

Alice: Hello, and welcome to Queer as Fact, a queer history podcast. I'm Alice.

Hamish: I'm Hamish.

Eli: I'm Eli.

A: On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, one of us will talk about a person, place, or topic from queer history. Today we're talking about queer women in medieval Arab literature.

[Intro music plays]

Just a few content warnings for this episode: there's brief mentions of murder, a lot of explicit discussions of sex, and one swear-word in a quotation.

The historical context for this episode is that we're going to be talking about the Islamic golden age, which was a flourishing of art, culture and learning in the Islamic world – so the Middle East, Spain, and North Africa, centred around Baghdad. The dating on this period – it's like trying to date the medieval period for Europe; it's pretty broad and vague. We're talking from about the 8<sup>th</sup> century through to the 14<sup>th</sup> century or even the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century depending on what scholar you're reading. Most of our sources for this episode will date from the early 10<sup>th</sup> century through until the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Before I start, I will give us a bit of terminology that we're going to be using throughout the episode. I'd like to apologise in advance because I'm not an Arabic speaker; I'm going to say a lot of Arabic words in this episode and I can't promise I'm saying them correctly, but I'm doing my best. So the word for lesbian in Arabic in the period – which I don't think is the word for lesbian anymore – was *sahiqqa*. There's also *sahhaqa* and *musahiqqa*.

E: So, when you say the word for lesbian—

A: Yes?

E: What do you mean by that?

A: The words *sahiqqa*, *sahhaqa* and *musahiqqa* come from the root *s-h-q* – so they all have those three consonants in them. That root is a verb which means 'to rub' or 'to pound', so...

E: Ah, so they're tribades.

A: Yes! Yeah, so it's like Greek.

E: Okay. So it's behaviour, not identity, basically, is the situation, or...?

A: The etymology of the word is behaviour, not identity. Later we'll get into what they thought about lesbians in terms of who was a lesbian, whether you were a lesbian for your entire life or just sometimes slept with women.

E: Okay.

A: I also want to note that because that root means 'to rub' or 'to pound' in the translations I was finding 'lesbian' is often translated as 'grinder' so—

E: [laughs]

A: That's going to come up a bunch. It's going to sound weird.

H: I feel like there's probably a bunch of dirty jokes from the period about – you know how you'd have woman grinding grain for loaves?

A: Yes.

E: [laughs]

A: That's another thing that is – not grinding grain for loaves, but working saffron dye into clothes.

H: Wow.

E: So saffron's gay now.

A: So saffron's gay now, and yellow clothing is also gay now.

E: Oh, this is great! Mhm. I saw a post on Tumblr literally last night where someone wearing I think a mustard jumper or a yellow skirt of something – I can't remember – was like "Yellow's gay now. I don't make the rules." So to that one random Tumblr user, you were right!

H and A: [laugh]

E: I'm just imagining, you know, two women getting to the end of their evening, and they're very satisfied sexually, and also have some lovely yellow garments.

A and H: [laugh]

A: That sounds immensely productive.

E: Yeah, yeah.

H: Yeah.

A: Yeah, so that's the terminology we're going to be dealing with. The words for lesbianism: the one that I think we're going to come across most is *sihaq*. There's also *sahq* and *sihaqa*.

So I don't, unfortunately, have examples of historic lesbian figures, which is why we're talking about literature. The first thing I want to start with in this episode is the story of two women who are known in the Arab literary tradition as being the first lesbians.

E: Ever?

A: Ever! Yeah.

E: Wow.

A: In the world.

E: Sorry Sappho.

A: Yeah. Get wrecked, Sappho.

E: [laughs]

H: Did you just say "Get wrecked"?

[laughter]

A: Sorry. So, this story comes from the earliest extant Arabic erotic text, which in English translation is called *The Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. I'm just going to include the disclaimer here – I'm not going to

try and say the Arabic titles of any of these books because it will be a mess and no-one will benefit from it. I will put out notes, then, of the Arabic words that I've avoided saying, but in English, we're going to call this book *The Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. So it dates from the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and it was written by a man named Abul Hasan Ali ibn Nasr al-Katib, who lived in Baghdad. We're going to call him ibn-Nasr, for the record.

One of the sections in this book is a collection of older sources from poets, philosophers, and physicians on the topic of erotic homosexual relationships between women, and also between men. Unfortunately I can't tell you the whole story because it's very hard to get hold of the original sources, 'cause I don't speak Arabic, and also because of the socio-political climate in the Islamic world at the moment a lot of them are censored.

I am going to go into a little bit of detail about how hard it was to get hold of these, just so we understand how difficult a topic this could be to research if you're not a male Arabic speaker living in the Arab world.

E: Okay.

A: So my information on this comes from the academic Sahar Amer, who is an Egyptian woman, and she's written articles and books about medieval lesbians in the Arab world, and she talks about trying to get hold of this book, and she found a bookshop in Cairo that stocked it, and she went and tried to buy it, and they wouldn't sell it to her because they said "We're not selling that book to a nice Muslim woman like you," and she had to get a man to come in and buy it for her. When she did get hold of it, it's written – as a book is written – black text on a white background, and then she said on each page there's a big picture of a red tree covering the entire page

H: Huh!

