

History is Gay Podcast
Episode 27: Fucking Superb You Funky Little Lesbian

Gretchen: Hello and welcome to History is Gay. A podcast that examines the underappreciated and overlooked queer ladies, gents, and gentle enbies that have always been there in the unexplored corners of history. Because history has never been as straight as you think.

My name is Gretchen.

Leigh: And I'm Leigh.

Gretchen: And in this episode, we are taking it way back and talking about the OG lesbian. Myself. I know. It's great.

Leigh: We're finally talking about Sappho.

Gretchen: How many years did it take? Like three years into this podcast? And we're finally talking?

Leigh: It's a good way to start 2020 right? New Year. Beginning of things. Beginning of gay. Not really the beginning of gay but the OG lesbian with a capital L --

Gretchen: From Lesbos! Which is a real place.

Leigh: Yes. Hence the name of our episode; because we couldn't pass up using the meme for something like this: Fucking superb, you funky little lesbian! Cuz she's a lesbian from Lesbos. [Laughing] It makes me happy.

Gretchen: I guess this is spoilers for how gay was she? Pretty gay.

Leigh: Wow.

Gretchen: Sappho. Pretty gay. I mean, regardless... Regardless of how gay she was, she's still a lesbian. So.

Gretchen: Right. She was.

Leigh: Yeah. We'll talk about that.[Laughs]

Gretchen: Does this have to be one of those like... I'm thinking of French wine memes, where it's like: You're not actually lesbian, unless

you're from Lesbos? [Leigh: laughs] Otherwise you're just, I don't know--

Leigh: A homosexual? Well, I mean... You say that facetiously, but there was actually legitimately a court case about that. There was - No there was legitimately a court case. Like back in - I think it was late 90s that were a bunch of lesbians were saying: Hey, people should not use the term - Like people cannot use the term lesbian for anything other than [laughing] being from Lesbos.

Gretchen: Okay. Sure.

Leigh: It's like literally a court case. And the judge was like: Nah, nah. It's widespread enough. It's okay. It's --

Gretchen: Most people probably don't even know that Lesbos was an actual island. That actually existed. And not like some Fantasy Island. It's not like Themyscira folks. Lesbos was real.

Leigh: Excuse me! [Sarcastic] Themyscira was absolutely real!

Here's a quote from the intro for Sapphistries by Leila J. Rupp. "How impossible it is to dissociate Sappho from her legacy, as suggested by the fact that.."-

Oh, it was in 2008! "In 2008, a Greek court dismissed the request of three residents of Lesbos for a ban on the use of the word lesbian for anyone other than inhabitants of the Aegian Isle." 2008 folks, that's like 12 years ago,

Gretchen: That feels - That's very recent.

Leigh: [Laughing] I also really liked that it's just three dudes being like: No -

[Mocking] "But I want to be a lesbian."

[Mocking] "I'm a lesbian in a man's body."

[Gretchen snickers] Sure.

Sure. Anyway, should we get into this - some stuff?

Gretchen: Right. Oh, do we have any content warnings ?

Leigh: I really don't think so. For this episode, this is a pretty tame episode. Not very sexual, either. So you know, if you're feeling squicky about sexy stuff, not a huge amount. It's mostly about longing and relatable gay feelings.

In terms of announcements. We will be showing up at TGI Femslash next month. Yay! So check us out there. We're excited to see people. As always, we have merch and various things. Um, yeah.

Gretchen: So this is a people focused episode. So we're going to go into a biography because Sappho was a poet. We're going to have a lot of her poetry in our discussion. And we'll talk about historical context.

Then we're going to end the episode with: How gay were they? Which is our personal ranking about how likely it is that they weren't straight. Given that two of the words that we use, or that queer women used to self describe come from Sappho I think i think you can kind of tell where this is gonna go. [Leigh: cackling] But --

Leigh: [Sarcastically] No. Totally unrelated!

Gretchen: Sapphic and lesbian come from Sappho. Yeah, so let's kick off this episode: Fucking superb, you funky little lesbian Sappho. Leigh, do you want to tell us a little bit about the Greek time periods?

Leigh: Yeah, sure we'll, we'll start off here a little bit with some social and historical context so that, you know, generally when we're speaking - and also a lot of Sappho's reputation comes in later Greek periods. So we wanted to give a kind of timeline for what we're talking about.

So the Greek periods that we're dealing with start with the archaic period, which is from 750 to 500 BCE. And this is the age that Sappho is from. It is most noted for the continued proliferation of the arts that had emerged in the age before which is the Mycenaean age, which lasted from 1100 to 600 BCE, where ancient Greek culture really started to develop and solidify in this age. Pottery and sculpture took root in this period, and political theory and democracy started in the archaic period.

From then on, we move into the classical period, which started in 500, and moved until 336 BCE. And this is - When you think about the golden age of ancient Greece, you're thinking about the Classical Era. The democratic system was fully created and implemented. And this period saw the building of all of the big ruins that you see from ancient

Greece, like the Parthenon. And there were major conflicts with neighboring empires, especially the Persian Empire. So when you're thinking about Classic Greek, you're thinking about the classical period, most of the time.

Unless you are thinking about the Hellenistic period, which is 336 to 146 BCE. It begins with the death of Alexander the Great and ends with the emergence of the Roman Empire. So this is kind of the death throes of the Greek-- Ancient Greek Empire. It's a lot of division and the cultural capitals of Hellenistic Greece weren't even Greece proper. They were mainly in Alexandria and Antioch, which were the capitals of the Ptolemaic kingdom and the Seleucid Empire, respectively. That's kind of what we're talking about.

Gretchen: So where do we get our information about Sappho? We're going to talk a little bit about our sources because you kind of have to understand the sources to understand why we read some of these sources, the way that we do. You kind of have to know what they are and where they come from.

So we do have fragments of Sappho's poetry, and we're gonna dig deeper into that a little bit later on. But teensy little bits of biographical material we can glean from Sappho's poetry - Though historians typically are wary about using poetry for biographical material, as you could well understand when you're dealing with poetry, it may not always be historically accurate. But she mentions her name and at least three of the fragments that we have, and discusses some family members.

Actually, there was new, fragmentary compositions of Sappho that were preserved on papyrus that were discovered and published in 2004 and 2014; that revealed information about her having three brothers, and one of the fragments that they found is probably the most autobiographical poem that we have. So some of the information we have about her life is only recent.

Leigh: [Joking] Yeah, I know. Everybody's just like, like, hovering over these tiny papyrological fragments being like: Ah, yes! That's the life of a classicist folks. [Laughing]

Gretchen: Oh, God. Yeah. I studied *Dead Sea Scrolls* stuff. So I... Yeah. You get tiny little fragments. And my favorite are the photos from like, 1920 when they're first discovering some of these papyri; especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls. And there's just people standing there like smoking cigarettes. Like, a room with all these tiny little

fragments of paper and just people smoking cigarettes and it makes me want to like: [Dramatically] tear my hair out. It's horrifying. Horrifying. Stop those are flames! No!

Leigh: [Dramatically] No! They're already bug-eaten! We don't want fire holes!

Gretchen: [Dramatically] You're gonna burn the fragments! [Leigh: laughing] So. Moving on from fragments, we have some vase paintings! [Leigh: laughing] So we actually have Sappho showing up a number of vases from the archaic and classical periods. Which is, I think, pretty cool that she got to be the subject of a vase.

One of the earliest surviving images comes from a vase dated to 470 BCE, which shows her holding a lyre and a plectrum. And a plectrum was, another instrument which was or- It's the instrument that was used to pluck the strings of the lyre. She's sitting there holding her lyre and plectrum and listening to Alcaeus. Doing her thing!

Leigh: Doing her thing! One of the other main sources that we have is something called the *Suda*, which will come up many many times in this episode. It is a- different sources said 10th century, different sources that 11th century. We're gonna frame it around there, but it's a Byzantine Encyclopedia of ancient culture, or testimonia. And it's the basis from which much of the biographical tradition of Sappho comes but it's very mixed up with some other sources like Athenian comedies.

So there were plays written in the classical era divided into three periods. You have old comedy, middle comedy and new comedy. And during this time, there were several plays throughout all these periods that featured Sappho. And there were even two titled after Sappho. And we get this comic stage figure version of Sappho that ends up getting woven into the biographical tradition.

Gretchen: Right. And it's important to know that when you're dealing with Athenian comedies, these are meant to be exaggerations or maybe even purposefully false to be mocking. And that's why we can't take them seriously. But that's what becomes a problem when these plays get interwoven and confused with actual - quote, unquote, "actual biographical material".

So we also have citations from later ancient grammarians and literary critics as well as authors like Homer and Plato. We have the stories from Ovid. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which is a pretty well known work

that, kind of pokes fun at everybody. [Both laugh] Everybody in ancient society, which is again, another one of those things that you can't always quite take entirely, seriously. But it is interesting that these stories from Ovid were initially thought to be Sappho's own writings; rather than meant to be a little bit poking fun at her and probably not entirely accurate.

Then we also have the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, which is a group of manuscripts discovered in the late 19th and early 20th century, near Oxyrhynchus, which is in Egypt. They are dated from the Ptolemaic period, which is the third century BCE, which we mentioned earlier. And then the Roman periods of Egyptian history, which is 32 BCE to 640 CE. Followed by the Muslim conquest of Egypt.

So some of these papyri have been used as *cartonnage*. Which is a paper like- it's like paper-mache basically. And Egyptians and Greeks used it for covering their sarcophagi, and even bookbinding, but they're actual pages of manuscripts. So it's like doing-- it's like doing decoupage like if you take like newspaper -- [Leigh: laughing] and, you know, decoupage stuff.

Leigh: I just love the idea that we're finding - Like the most recent findings of Sappho are just like: Oh, I found a Sappho poem on this coffin. [Gretchen laughing] This decoupage coffin!

