero così occupato con la memorizzazione dei versi della mia nuova tragedia, che **mi passò** di mente ed il sicario scelto da Poppea, **fece** a pezzi la mia dolce mamma! Povera mamma! Senti, non avresti per caso un cerino?

Colombina speaks with Nero the Cat

Colombina: Is it true that you did horrible things?

Nero the Cat: All fibs! I was a great misunderstood artist.

Colombina: They say that you killed even your mother Agrippina.

Nero the Cat: That was an idea of my second wife, Poppea. At first I told her yes, just to keep her satisfied, then I forgot to issue the countermand.

Colombina: So your mother died by mistake?

Nero the Cat: In a manner of speaking. I was so busy memorizing the verses of my new tragedy, that it slipped my mind and the killer Poppea had hired tore my sweet mummy to pieces. Poor mummy! Say, you wouldn't have a match on you, would you?

Nota Grammaticale

The **passato remoto** is a simple, that is, a one-word, past tense that, just like the **passato prossimo**, is used to report completed actions, changes in states and to make reaction statements.

Although there are some regions of Italy where the **passato remoto** is used in conversation for relatively recent events, in contemporary standard Italian this tense has essentially become a **literary** tense used in two main situations:

1. when you are talking about events that occurred in a remote past (historical events or events that are seen as unrelated to current events), and
2. in narrative fiction (short stories, novels) and in formal expository prose (histories, biographies, encyclopedia articles).

Even in these two situations, the **imperfetto** will still be used to convey background and descriptive information, ongoing actions, and habitually repeated actions.

Almost all first- and third-conjugation verbs (-are and -ire) have **regular passato remoto** conjugations; almost all second-conjugation verbs have **irregular passato remoto** conjugations.

Regular in the **passato remoto**

1st conjugation: **cantare**

cantai	cantammo
cantasti	cantaste
cantò	cantarono

2nd conjugation: **vendere**

vendei (vendetti)	vendemmo
vendesti	vendeste
vendè (vendette)	venderono (vendettero)

3rd conjugation: **capire**

capii	capimmo
capisti	capiste
capì	capirono

1-3-3 Pattern

avere

ebbi	avemmo
avesti	aveste
ebbe	ebbero

leggere

lessi	leggemmo
leggesti	leggeste
lesse	lessero

Completely irregular: essere

fui	fummo
fosti	foste
fu	furono

In summary, you don't have to worry much about the **passato remoto** in conversation or in informal writing, but you definitely need to be familiar with it and to recognize it in order to read Italian texts.

Nota Culturale

The most centrally located of the seven hills of Rome is the Capitoline Hill, which was the center of the political, social and religious life of ancient Rome. It is still one of the most crowded sites of modern Rome. The Piazza del Campidoglio is a stunning backdrop for wedding photographs: in the Sala Rossa, civil marriage ceremonies are performed by officials of the Italian State.

The piazza, designed by Michelangelo, has three majestic palaces and the famous statue of the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD), of whose famous aphorisms Arlecchino seems to be so fond. His gilded bronze equestrian statue survived destruction because the popes mistook it for a depiction of Constantine, the first Christian emperor. It was placed in this piazza by Michelangelo in 1538 and was removed for restoration in 1981. It can be seen in the Capitoline Museum; however, a copy of it still dominates the breathtaking piazza del Campidoglio. Legend has it that so long as Marcus Aurelius' statue stands in the piazza, the Eternal City of Rome will survive.

According to another legend: the stray cats of the Coliseum are the reincarnation of

Roman Emperors. Look for them when you visit this Roman landmark, they may share some unrevealed secrets about Ancient Rome with ***you!***

Thanks for listening! And be sure to tell your friends that you heard it here on **Radio Arlecchino!**

Your hosts with the most – grammar,
Antonella Olson & Eric Edwards
“Out of our minds ... into your ears”