Gretchen: Right?! Can you imagine doing like home arts and crafts and just being like: [sing song] Dodododododo... Here's some Sappho.

Leigh: Right! [Both laughing] Like there you go! There you go Tumblr gays. Here's your new- Here's your new arts and crafts, so you can sell on Etsy: Decoupage Sappho.

Gretchen: I mean, it's not a bad idea.

Leigh: I'd buy it!

Gretchen: Right! People would buy it. Absolutely.[Leigh laughing] Imagine having little fragmentary poems in those little earrings. They make earrings with book quotes.

Leigh: Oh yes! Yeah, but resin. Yeah, yeah.

Gretchen: Yeah! Someone do that. Someone who's not me. Go for it fans! Go for it!

Leigh: So yeah, so with that being said, with where we're getting this information. Who actually was Sappho? Let's talk about the bio of Sappho of Lesbos, who lived, maybe from around 620 BCE to 560 BCE.

Before we start, a disclaimer. Like the scattered fragments of her poetry, there's very little that we actually know for sure about Sappho's life and who she was. Like we were saying before with the sources, most of the tradition of her life we know from writers in later centuries who are either singing her praises as a poetic genius, or portraying her as a comedic promiscuous stock character. So the question of a comprehensive and consistent picture of Sappho is one that has plagued classicists and scholars for ages. So we are not going to be able to, you know, definitively say anything, because this is what some people devote their entire lives to unraveling.

All of the sources for the biographical traditions of Sappho are writings that can't necessarily be inherently trusted as fact. And she's a figure shrouded in mystery. As Mary Barnard says in her introduction to her translation of Sappho's fragments, I really like this: "We have heard a great deal about Sappho and we know almost nothing." Which is really fun.

Gretchen: I feel like that's very Platonic. Like Plato. Plato and Socrates would love that kind of like: We've heard, but we don't know. It's very philosophical.

Leigh: Yeah, it's— it makes her— I mean, it's frustrating to not know, but it also makes her a mythic and larger than life figure. Which I think is really neat. We're gonna get into the legend and reputation of Sappho so much more than what we know quote unquote "for certain" about Sappho. So, here's what we can piece together and what's generally agreed upon by historians or what appear in various sources. You want to start us off Gretchen:?

Gretchen: Yes. So Sappho was an archaic Greek lyric poet who's one of the only renowned women poets of antiquity. As we just mentioned, we can date her life to somewhere around 620 to 630 BCE, on the island of Lesbos, but it's not actually known where she died. Some sources say she was born and lived on the city of Mytilene; Heraclitus and Aristotle chiefly among them, and there are others, like the testimonia, who say she was from Eressos [also Eresos].

She was most likely part of an aristocratic family that was well honored in Lesbos, and there is an ancient inscription called the Parian Marble, which mentions her family's exit out Sicily, sometime between

604 to 595 BCE,

Leigh: The *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* from around 200 CE and the *Suda* both agree that Sappho had a mother named Cleis, and also a daughter by the same name. And two preserved fragments of Sappho's poetry actually refer to a Cleis, and in that she specifically refers to her as her daughter. Her father was referred to with as many as 10 different names in tradition, but most of the frequently cited ones note him as Scamandronymus or Scamander; which just makes me think of "Newt" Scamander.

Gretchen: I know I immediately was like: "Harry Potter!" [Both laughing]

Leigh: Yeah, exactly. Like we mentioned before the 2014 *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* revealed that she had three brothers called Larichus, Erigyus, and Charaxus. The latter of whom, Charaxus had a somewhat scandalous relationship with a courtesan that Sappho wrote about in one of her poems, and she was reproaching him for his wanton behavior like: Hey, don't go off on a boat with this courtesan! What are you doing? That's irresponsible. I'm your big sister and blahblahblah...

Gretchen: [Unintelligible] Her brother's name sounds like the three dragons from Aegon The Conqueror and his wife in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, if anyone knows what I'm talking about. Names are like, you know, Balerion and Vhagar and Meraxes and here we have like: Larichus and Erigyus, and Charaxus. And I was like: Oh, those sound like dragons! She has dragon brothers! That's nice. [Both laughing]

Leigh: In later Hellenistic sources there are mentions of a husband named Kerkylas [also Cercylas]. Though the reputability of these sources are highly suspect. We'll get into Kerkylas later. There's also considerable speculation on Sappho's social role. Many have suggested she held some sort of school mistress or matron role for a group of girls. Or was this a circle of her lovers and companions? [sarcastic] Who knows?

Gretchen: She was most likely past middle age when she died, and in at least one poem she complained about graying hair and creaky knees and bones. Though, I mean, to be fair, I'm in my mid 30s, and I have gray hair [Leigh laughing] and creaky bones. So who knows? Maybe she was just gay and tired --

Leigh: Okay. Fair, but also ancient Greek. Like 30 was definitely middle aged. [snickering] Damn, let's, let's be real. [Both laughing].

[Unintelligible joking and talking over each other.]

Leigh: The life expectancy in ancient Greece, probably not as robust as 21st century.

Gretchen: Yeah. Though-- Aristocrat.

Details about her death. We don't really know when or how, really. There are stories created in later centuries about how she leapt to her death off of the Lucidian Cliffs in an act of desperation caused by unrequited love. Again, we'll come back to that. But it is worth noting that other than this tale, which originated in the Roman poet, Ovid, there's not really anything to connect Sappho with Leukas and the Lucidian Cliffs.

The *Palatine Anthology* actually names a different place for her death. There's an epitaph for her that says "Aeolian earth, you cover Sappho, who among the immortal muses is celebrated as the mortal muse..." Which heavily implies that she died on Lesbos, because Aeolia is the name of the Greek dialect, which is spoken on Lesbos.

So there is a monument in one of the cities that's claimed for her birth Eresos, which claims also to be the site where she died. But I mean, this was a couple thousand years ago. You know, people claim to know where the tomb of King David is and we're like: I don't know. There are a couple different places. [Leigh laughing] She was probably middle aged. And she died. That's all we know. It probably was not leaping from a cliff.

Leigh: [Sarcastic] Alright, cool. Episode over. Great.

Gretchen: [Sarcastic sing-song] Yeah! That's all we know!

Leigh: [Laughing] [Sarcastic] Yeah. That's all we know. Syke!

Gretchen: Kidding! We've got many more pages of outline folks.

Leigh: Many more pages. So works and influence. What did Sappho actually do other than, like, have brothers and maybe die at some point? [Gretchen laughing] Who's to say?

She wrote around 10,000 lines of poetry and four centuries after her death, the Library of Alexandria cataloged nine volumes of her writing. She was among the canon of nine lyric poets most highly esteemed by

scholars of the Library of Alexandria. She was the only woman to be so. [Emphasis] Which is fucking cool!

Gretchen: Can we take a moment to cry again about the Library of Alexandria because I feel like, whenever - Let's take a moment of silence.

Leigh: Let's take a moment of silence for the Library of Alexandria. [Sigh]

Gretchen: It makes me sad to think that about Library of Alexandria. [Unintelligible]

So of those 10,000 lines, how many do we have?

Leigh: [Disappointed laughter] We have about 650 lines of poetry from Sappho. And they're broken up in fragments, sometimes only containing a word or two. There's literally a Sappho fragment that just says "celery". -

Gretchen: Oh, yeah, super rank for shitposting.

Leigh: She's credited with creating a very specific poetic meter named appropriately the Sapphic stanza; after her. Which is comprised of two verses of 11 syllables, and a third verse starting the same way, and continuing with five additional syllables, which comprise the last line, it's kind of hard to explain. We'll put a visual representation of it on our website.

The syllables alternate between long and short, creating this musical rhythm. Because, in addition to being a poet, Sappho was an accomplished musician. And her works were actually meant to be performed to music played on a lyre, hence, lyric poetry. [Silly voice] If you didn't know where the word lyric came from, now you do: "lyre".

She frequently mentions music and songs in her poetry and she even - There's like one fragment that's her talking about her lyre and bringing things to life. And vase paintings almost always depict her with a lyre in hand.

She's credited with the creation of three different musical instruments, the plectron, which we had mentioned before, which is an instrument for picking the lyre. And that's noted in the *Suda*. She also apparently invented a new type of lyre altogether called the pectis. And a musical

mode called the *lydian* mode. So *lydian*, *Lydia*, Greece. A musical scale that was adopted by tragic poets and evolved throughout the centuries, and was even in use through the Middle Ages, as well as into the modern period.

Gretchen: I bet there's like a YouTube video of the *lydian* mode. -

Leigh: Oh, there is!

Gretchen: Yeah we can try and - We'll definitely make sure we put that in our show notes so that you guys can you know, engage with that.

Yeah, it's, it's still used.

So her poetry was so prolific in antiquity that one Greek author writing 300 years after her death, predicted that, quote: "The white columns of Sappho's lovely song endure, and will endure speaking out loud, as long as ships sail from the Nile."

And her poems were still being copied and circulated as late as the third century CE. And much of the papyrus with her writings on it actually come from the hands of scribes, hundreds of years after her death. We're unsure of whether Sappho's poetry was ever written down during her time, or if it was passed down in oral tradition, but it's pretty cool that like, almost 1000 years later, after she lived, people were still copying and circulating her poems. That's - I mean -

Leigh: That's how prolific she was. She was on the level of Homer and Plato.

Gretchen: Yeah. And we're not just saying that. People at the time when she was living, or immediately after, thought of her as on the level of Homer and Plato, which is why it is upsetting to think about the fact that at least when I studied history, so much emphasis is placed on Homer, and Plato and very little on Sappho. Yet in the ancient world she was just as important as they were, as artists, and yet, you don't get as much time spent on her. [Sarcastic] Gee! I wonder why. [Sings] Fuck the patriarchy!

Leigh: [Sings in falsetto] Patriarchy!

So let's get into why she's so prolific. Why is this lady with a lyre so esteemed? Let's talk about the poetry. It's all about the yearning.

Gretchen: Yes. Especially today-- I have been seeing, at least on things like Tumblr especially, a huge revival of interest in Sappho's poetry. Not just Sappho as a person, but like her poetry in particular. And most of it seems to be really about the kind of queer yearning. [Both laugh]

So one of the best descriptions that I found in my research of those who don't like Sappho, is from a book called *The Lesbian Lyre*. Which is in our resource list. And the author says that any shame cast on Sappho is poetry from her sexuality isn't from the poetry itself, or its expressions, as they are, quote:

"Too frank and healthy to comfort any attempt to degrade them. It comes from those whose restricted sympathies are allowed to choke their pleasure in poetry."

So if you don't like Sappho because she was a lesbian, you're just a narrow minded bigot. Basically. If you don't like her poetry, because she's a lesbian, that's just because you're a bigot, not because the poetry is bad. She's actually an amazing poet.

Leigh: [Laughs] Yeah, on the actual body of Sappho's poetry. Like we mentioned above, the majority of what is survived is only in fragments and there exists only one complete poem in the canon. One. One out of that 10,000 lines of poetry.

We have one poem that we know is complete. It's usually referred to as poem or *Fragment 1*, titled *Hymn*, or *Ode to Aphrodite*, depending on the translation.

And so to start off the conversation about poetry, we wanted to bring in somebody very special if you are a Xena fan, you have heard her voice before you have seen her. She is Aphrodite herself. We brought on Alexandra Tydings to come and chat about Sappho with us because she is also a queer history nerd. And what better area for her to come in and do some stuff with us? So we're going to have her do a lovely reading of *Hymn to Aphrodite*, and then we'll launch into our conversation.

Alexandra:

*Immortal Aphrodite, on your intricately brocaded throne,
child of Zeus, weaver of wiles, this I pray:
Dear Lady, don't crush my heart
with pains and sorrows.*

*Rapidly they came. And you, O Blessed Goddess,
a smile on your immortal face,
asked what had happened this time,
why did I call again,*

*and what did I especially desire
for myself in my frenzied heart:
"Who this time as I to persuade
to your love? Sappho, who is doing you wrong?"*

*For even if she flees, soon she shall pursue.
And if she refuses gifts, soon she shall give them.
If she doesn't love you, soon she shall love
even if she's unwilling."*

*Come to me now once again and release me
from grueling anxiety.
All that my heart longs for,
fulfill. And be yourself my ally in love's battle.*

Leigh: We'll talk more about this poem because there are some really, really interesting turns of phrase that reference some themes at the time that Sappho was writing this. But we want to use that as kind of like a jumping off point to dive into the world of Sappho's poetry.

Leigh: [Mic crackle] Hey, folks, Leigh popping in here just to say that we also had a really wonderful extended conversation about Sappho and her poetry specifically with Alex, and we're gonna be showing that to you in a bonus episode that will be coming out soon. We just couldn't fit it in the episode. I also want to let you guys know that we will be discussing that poem a little bit more at length and addressing a little bit of the more 'yikesey' lines in it. But until then, here's what we have to say more about the world of Sappho and her poetry between Gretchen and I. [Mic crackle]

Leigh: Edward Young in *On Lyric Poetry* writes "Sappho's Muse... is passionately tender, and glowing; like oil set on fire, she is soft and warm in excess." She's the first extant Greek poet to write expressively about the feelings associated with love. Which is huge! Sappho's poetry is distinct from the poetry of men at the time because it personalizes the physical manifestations of emotions. This is the first time we're seeing something like this! So personal, so visceral, in describing the feelings of being in love and the feelings of yearning. It showcases an altogether different view of love than a male perspective.

One scholar that we use in our sources, Ella Haselswerdt, notes,

*"Sappho's fragments show us eros..." Which is love.
"...and pleasure for their own sake, not as an exchange of property, the exploitation of one for the sake of the other or in order to achieve virtue in the eyes of a moralizing philosopher, like Plato or Aristotle. In her poems, the descriptions of women's looks are in fact descriptions of the feelings they evoke."*

Which is so neat. There are so many elements that you see where she's describing someone's beauty, as they are related to nature and the feelings of being so struck by this person come from the way that they make her feel, not necessarily their innate qualities.

One of the most profound examples This kind of nature of Sappho's expression is perhaps her best known verse, which is *Fragment 31*. It was heralded by a first century CE author for the way the stanzas: "Select and juxtapose the most striking intense symptoms of erotic passion. As Sappho looks jealously on a man and a woman, as they converse, envious of the opportunity to woo the girl."

So this is *Fragment 31*, translated by Anne Carson.

*He seems to me equal to gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking
and lovely laughing--oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
is left in me*

*no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears*

*and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead--or almost
I seem to me.
But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty. . .*

And that's where the fragment ends. Like literally, literally a volcano

under this skin fire racing. It's also - [cutesy] It's also a Sappho poem that is referenced in Xena so I really like that one. No spoilers but - [laughing] Yeah, her words:

"Are healing enterprises, linguistic attempts to spirit the mind suffering from desire or separation away into a more satisfactory or pleasurable awareness, drawing upon the medicinal properties of daydream, memory, sensuality Aphrodite, and metaphor to accomplish this."

That was from Duban. So it's all about the yearning, folks.

Gretchen: Right. Yep. So that's what I find so fascinating about her current legacy is this queer yearning for the 21st century queer woman. The number of times I see queer women reblogging Sappho's poetry and just being like: Mood. This idea of pining from a distance after a beautiful woman just [both laughing] feels like a super relatable experience.

So because I'm a nerd, I follow a couple of queer classicists on Tumblr, and one of my favorites is thoodleoo. And she says: "lads, is there anything truly gayer than the sheer yearning you experience when reading a fragmentary text?" And yes. Yep. --

Leigh: Mm hmm. Yeah, the very process of reading Sappho, I mean, like what we have in itself, like the language encapsulates the yearning, but it's the very process of reading something that is so fragmentary. You're sitting there and you want - You want to know more!

We'll put pictures up of these papyri, and it's so heartbreaking. It's so frustrating because you're like: If that-- If that tiny piece of paper was still here, I would know what that says."

Gretchen: Mm hmm. Right. So one of the biggest, I don't know, I guess big mood among Sappho. That was one of the poems that jumped out to me is one called *Kypris Song*, which is translated by Diane Rayor, which is:

*How can someone not be hurt and hurt again,
Queen Aphrodite, by the person one loves—
and wishes above all to ask back?
[What] do you have*

[in mind], to idly rend me [shaking

*from desire] loosening [my knees]?
... not ...
*
... you, I wish...
...to suffer this...
...I know
this for myself.*

And you're like, "_____". All of those pauses I put in are like fragments and you're like: "_____". [Frustrated noises]

Leigh: [Unintelligible] Or you have *Fragment 34*, also translated by Diane Rayor

*"stars around the fair moon
hide away their radiant form
whenever in fullness
she lights the earth..."*

So yes, it's about the moon. But we all know the moon is gay. And the "she" is grammatically ambiguous. So it makes it sound like the stars themselves are hiding, because the beloved shines so bright.

Gretchen: Right. So yeah, it's a poem about the moon, but it's also a poem about a pretty lady who shines brighter than the stars. [Leigh makes excited noises] Yeah!

Fragment 36. [Giggling] "I yearn and I desire." Like that. That's the whole fragment. And you're like, yep, Mm hmm.

Leigh: Yeah. *Fragment 41*, also translated by Diane Rayor. "For you beautiful women. My mind never changes"

Gretchen: Yup. Some of these are just like: Yeah, I understand what you're going for Sappho. I don't even need the rest of the poem. I just know." [Leigh: laughing]

So *Fragment 47*, also translated by Diane Rayor. "love shook my senses, like wind crashing on mountain oaks"

Leigh: Or *Fragment 48*. Also by Rayor "you came, I yearn for you and you cooled my senses that burned with desire."

Gretchen: This is one of my favorites. *Fragment 51*. Again from Rayor "I don't know what to do. I'm of two minds" -

Leigh: Mood!

Gretchen: Mood! Yes, yes. Put that on my wall.

Leigh: Lads is there anything gayer than not being able to make a decision? [Both laughing] *Fragment 168 B* also by Rayor. You'll note that most of the translations we have are by Diane Rayor or Anne Carson. They are two of the most esteemed translators of Sappho, and two of the most recent. They're also the ones that really dive into the ambitiousness of gender in the poems which we'll talk about. But this one says:

*"The Moon and Pleiades have set--
Half the night is gone.
Time passes.
I sleep alone."*

So drama.

Gretchen: So sad. Some of these I put in here I love. They're not about yearning, but it's mostly just Sappho being kind of mean, which I enjoy that she wrote, like mean lyric poetry, as well as like yearning lyric poetry.

Leigh: Oh, yeah, she could be bitchy. It's great.

Gretchen: Yeah, this is one of her exes. Apparently. I think. It sounds like. *Fragment 91* "I never met anyone more irritating, Eirana, than you."

Leigh: And I liked this translation that I have from Anne Carson, which makes it sound even more dramatic. So we have: "I've never met anyone more irritating..." and Carson translated as "never more damaging O Eirana have I encountered you"

Gretchen: Dammmn!

Leigh: "Never more damaging". I love it

Gretchen: *Fragment 55*. Also translated by Rayor

*When you die, you'll lie dead. No memory of you,
no desire will survive, since you've no share
in the Pierian roses. But once flown away
you'll wander among the obscured dead, and invisible even in
the house of Hades.*

Like damn Sappho like who robbed you?! Is this like Eirana? Like, are you still talking about that [laughing] same person? Like I met this lady? When you're dead, no one's gonna remember you! Which is true because we have this poem, but we have no idea who it's about. So -

Leigh: [Laughs] Yeah, she wasn't always happy that she liked the ladies so much. Like in this *Fragment 26* Translated by Anne Carson. This one is like super fragmented, but what we have left of it is

*...frequently
...for those
I treat well are the ones who most of all
...harm me
...crazy
...
...
...
...you, I want
...to suffer
...in myself I am
aware of this
...
...
...*

Goddamn! [Laughs]

Gretchen: It reads, even without all the fragments it reads like an actual poem. And that's one of the things that we find is really interesting about Sappho is you can take the fragments that are left and read them as if that is the entire poem. And sometimes they make sense. Sometimes they don't but this is one of those ones that does kind of make sense even without it.

Leigh: You want to do *Fragment 130*?

Gretchen: Yeah, so *Fragment 130*, also translated by Diane Rayor

*Once again Love, that loosener of limbs,
bittersweet and inescapable, crawling thing,
seizes me.*

Leigh: "Crawling thing" is so good!

What probably one of like the most heartbreaking poems, heartbreaking breakup poems to ever exist, is *Fragment 94*, where Sappho reminds the woman who is leaving her, perhaps to marry, of the deep feelings and pleasant times they shared. The yearning - the language in this poem gets me.

So this is *Fragment 94*, translated by Anne Carson with a few edits at the end by me just because I like the ending from another translation better and it's more clear. "I simply want to be dead." Well, starting off strong.

Gretchen: [Snorting laughter] Tell us how you really feel Sappho!

Leigh: Right?

*I simply want to be dead.
Weeping she left me
with many tears and said this:
Oh how badly things have turned out for us.
Sappho, I swear against my will I leave you.*

*And I answered her:
Rejoice, go and
remember me. For you know how we cherished you.*

*But if not, I want
to remind you.
...and beautiful times we had.*

*For many crowns of violets
and roses
...at my side you put on*

*and many woven garlands
made of flowers
around your soft throat.*

*And with sweet oil
costly
you anointed yourself*

*and on a soft bed
delicate
you would let loose your longing*

*And there was no dance
no holy place
from which we were absent.*

This is generally thought by classicists to be one of the most overt and only explicit mentions of love between women. That line you know "and on a soft bed delicate you would let loose your longing:". And there are like-- [laughs] There are scholars that you know, say: [mocking, sarcastic] Oh, well. Sappho was just writing about gal's being pals. But they don't really know what to say about this poem so: Ay! If you don't like Sappho cuz she's lesbian, you're a bigot! [both burst into laughter]

Gretchen: I want that on a button. Or like yeah, stickers. Or something.

Leigh: It'd be funny if lesbian was capital, like lesbian was capitalized. With a lesbian "L". Wow. With "lesbian" with a capital "L".

Gretchen: That's what we should call it from now on capital L's are lesbian, lesbian L's.

Leigh: Yes, I like it. [Laughs]

Gretchen: So there are a couple of other interesting fragment aspects to Sappho's poetry. Like as we mentioned earlier, some of her fragments - some of her fragmentary poems are even more beautiful, or haunting as fragments than maybe they might have even been in their full poems.

For when you are gay and tired: *Fragment S/A 18c*, translated by Diane Rayor:

I may flee girls– youth

[Leigh giggling] You're like: I am old and gay and tired.

For when you just want that boy out of your life, Fragment 214B. Again, translated by Diane Rayor:

*...away from him
... as destined*

Leigh: Or *Fragment 38*. Translated by Anne Carson:

...you burn me

[Gretchen: laughs] Wow. So much in three little words!

Gretchen: *Fragment 178*. Again, translated by Rayor:

fonder of children than that shapeshifter, Gello

I mean, I don't really know who Gello is, but they sound like someone you don't want to hear screaming in the mall at two in the morning like - [Leigh laughs]

Leigh: Oh god. *Fragment 169* also translated by Rayor:

May I lead?

Sounds like the ancient version of Let me live!

Gretchen: Or *Fragment 129A* Translated by Carson:

*but me you have forgotten
or you love some man more than me*

Leigh: Wow Sappho! Tell us how you really feel about straight girls.
[Both laughing]

Gretchen: Sounds like Sappho had several experiences of falling in love with a straight girl.

Leigh: Yeah, that's a mood. [Both laugh] And then you have *Fragment 25* also translated by Carson, which I love. It's literally just

...quit

...

...luxurious woman

[Both burst into laughter].

There's also even more flower motifs in the poetry like we saw in *Fragment 94*. Gay flower crowns anyone? The association of violets with queer women and queer love comes back to Sappho.

And we'll actually have a whole other episode coming up about queer

symbols. So stay tuned and we go into that a little bit, but there's a whole bunch of flowers in this y'all.

Like *Fragment 122* Translated by Carson:

gathering flowers so very delicate a girl

Gretchen: Or *Fragment 125*. Again translated by Carson:

I used to weave crowns

Leigh: Or we have *Fragment 19*, this one Translated by Mary Barnard:

*Tomorrow you had better
Use your soft hands,
Dica, to tear off
dill shoots, to cap
your lovely curls*

*She who wears flowers
attracts the happy
Graces: they turn
back from a bare head*

So if you want happy, wear a flower crown!

Gretchen: I mean - Yeah! Absolutely!

Leigh: [Excited gasp] I should have worn my flower crown this episode! I have a flower crown! Let me get it, you keep talking.

Gretchen: All right, I am going to talk about the famous weaving poem and bias in translations. So according to Diane Rayor, this is how the poem is translated.

*Sweet Mother, I cannot weave—
slender Aphrodite has overcome me
with longing for a girl.*

So Alright, y'all are going to get a little lesson in translation. So the word "girl" in that last line, "slender Aphrodite has overcome me with longing for a girl". You might see it elsewhere translated as "boy" or "youth" or "young lover". So why is there a difference? I mean, boy and girl are not the same thing. So why would one translator use boy and another one use girl? Well, the Greek word there is *paidos*, which

means youth or child or simply young person. Greek has three grammatical genders, which is male and female and neuter. And I use the word grammatical gender because they're not always- they don't always translate to biological gender. Sometimes they do.

Sometimes the grammatical gender of a word is equivalent to the biological gender of that entity in real life, like a female horse or mare, something along those lines, but sometimes it's purely just a grammatical thing. So *paidos* neuter. It's in the neuter gender, meaning it carries no gendered connotations for the person being described. It literally just means teenager or younger. That's what the word means, with no indication for gender.

So as a translator, you have to make a choice. Do you go the gender neutral route in English because English doesn't have grammatical gender in the way Greek does. Do you go with youth or young lover; and that's why you might see poems translated with a gender neutral word, which would be my choice as a translator, because I would want to preserve the lack of gender in the original. But you could also decide to pick a gender for the word.

But as a translator, if you're picking a gender, it means you're making an assumption about the object of Sappho's affection, which is not a neutral choice to make as a translator, because you're making an assumption about their sexuality. You have to decide which gender she might be more likely to be in love with, in the poem. [Leigh laughs quietly in the background].

So if you're working on the assumption that she's heterosexual, or you just don't want her to be gay, you would pick boy or young man, but that goes against most of Sappho's poetry which has the object of affection and desire being a woman. So if you're going to go a gendered route, the choice that more accurately reflects Sappho's poetry as a whole- Even if you're going to say, well, maybe she's not actually gay, she was like assuming the role of a male character when she's writing her poems, whatever, which is bullshit.--

Leigh: Totally bullshit.

Gretchen: Totally bullshit. But even if you want to go that route, if you want to be more faithful to Sappho's, poetry as a whole, and you know, very likely her personal attraction, which we'll get into, girl or young woman is the better translation.

But really, all of this was to say translating Sappho isn't

straightforward, or even all that straight. [Leigh laughs] But also translators make choices and the choices that they make can come from bigoted or moralistic places, even if they're not aware of it. Like the translator might not be aware of their own biases when they're picking a word.

That's why I always advocate finding a translation that includes the original language, that way you can look things up for yourself, or something that's very well annotated, because that way, if you're confused or want to know a little bit more, you might not be able to read Greek or even know Greek. But if you can look at the little symbol, you know, look at the alphabet, and then look it up in a Greek English dictionary, then you can know for yourself, oh, this word is actually gender neutral. So this translator who used a male word was making a translation choice, and it's actually a gender neutral, so it could very well be girl and probably is more likely to have a feminine object of affection rather than a male one.

So anyway, it's just an aside to talk about why translation is important. And how if you are reading Sappho, or really any ancient thing in ancient texts in English, you have to be aware that translators make choices.

Leigh: So don't be discouraged if you see a Sappho poem saying: blah, blah, blah. And I'm, you know, consumed with love for this boy.

I'd be like: Wait, everybody told me Sappho was gay! I'm really sad now. It's a translation. It's a translation choice.

Gretchen: Right. Yes. And Leigh is now wearing a lovely flower crown that you guys can't see. But it's delightful.

Leigh: It's great. I got it at Pride.

Gretchen: Yay!

Leigh: So continuing in this thread. The very fact that Sappho chooses to use the neuter pronouns so often is one of the ways in which her writing diverges so much from male poets at the time.

Male Greek love poets were far less vague and abstract in their writing. They almost always used masculine rather than neuters, because of course, why would anyone want to talk about anything other than men? And as we'll see, male/male love was spiritualized by Socrates. And that's what the male poets would have been celebrating.

Gretchen: Yeah, there was a quote that you read earlier that talked about the moralizing of male love within the poetic tradition. And so yeah, Socrates and male poets talk about the strong spiritual bond between men. So that became a part of the love poem tradition. And yeah, they were less interested in women as objects of love and affection. Because patriarchy.

Leigh: Right. And so much [sarcastic] patriarchy. We really need a patriarchy jingle at this point too. [Gretchen: laughing]

So much of the yearning and language in Sappho's poetry is different than the metaphors and imagery being referenced by male poets of the era too and yet evokes and references them at the same time, which I think is really cool. It's a really fantastic breakdown of the physical world and surroundings represented in Sappho's poetry, which I highly recommend you read, we're gonna put it in our sources, but it's by William Harris, he actually goes into like in the *Ode to Aphrodite*, you know, saying like: integrate lubricated throne dapple colored Aphrodite, and specifically talking about that, potentially having been just what Sappho would have seen walking into a temple to Aphrodite.

But he makes an interesting connection between Sappho and Homer in *Hymn to Aphrodite*. He discusses the last line where Sappho pleads for Aphrodite to come to her aid as an ally in battle, saying, "be my battle ally". For a woman who never goes to war? The word makes you pause since something is strange. Where is the battle and when was Aphrodite herself so soft and gentle an ally in battle?

How was Sappho's world connected with the epic of the Iliad scene, we must go back to a clue in earlier portion of the poem, the doves flew down, quote "over the black Earth", a phrase any modern or ancient reader would know as a phrase from Homer, the chronicler of battles and allies. And here's the really important part. So Sappho's world is the same black Earth of epic struggles. It has its battles too but they are different kinds of battles, battles of women, battles of giving birth of infants dying of love refused, battles of the heart, and for these of course, Aphrodite is the only ally the best mothering and loving ally. This is the Battle of living, of life.

Gretchen: Hmm, I love that.

Leigh: I love this article. It's so cool. We see this again in the opening lines to *Fragment 16*. And what is perhaps one of my favorite lines of

Sappho. It starts

*Some men say an army of horse and some men say an army on foot
and some men say an army of ships is the most beautiful thing
on the black earth. But I say it is
what you love.*

Gretchen: Hmm, Hey guys, referencing that black Earth,

Leigh: The black Earth Exactly. That's, that's one thing that I thought was so fascinating is that she's constantly referencing her contemporaries and subverting them.

Gretchen: Right? And it's a very feminist like: all you men are out here talking about how battles and army and blood and all of this stuff is beautiful. But what I find beautiful is the object of my affection is what I love is what I care about. That's what real beauty is. That's really cool.

Leigh:[Enthusiastically] Oh, yeah! It is literally- even beyond the specific big mood yearnings. That is one of my favorite lines that I've ever seen translated. It's so cool.

Gretchen: Right? It immediately-- I mean, because I'm such a big nerd. I'm like, oh, Star Wars! It's like the last Jedi with Rose Tico [Leigh: laughing] saying: It's not about, you know, finding what you hate. It's about [together] Saving what you love!

Leigh: Rose Tico space Sappho!

Gretchen: Yes. So here's another beautiful example of Sappho subverting the male tradition, is her use of the phrase "rosy fingered moon", in *Fragment 96*, which is altering the repeated Homeric refrain of "rosy finger dawn", which at the time had almost become cliché in the bardic tradition.

*But now she is conspicuous among Lydian women as sometimes
at sunset the rosy fingered moon
surpasses all the stars. And her light stretches over salt sea
equally and flower deep fields.*

So Harris notes on Sappho's alteration, the difference between the

two human worlds one is the world of men with swords and fleets of ships over the Homeric black Earth. The other is the world of women and lovers and what the heart desires.

Leigh: [Sigh] Yes, my favorite part! So good!

Gretchen: Yeah. And that reminds me of that poem I read earlier about like: as the moon surpasses the stars. And what's interesting to me is moon, I would have to look at the original Greek, but moon, she could be referencing either - well, Moon was a feminine goddess in Greek tradition, like the goddess of the deity of the moon was feminine. So there's another layer to her comparing like beautiful women to the moon.

So you have Luna but you also have Artemis is a moon goddess. And what I love about that is that Artemis is a-- I mean, I guess she would say she's a celibate--

Leigh: Quote, unquote.

Gretchen: Quote unquote celibate, but you can't see my like sarcastic eye roll and scare quotes, but that's just because she doesn't have a male consort. But Artemis is is often associated with queer women and there are traditions around Artemis that seem to be associated with women loving women.

So it is again interesting that you have Sappho, a woman loving woman, comparing women to the moon, who is associated with women loving women, via Artemis. But Artemis is also an archer deity so you've got like layers of like martial imagery in there as well. It's just like fat like the layers here. So --

Leigh: [joking] Reasons Why the Moon is Gay by Gretchen Jones. [laughing]

Gretchen: I mean, the moon is gay. Yes. Always.

Leigh: I forgot to mention beforehand when we were talking about the beauty of of Sappho's fragments being turned into their own type of poetry.

I really want someone with coding experience, to please, for my sake, create a Sappho shit post generator. [Gretchen: laughing] Please take- I will give them to you, take the one or two word fragmentary poems of Sappho and create a generator where you can click a randomizer

button and it will put three or four together and you can create the best shit post just like: "Celery. I like that woman" or something like that. It's great. [Gretchen is still laughing]

Try it yourself. I've been doing that for the last couple days just going through my book and like flipping to one page and then flipping to another page and coming up with fun shitposting Sappho stuff so that's my little aside, someone please on the internet. Do that for me.

Gretchen: I feel like it would be a pretty great twitter blog. Sappho shitpost blog.

Leigh: I literally had to - I googled because I was like, somebody has to have made this right. No, no one has you would be the first to make it and send it straight to me. So one, please work. Yes, me. Email us at HistoryisGaypodcast@gmail.com and work with me to make it. I just don't have the technical wherewithal, but I do have the Sappho wherewithal. Anyway, that's my aside.

History is Gay Podcast: [Voice of the future: Laura Galm and Annie Johansson, have created this ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS masterpiece of coding and silliness. Please enjoy creating some Sappho surrealism. <https://www.historyisgaypodcast.com/sappho>]

Gretchen: All right. And that brings us to our Word of the Week.

♪ Word of the Week. Gay word of history! ♪

Leigh: So we wouldn't be able to go a whole episode about Sappho without diving into the fact that we owe very much of the language we ascribe to female love to her. So let's talk about how lesbian and sapphic came to refer to lady lovin' and not just that love struck lyre plucker from Lesbos. That's a tongue twister.

Gretchen: That is a tongue twister.

Leigh: You want to start with sapphic or sapphism?

Gretchen: Yes. So sapphism is a term far older and more widespread than its counterpart lesbian. So we'll start with Sapphic. Perhaps only eclipsed in historical reach by tribadism from the Greek and Latin words "to rub".

Sappho's legacy and the use of sapphism as a synonym for love between women stuck through the centuries across the world. An 11th

century poet in Muslim Spain even earned the moniker "The Arab Sappho". And a Japanese loanword referring to female sexuality, *saffuo*, was coined in the 1900s.

The use of the terms: sapphic, sapphist, sapphism, in describing erotic love between women began to rise in prominence during the 15th century, when there was a renewed interest in her poetry. And when Ovid's treatise was discovered and translated.

In 18th century London, the terms sapphist and tommy were used as the high and low cultural terms for women with homoerotic interests, parallel to the words sodomized and molly for men at the time; and in referencing the "Ladies of Llangollen", who we will get to because they're delightful. Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who were in a romantic friendship during the late 18th century, gossip diarist Hester Thrale-Piozzi refer to the two women as "damned sapphists".

I want to be a damned sapphist. I am. I am a damn sapphist!

Leigh: It's a beautiful-- That's another good pin-back button.

Gretchen: Yes! Damned sapphist!

Leigh: So let's get into "lesbian". As we've mentioned several times on this podcast before, the very notion of homosexuality as identity is an extremely new concept in history. And the same pattern falls specifically for the term lesbian. Lesbian wasn't used to refer to anything other than someone or something from the Isle of Lesbos until about the mid 19th century. So it's very new.

The the first recorded instance of lesbian being used similarly to its modern meaning is from William King and his satire *The Toast*, which was published in 1732 and revised in 1736. So a little bit earlier when he referred to lesbians with a capital L, the lesbian "L", as women who "loved women in the same manner as men love them".

Another one of the first instances of lesbian being used in a homoerotic nature is from 1875 when writer George Saintsbury, writing on Baudelaire's poetry refers to his "lesbian studies" also with capital L, including his poem about the passion of Delphine about the love between two women.

In 1890 "lesbian" was used and this is really where we see a shift in a medical dictionary as quote, "lesbian love" using the lowercase acting

as an adjective to describe tribadism, which is perhaps one of the oldest terms for women/women love; and that was something that you did. It was a behavior. It was an act. It was you know, as we've talked about before, it wasn't an identity.

By the turn of the 20th century, the terms lesbian, invert and homosexual were interchangeable with sapphist and sapphism, and the use of lesbian rose to prominence specifically in medical literature. We see the increasing medicalization of lesbianism.

By 1925 it had been recorded as a noun kind of for the first time meaning the female equivalent of a sodomite. So this is where we start to see it, solidifying a little bit more into something that someone is rather than something that someone does. Early sexologist described lesbianism as a form of [sarcastically] insanity and hysteria. Thanks Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Thank you. And while some posited it was a lifelong condition, others Ellis [disproving angry noise] believed it was a neurological condition that would go away once a woman had experienced marriage and a quote "practical life". Huh. [Angry noises]. Okay -

Gretchen: So sure.

Leigh: With the widespread reading of the work of Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, and the assertion of homosexuality being an innate condition of difference, queer men and women began to accept this designation of different and created their own social circles around it. So thus birthing the homosexual and lesbian circles, so popular in Berlin and Paris in the 20s, and 30s. So the creation of like Queer as culture. Yay!

The term lesbian became more popular specifically as an identity marker, outside the zone of medical language in the 1960s and 1970s, with feminist movements, and the very deliberate adoption of lesbian as a political feminist identity. [Silly voice] But that's a [silly voice] whole other episode. But we wanted to give a nice little mini-history on how did ladies who love ladies come to be called lesbians. There you go.

Gretchen: Right. And yeah, up until the 60s and 70s. It's also important to know, which I know that we've noted elsewhere that lesbian didn't mean exclusively. It wasn't about it was the umbrella term for any and all women who engaged in loving, you know, either sexual acts or loving relationships with other women, regardless of whether or not they were attracted to any other gender. It was just -

because it was about the behavior and the act. It was used to just describe women who engaged in that behavior or act regardless of what other behavior they might engage in elsewhere. It wasn't until the 60s and 70s that it came to mean exclusively women identified persons being attracted to other women.

Leigh: Specifically, like aligned with lesbian separatist, feminism, and all of that. So, again, a whole other episode, but yeah, that's, that's very new.

Gretchen: Yay! So that's our words!

Leigh: Back to our regularly scheduled content.

Gretchen: We are going to move on to talk about Sappho's legacy and reputation, which is[unintelligible]- We're gonna get into some fun and interesting parodies of Sappho. As Leigh briefly mentioned above; Sappho has a- kind of a two fold reputation. On the one hand, she was highly regarded in antiquity, and was considered the most brilliant female poet of her time. But on the other, later, sources mock and reproach her painting a picture of Sappho as a frivolous promiscuous woman relegated to the lines of Athenian comedies. Which doesn't surprise anybody that someone- That a woman who is highly regarded and valued eventually becomes, you know, mocked and derided and made fun of because, patriarchy.

But on the positive side, Plato referred to her as the 10th muse. In the Palatine Anthology, which is an anthology of Greek poems dating back to the seventh century BCE does as well saying:

Memory [who is the mother of the Muses] herself was astonished when she heard the honey sweet Sappho wondering whether mankind possessed a 10th muse.

Sappho is deemed "the equal of any god" and the ultimate in her craft: "You have established the beginning and end of all lyric song." She is considered "the sweetest of love pillows to the burning young"

Leigh: Plutarch, who lived from 46 to 120 CE, also counted her among the Muses writing "Sappho utters words truly mingled with fire and gives vent through her song to the heat that consumes her heart", and that she can "heal the pain of love with the Muses melody." [Happy sigh]

Gretchen: Galen compared Sappho to Homer writing "you have only

to say the poet and the poetess. And everyone knows you mean Homer and Sappho." And -

Leigh: That's the level-- that's the level that she was on!

Gretchen: Right? Yeah! With Homer, whom everyone reads. So there's a remark from Greek philosopher Strabo "Sappho is an amazing thing, For we know in all of recorded history, not one woman who can even come close to rivaling her in the grace of her poetry."

Leigh: [Excited] And I liked this story from a later author in the classical period named Aelian who relates a legend about the Athenian lawmaker Solon, the Wise who is a contemporary of Sappho, writing: "Solon of Athens, son of Execestides, after hearing his nephew singing a song of Sappho's over the wine, liked the song so much that he told the boy to teach it to him. When someone asked him why he was so eager, he replied, "So that I may learn it and then die."" [Gretchen laughs] When the poetry is that good!

Gretchen: Yep, I've just got to learn this, and then my life has peaked.

So here's where we're getting into the kind of double nature of her legacy. In antiquity she was held in high esteem. There's a separate story began to grow and later centuries creating a tradition of her as an, "immoral and wanton bisexual woman". [Leigh: laughs] So authors in antiquity didn't really seem to have any qualms with Sappho's homo eroticism, both in her writings and in her supposed in real life, what we can glean about it. Either because they're only references to the love between girls from Lesbos, and Sappho's poetry didn't see reproachful or they simply never referred to Sappho's homosexuality at all. It doesn't seem to be anything that they would have found disturbing or really to take note of, as out of the ordinary, they just kind of accepted it at face value.

The first sources that begin to hint at the development of Sappho's bad reputation come from the Athenian comedies of the fourth century BCE. So this is like a couple of 100 years this is like 300 years after she's alive, 200, 300 years. So that's what we're working with here.

Leigh: Yeah, considering the lewd nature of these comedies. They're basically like sex plays. Basically. She probably wasn't, as phrased by scholar Maarit Kivil, "described as a modest housewife. It said she was probably treated in these plays as a stock character of a lascivious woman with many partners"

Attic comedians describe Sappho as short with a dark complexion, and therefore ugly. [Sarcastically] Ah! There we are. Hello classic Greek racism and colorism.

♪ Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck Fuck colonialism! ♪

So yes. And "man crazy". Apparently Sappho-

Gretchen: Yeah. Cuz nothing says man-crazy like writing about yearning for women!

Leigh: [Laughs] Yeah, the stage figure Sappho was depicted as a woman who exemplified an insatiable heterosexual promiscuity. An over-sexed predator of men, which is just so laughable. In fact, this was actually an ancient cliché about women from Lesbos at the time, way before the word lesbian brought up connotations of love between women. It was a blow job joke. In classical Greek, the verb *lesbiazein* "to act like someone from Lesbos" actually meant performing fellatio; something for which inhabitants of Lesbos were thought to have a certain love for. Go figure. [Gretchen laughs] So if you called somebody a lesbian, [laughing] in classical Greece, you are saying: Man, that girl's real good at giving BJ's.

Gretchen: So like the opposite of what it means now--

Leigh: [Laughing] I know! Thank you Sappho for completely rewriting the history of the term. The early church in 1073, under Pope Gregory actually burned her works. Well, I mean, I say actually, but it's thought to have we don't really have conclusive evidence. But one theologian at this time described Sappho as, quote, "a sex crazed whore who sings of her own wantonness". [Sarcastically] Thanks, dude. --

Gretchen: [Sarcastically] Because you can't have women talking about their desires without them being, you know, sex crazed.

Leigh: Yeah, so when we get to the *Suda*, the ancient encyclopedia from the 10th and 11th century that mentioned Sappho a few times we also see references and assertions that Sappho had a husband, a man named Kerkyllas from the island Andros. Hold tight! [High pitched mocking] So surely, surely, she can't be gay. She had a husband! But much like the legend of Sappho and the ferryman Phaon which Gretchen is going to talk about next. It's likely that this was an invention meant to distract from Sappho's homoerotic leanings and change her reputation.

Gretchen: So there was a legend from Ovid that suggests she throws herself off of the Leucadian cliffs when her heart was broken by Phaon who is a young ferryman. So the poem in question the 15th Heroides was originally thought to be a genuine letter from Sappho to Phaon, and is by far one of the most influential documents in the history of the reception and reputation of Sappho, which eclipses many of Sappho's own fragments by the time it was translated and attributed to Ovid in the 15th century.

According to Ovid's, *Sappho-Phaon Epistle*:

Not Pyrrha's coterie nor Methymna's girls beguile me now, nor any Lesbian maiden. Dazzling Cydro's of no account—Anactoria and Atthis, once embraced, are now disdained; and the hundred others, loved to my reproach, relinquished this their claim to callous you [Phaon] alone.

Yet at the same time, Ovid contradicts himself when he asks in another part of his works. "What did Sappho of Lesbos teach but how to love maidens, yet Sappho herself was safe", which implies that she taught other women about loving women, but wasn't herself a lover of women. Even as he's talking about all of these female lovers that she's rejecting for Phaon?! Like what is the truth Ovid? Insert Oprah meme: So what is the truth?

Leigh: [Laughing] It's just so funny. It's like, I mean, I say funny and frustrating because it's literally just the myth of: [sarcastically] Ah yes, the man that can cure the woman of all of her lesbian love. Ovid is literally mentioning her female companions: Anactoria, Atthis, all of these women that she loves she's like: Ah, I'm not into these maidens anymore because I love you Phaon.

Gretchen: Yes. So what's interesting about this story about throwing herself off of a cliff out of love for a ferryman is that it may actually be connected to Aphrodite, who we know Sappho was devoted to, and invoked in many of her poems.

One of Aphrodite, other forms in the Roman tradition is that of Venus, who's - it's a planet, everyone knows the planet Venus, whose orbit makes it look as if it's sometimes chasing after the sun in the evening, because Venus sets after the sun sets when it's called the evening star, or *Hesperus* in Greek. And at other times Venus looks like it's being chased by the sun in the morning because it rises before the dawn, which is the morning star *Phosphoros* in Greek.

So Ovid himself explained this activity with the myth of Aphrodite and Phaeton. So if you're unfamiliar with this myth, Phaethon is the son of Helios who is the sun god. Aphrodite falls in love with Phaethon and Phaethon decides to try to drive his father's chariot. When he does, he ends up losing control and plunging into the sea Aphrodite as the evening star, Venus chases after him, and then retrieves him from the water and raises him back up from the sea. In the morning in the morning star, you can kind of see the astronomical reality behind this myth of Aphrodite, chasing the sun into the sea, and then raising the sun back up.

So Sappho throwing herself into the sea out of love for a ferryman, which is not so different from a chariot driver. It's just that his chariot is a boat could also be Ovid's way of trying to give Sappho a death that mimics Aphrodite, his love for Phaethon. I mean, it's like even the name Phaethon to Phaon. So--

Leigh: Small leap. Heh.

Gretchen: Leap. Heh heh heh. Leap from the cliff. So it could be that Ovid who calls Sappho a goddess among women was trying to imitate the goddess and her death in this story and is this immortalized in Ovid's works as like a true devotee of Aphrodite. Like she's, such a good disciple of Aphrodite that even her death like mimics this, you know, myth of Aphrodite chasing down the sun into the sea, out of love for the sea and then resurrecting the sun. So it could be one of those things.

It could also very well be trying to erase her sexuality. But it was just interesting to me that like if Ovid made this story up, which it seems like he probably did, you can kind of see the pieces where he got it from. He's pulling from Aphrodite mythology to like create this story about Sappho in order to immortalize as Sappho this like this perfect devotee of Aphrodite. She even mimics Aphrodite in her dying.

Leigh: Yeah, and I mean, around, I think, Victorian times this was the version of Sappho that was mostly disseminated. If you asked people in the 19th century early on about what they knew about Sappho, they would probably talk about Phaon and the cliffs. It was that - It was that prolific.

Further complicating this as a result of the ever evolving reputation of Sappho from this man crazy female lecher of Attic comedies to this, scornfully addressed immoral woman lover of Roman times. The

contradictions of these literary reputations with the queer yearning in Sappho's poetry itself. It's safe to say that many ancient scholars were flummoxed, to say the least, at how to make sense of this mess of information and create a coherent picture of Sappho's life. Things didn't quite line up and make sense.

So in doing so, authors tend to— to use one of three strategies as classicist Glenn Most asserts. They either did duplication, narrativization, or condensation. And I want to talk about duplication, which is what most of the ancient scholars did to try to make sense of the stories. Ancient sources like the Nymphodorus, in the third century BCE, declared that there must have been, of course, two Sapphos; [Gretchen: laughs] assigning different features to each in order to create a plausible story. One of the poetess and the other have a sex worker.

As Glenn Most notes:

The division of labor such a distinction tries to establish is manifest. On the one hand, the lyric Sappho retains the connections to family and female friends evidently mentioned in her surviving poems. On the other hand, the comic Sappho certainly could not have had so many male lovers if she had not been a professional prostitute. Anyone who thought the two were the same person would merely be a hapless victim of their inconvenient homonym. Fortunately an enlightened, historical scholarship had discovered the difference and rescued the great poetess from unfair blame.

So the idea that, how did all these things come up like: Oh no, these are gonna tarnish Sappho's beautiful reputation! Wait, there must have been two.

In the *Suda* there's a modification of this two Sappho theory. In this case one Sappho is still being distinguished by another by their profession, birthplace and erotic interest, but kind of a more blurry line than what Nymphodorus came up with. The *Suda* mentions a Sappho born in Eresos on Lesbos with some of the biographical information that we've discussed, with a mother named Cleïs, three brothers, married to Kerkylas, with a daughter. Inventor of the plectrum writer of nine books of poetry. This Sappho was cast upon with moral suspicion not because of prostitution, but because of her female friendships, the *Suda* writes: "She had three companions and friends Atthis, Telesippa, and Megara She was also accused of shameful love with them."

Then the second Sappho, this one from Mytilene was not a prostitute but a harp player, and aligns more with the story of Phaon. So this one says "Sappho from the island of Lesbos from the city of Mytilene, a harp player, she threw herself into the sea from Leukas, because of her love for Phaon of Mytilene. Some have registered that there is lyric poetry by this woman too."

Gretchen: [Laughs] Okay...

Leigh: Again! I say! What is the truth?

Gretchen: Okay cool. [sarcastic] I love that. Man, ancient scholarship is just so- the amount of mental gymnastics that scholars do to make sense of things is just- it makes me laugh.

Leigh: It's stories, y'all stories.

Gretchen: Maybe some of the people were making shit up. Yeah.

Leigh: So why do we think Sappho was gay? If we really want to present our evidence, let's talk about that to round things out. Why do we think they're gay?

Gretchen: I mean, so many of her poems are about yearning, and love for women! And it's so explicit and it's filled with what feels like very personal longing and desire, even if it might be wrapped up in you know, quote, unquote, traditional or ritual verse, like, as we've been saying, the poetry that she writes is so different in tone than the male writers of the age. It feels very personal and filled with emotional, it's about how she feels when she looks at something beautiful, rather than about the object itself being beautiful. It's about how she feels about it. And it's hard not to read that and be like, well, this must be an expression of what she's actually feeling because no one else is writing about what they're feeling. [Leigh: laughing] So she's not even following convention. It's not even a you know, a convention at the time to write about your feelings in this way. Therefore, she's clearly just- this is just like a poetic persona that she's creating. It feels very personal when you read it.

Leigh: Mm hmm. Yeah. So so many scholars hesitate to apply the like lowercase lesbian framework to Sappho's life in poetry, but it can all be, like you were saying, it can all be seen in the poetry.

Jane McIntosh Snyder, the author of a fantastic book called *Lesbian*

Desire in the Lyrics of Sappho, so wonderfully puts it:

Debates around the question was Sappho a lesbian strike me as idle. The important part is that her songs focus on women on women's emotional lives with one another and on female erotic desire directed toward other females. Sappho's poetic world, whatever its sources of inspiration or origin was a female one, a world in which male figures when they do appear stand on the periphery as to what her actual world was like, we can only make educated guesses but her poetic world as the fragments clearly show was centered on women and on homoerotic desire.

Gretchen: Right. So right basically, it's like, whether she was actually a lesbian herself or not, her poetry is. Her poetry is about the erotic desire between women. So that's what we got and--

Leigh: It can stand alone.

Gretchen: Yeah, the blatant queer ratio of Sappho like there's evidence of hearsay from later sources and desperation to create a heterosexual narrative for the poetess which, that's part of why we think she's gay because of this, like, kind of frantic desires --

Leigh: [Unintelligible] ...for correction.

Gretchen: Yes. So you know, the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* from the Hellenistic period remarks at one point that Sappho has been accused by a few of being undisciplined and sexually involved with women. Or the *Suda* from the 10th century stating that she was slanderously accused of shameful intimacy with certain of her female pupils! The amount of pearl clutching that's happening in these statements.

Ovid which is you know, where we get the tale of Sappho and Phaon portrays Sappho as discomforted by allegations that she enjoyed erotic attachments with other women at line 201. She complains that her love for women of her native Lesbos has made her infamous. Like just - [Leigh laughing] which is from the same source where Ovid is talking about her female companions that she's apparently giving up for Phaon. Which I just like- Ovid contradicts himself all the time. [Leigh: laughing]

The way the writers approach Sappho's reputation of erotic love with other women with shame, is so transparent. It's so incredibly overt! All three of these sources consistently insist that Sappho's primary dalliances were heterosexual. Citing her infatuation with Phaon, the

fact that she's married to a man named Kerkylas and had a daughter.

Yet by comparison, the same kind of queer relationships enjoyed by the male poets of Sappho's time don't get the same response of disbelief.

A number of these same authorities refer to the homosexual involvements of Greek male lyric poets, as established facts, like virtually all ancient testimony on the lives of Greek poets. They do not give the impression that male pederasty, at least for the active partner, was thought cause for shame.

And yet they're like: [mocking tone] Oh, no! A woman with another woman! Ah!

Leigh: [Sarcastically] Women don't have sexuality. That should be the subtitle of this entire fucking podcast.

Gretchen: I mean, right. [Leigh: laughing] Um, can you tell us about Kerkylas?

Leigh: Yes. So we've mentioned her, husband, question mark. So remember when we talked about Kerkylas of Andros? The husband Sappho supposedly had? Yeah, this was definitely an invention of Attic comedies like, this dude never existed. How do we know? How do we know that this, specifically, is a crock of shit? Like, why wouldn't this be a true fact found in the reputable ancient encyclopedias?

Well, when we dissect this, as later scholars did when they were trying to rescue Sappho's reputation. It's noted that Sappho's husband's name, Kerkylas is curiously similar to the Greek word *kerkos* or tail, which was slang for penis and *Andros* meaning man, so yeah. [Joking] Why shouldn't we totally believe that Sappho was just a straight gal, when she was married to dick Johnson from Man Island. [Gretchen: laughs] Just like... Roger penis from the Isle of dicks. Manly Manson. --

[Deadpan] Here is my husband. A man with a penis. Like it's got the same energy as like from Brooklyn Nine-Nine, and Holt. [Gretchen: giggling uncontrollably] It's like: Yes. Hi. I am Sappho. I am straight. Here is my husband. Man. Husband, man. With dick.

It's like it's the "Sure, Jan" meme.

Gretchen: Yeah. Oh for sure!

Leigh: "George Glass." "I didn't know there was a George Glass at our skule." [Mocking] I didn't know that there was a Dick Johnson on Man Island. [Gretchen: laughing] Yeah, as you could tell, like when you dive into it a little bit more! Just the tiniest bit. It's very clearly a joke. [Laughs]

Gretchen: Yes, very, very clearly. So let's talk a little bit about Sappho's school. Quote unquote, her school. There are some scholars who take the angle that Sappho was more of like a Headmistress for the young women around her. So she's leading this transition period from their youth into marriage, that she's serving a public function of instilling sensual awareness and sexual self regard, and of easing women coming of age in a sexually segregated society. So that she's like teaching young women how to be sexually aware and in touch with their sensuality. And since they couldn't do so with their male lovers, they did so with other women. Which is also gay! But like, sure.

[Laughing] It's not gay if it's just for class.

Right! That's kind of what it sounds like. They're saying like: Oh. she's just, this is just practicing kissing with other girls.

Leigh: Yeah. Well, I mean, that's- we've seen that refrain before that women being together with women is practice for them being with men.

Gretchen: Right, right. Which is so- I think, just weird to me, because it's like- but they're different. It's very different. Being with - As someone who is multi gender attracted, like, being in a relationship with a woman is different than being in a relationship with a man so like, if I had like, quote, unquote, practiced on women like I would have gotten into a relationship with a man and been like, what? [Laughs]

Leigh: [Laughing] This is different.

Gretchen: All right, everything I learned is different. So we see in Sappho's own *Hymn to Aphrodite* with the lines: "if she runs away soon she will pursue" which is a contrast with the strictly designed active/passive, older/younger, pursuer/pursued dynamic of Greek male sexuality, which we will get into, you know, when we do an episode on Greek male sexuality.

But we've seen this kind of dynamic in other societies from around the world where male homosexuality was pretty rigidly prescribed in terms

of roles and you didn't really switch. The idea of switching back and forth between roles is a more modern expression of male homosexuality historically. As Ella Haselswerdt notes

In Sappho's lesbianism by contrast, it would appear that the pursuer could become the pursued at any moment. Both of the women involved are liberated from the scripts that predetermined those roles. Queerness is not necessarily the freedom from an eroticized power imbalance, but the freedom from its gendered predetermination. This freedom is miraculous for a society like archaic Greece, and it is miraculous still today.

Leigh: Yeah, I mean, it's in fact, this concept of women as equals in a sexual romantic relationship was so scandalous and miraculous that it may actually have been the very cause of the Sappho as a schoolmistress theory. Like later scholars couldn't abide by such a relationship. So of course Sappho must have been involved in some sort of arrangement, or organization that upheld these established power differentials. Right. Like Sappho can't be experiencing these things with women unless she has a significant power imbalance over them because that's what we understand, as it relates to the way that men are having relationships with one another.

Gretchen: Right, and it can't be that she is creating an understanding of love and relationships that exists outside of the significantly power imbalanced male/female relationships within Greek society, she must be part of the system trying to enculturate women into a heavily power imbalanced relationship like she can't be against the status quo, she must be reinforcing the status quo somehow, because they can't abide the idea of Sappho as creating this kind of revolutionary understanding of relationships. One that's between women and that exists outside of, as you were saying, a power imbalance, which there was a power imbalance between men and women in Greek society.

So the idea- it's just men being threatened by the idea of women being in a relationship that does not involve them and one that is more equal. It makes me think of Gaston's "It's not right for a woman to read! Soon she gets ideas! And thinking!" like, not right for women to be a lesbian because soon she gets the ideas that she can be equal in a relationship and not be subservient to her partner. It smacks of that energy.

Leigh: [sarcastically] Egalitarian love! Gasp. The scandal.

Gretchen: So while it does seem like there were institutions like this

for men in this society, it is conceivable that there might be something for women, but this also assumes that the erotic element to Sappho's poetry is purely stylistic, that her erotic affection and romantic nature is just like, oh, that's just like set dressing. It's not meant to be taken literally by herself or her students. It's meant to just be this poetic device. Duban says,

It taxes belief that the erotic admiration via poetry could be effective, where the author dissociates herself from it, if the praise of young men by male poets was undeniably based on sexual attraction, and the desire to possess a young man was socially acceptable. The same may be assumed for women.

And I would say must be assumed for women! If you're going to assume that male poets talking about their attraction for men represents their own experience, you can't just say: Oh, well, but if it's a woman, then just poetic device, just a metaphor.

Leigh: Yeah, yeah, he sums it up nicely when he says "To lead is to lead by example, not precept." So Sappho practiced what she preached. There's also arguments about personal identity versus the choral nature of Greek poetry. A lot of people when denying that Sappho could have been feeling these things personally claim that she can't be expressing these feelings because some of her poems are ritualized. So she must be expressing a collective feeling, and that she's taking on this artistic persona to conform to the poetry standards of the day. The scholars claim that the Greeks had no concept of artistic ego, and that the poets weren't speaking from their own experience the way that poets do now, but like we've seen in choral poetry, speaking from some kind of collective consciousness, but they're not contradictory. Maybe she was drawn to these forms of expression because she liked ladies and what let's talk about how much she liked them.

Gretchen: But also remember that Plutarch, when writing about Sappho says "Sappho gives vent through her song to the heat that consumes her heart" Which sounds to me like even Plutarch understood that she's speaking from personal experience and not just as a Greek chorus. He's literally saying: Yeah, she's talking about how she feels inside. So this idea that they didn't have a concept of artistic ego is, I just think, kind of--

Leigh: Like it's ment- it's the mental gymnastics again. Sappho must be an incredibly unique example.

Gretchen: Right when she's writing about loving women she's taking on like the artistic persona of a man writing about loving women. Sure, Jan. Sure, right? [Leigh: laughing] Yeah. Except she never says that. No one says that of men writing about other men: Well, he must be putting himself in the mind of a woman when he's talking about how much he loves men. Um, so yeah, I mean, based on everything that we've said, I feel like it's pretty clear that Leigh and I are like: Yeah, she gay. She gay. She's very gay, which leads into how gay were they? How gay was Sappho? Leigh, how how gay was Sappho?

Leigh: Oh God, I know right? Like we can continue talking for ages. There's so much more like we had here. God, I'm gonna say. I mean, she's the OG. She's the OG lesbian. And every single-- every single attempt to create a different narrative of Sappho is so transparent, that they're trying so hard. There's not really a lot of like digging to find out how queer Sappho was. There's a lot of digging to scrape away at the veneers that reveal how queer she was. So I'm gonna say that Sappho was capital L Lesbian - but in the gay way, out of 10, on a scale of "How Gay Were They?" What about you Gretchen? How gay was Sappho?

Gretchen: I feel like Sappho was like the scale gay like if I'm coming up with this, like a scale of gay and like on a scale of zero to Sappho how gay is Sappho like well Sappho is like was Sappho gay like Sappho levels. Like you're saying she was the OG. She's the standard. She's like, as gay as you get. How do you get gayer than Sappho? So I will say she is 10 "rosy fingers of the moon" gay. Yeah, she is 10 "rosy fingers of the moon" levels of gay.

Leigh: I'll amend mine to say that she's 400 volcanoes under the skin of gay. How about that? That's so evocative! [Gretchen: makes approving noises] I love it. I love that poem. Do you have any closing thoughts? I know we kind of rush rush to the end here. But yeah, that's Sappho for ya.

Gretchen: Yeah. I mean, look up- Okay. Yeah, summarize someone needs to give us Sappho shitpost bot. Her poems are full of longing and very, very relatable moods, even the very fragmentary stuff.

Oh, I can tell the funny story about how before I knew I was queer, I was at a bookstore. And it was like closing so they were having this paper bag sale of like fill a paper bag for \$5. And I picked up a book, very old book. Binding was totally broken and it had a picture of the Muses on the front. And I was like: Oh, this looks cool. And I opened it and I was like: Oh. Sappho, she's a Greek poet, and shoved it in my

bag. And then, like, years later, when I figured I was queer, I was like: Oh, that's why I grabbed the book of Sappho.

Leigh: That reminds me of when I was a teenager and obsessed with NSYNC and Lance Bass. And then I came out, and then Lance Bass came out, and everybody called me on my parents landline telephone, asked them to speak to me and then said: Ah, it makes sense now. So I was attracted to the male Ellen DeGeneres. Sue me. [Gretchen: laughs] Anyway...

Gretchen: Anyway...

Leigh: [Laughing] I think that's a good place to stop for right now. Yeah, that's it for History is Gay. You can find us online individually as usual. Gretchen? Where can people find your lovely self on the worldwide web?

Gretchen: Well, when I am not sighing over sapphic psalmody, I am working on my novel and writing nerdy media analysis about Star Wars, Steven Universe, and A Song of Ice and Fire over at TheFandomentals.com and GNEllis.com which I am trying to get renamed.

Or you can check me out on Tumblr and Twitter as [Updated: gnelliswriter] [@gnjoneswriter](#), and on YouTube as Ba'al the Bard and that's mostly for my *Song of Ice and Fire* meta analysis stuff. I'm going to be talking pretty soon about the dance of dragons if anyone likes *Song of Ice and Fire*, and there are some pretty cool queer ladies that I'm going to be talking about. So if you like queer dragon ladies and queer pirates and things like that, I'm going to be talking about some fictional ones. Yay. Leigh, how about you? Where can you be found on the interwebs?

Leigh: So I'm Leigh, and when I'm not nerding out about rosy fingered moons and completely subverting the ancient Greek ideals of the worlds of war and battle with love; I'm usually talking about comics and queer TV over at [@aparadoxinflux](#) on Twitter. And doing more queer history education at the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco.

Gretchen: Nice! History is Gay Podcast– we can be found on Tumblr as [historyisgaypodcast.tumblr.com](#), Twitter [@HistoryisGayPod](#). And you can always drop us a line with questions, suggestions, if you want to get that Sappho shitpost bot done, you can send us an email at [historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com](#).

Leigh: And as usual, if you enjoy the show and want to continue supporting us in making it you can support us on Patreon where you can get access to Sappho's Salon minisodes. We just recently released one that is Gretchen reading some lovely letters from Radclyffe Hall. So you should check that out. And we have special sneak peeks, the opportunity to have your voice show up in the show, and more. You can become a patron by going to the support section on our website and join the ranks of our Patreon community along with the amazing...

Gretchen: Julie Siegler

Leigh: Janessa Eddy

Gretchen: Sophia Phillips

Leigh: Grace!

Gretchen: Alexis Miloglav,

Leigh: Ollie Gray

Grethen: And Laura Galm.

Together: Thank you all! Yay!

Gretchen: We couldn't do this without you.

Leigh: Yeah, this is amazing. Again, we say every single episode. We're so grateful for your support and for your love and for your beautiful emails that you send us. Please continue talking with us. We want to talk with you.

And if you want to show your support physically on your body, or when you're like drinking tea, you can buy awesome merch at our History is Gay store, you can click on "shop" at our website. There's fun things. We're working on getting some new stuff in there. So hold tight, but we're always interested in hearing more ideas.

And lastly, remember please, to rate, review, and subscribe, wherever you get your podcasts. It helps more people find the show and we can expand our awesome community worldwide and throughout the United States. It's really awesome to see just how global our community is sometimes. So please, please please remember to rate, review,

subscribe. That's how other people find us. Yes, so that's it for History is Gay. Until next time:

Gretchen: Stay queer.

Leigh: And stay curious.