A: In an effort to hide it from censors, basically.

H: Wow.

A: So nobody's going to glance at it and be like "Oh, that's porn!" they're going to glance at it and be like "That's a picture of a tree and I guess some words?"

E: Oh, okay.

H: Huh, wow. Interesting.

E: Do you have, like, any of the pages that we could put a picture up of or anything, 'cause that sounds interesting and I can't quite picture it.

A: I don't. She talks about this in one of her articles that I read and she didn't include any images.

E: Alright, fair enough.

A: So I don't. Yeah, I was a bit confused when she described this, but it at least made it clear that even once you've got the book it's very hard to read the book.

E: Mm, wow.

A: Yep. The English translation through which this book is most well-known was published as part of someone's PhD dissertation in the '70s, and it was published by Aleppo Press, and to quote Sahar Amer:

*Aleppo Publishing has since gone out of business, none of the translators can be found in any scholarly listings or directories, no information is given on the university where the dissertation was submitted and defended, the book is utterly unavailable for purchase anywhere, and it can only be consulted through two known copies...*

H: Wow.

E: Jesus!

A: Yeah.

E: This is some conspiracy level stuff!

A: [laughter] So that's what we're dealing with here.

E: Where are the two known copies?

A: One's in the Library of Congress in Washington DC, and the other's in the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

E: Wow.

A: So they're not readily available—

H: No.

A: —to us as Australians.

E: Or to, you know—

A: —anyone.

E: Yeah, okay. Yeah.

E and A: [laugh]

E: I was going to say, like, I don't know where she is based but, as an Egyptian woman...

A: She's now based in Sydney I think.

H: Huh.

E: Oh, okay. Hi!

H and A: [laugh]

E: You're so close to us!

A: Yeah! Okay, so that was our little interlude on how hard it is to get hold of anything in this particular area of research, so unfortunately everything I'm getting I have to get from secondary sources, basically.

E: Man, you always pick tough ones, don't you.

A: [laughs] Okay, so that aside, in the Encyclopedia of Pleasure we find the story of two women who are the first lesbians. Their names are Hind bint al-Nu'man, who we call Hind, and Hind bint al-Khuss al-Iyadiyyah, who we call al-Zarqa'.

E: Okay. Do you know how the names are working?

A: So Hind is the first name.

E: Yep.

A: And they both have the same first name, Hind.

E: Okay. It's like Anne all over again!

A and H: [laugh]

A: Yeah. *Bint* means 'daughter of' so Hind bint al-Nu'man is Hind, the daughter of al-Nu'man.

E: It's just like *bat*.

A: Yeah! Yeah. And then Hind bint al-Khuss al-Iyadiyyah is the daughter of Khuss al-Iyadiyyah.

E: Okay.

A: And al-Zarqa' I think means 'blue'.

E: Alright.

A: I'm not sure why that's her name, but that's what we call her.

E: Okay, so were surnames not a thing here, at this time?

A: No, these woman don't have surnames, they just have 'daughter of' whoever.

H: Patronymics works like surnames in a lot of contexts.

E: I'm Jewish, dude. I know.

H: Okay.

A: [laughter]

H: Yeah, okay.

A: Yep. So the story's set in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so that's when the first lesbians happened, guys.

E: Is this CE? This is CE.

A: Sorry, this is CE. Hind is a Christian, and she's the daughter - or in some sources that also tell the story, the wife - of the king of Hira, which is in modern-day Iraq. And al-Zarqa' is an Arab woman from Yamama, which is in in modern-day Saudi Arabia. I don't have the whole story to hand from the Encyclopedia of Pleasure, as we discussed, but another 9<sup>th</sup> century source tells us how the two women met and fell in love, and it says:

*Al-Zarqa' did not cease to deceive Hind, and to extol grinding for her, and to say "In the union of two women there is a pleasure that cannot be between the woman and the man'. The safeguard herself from scandal, and knowing that her appetite could be satisfied without accusation or fear of punishment, they had intercourse. Hind found a pleasure that was even greater than the other had described, and their amorous desire for each other increased, and it had never so between women before this.*

E: So do they just invent lesbian sex?

A: Yeah, I did think that was interesting, 'cause like, I feel like they just invented lesbian sex, but it also starts with Al-Zarqa' obviously like, knowing what this is and being like "Hind, this would be great, let's do this."

E: Hm, okay.

A: So, unclear, but like, yes, they just invented lesbian sex.

H: And then were presumably like, "Holy crumbs! We have to tell people about this!"

A: [laughs] Yeah, it says it was a pleasure that could not be between a woman and a man, so they were like "Yeah, this is way better than with our husbands", so yeah, that's what happened there.

Okay, a few points I did want to make on that quote before we continue: it talks about how Hind was willing to engage in lesbian sex "to safeguard herself from scandal and knowing that her appetite could be satisfied without accusation or fear of punishment". What that's talking about there is basically that she couldn't accidentally get pregnant—

H: Huh!

A: —sleeping with al-Zarqa', so it's much safer and less likely to bring any shame on her or her family that if she'd had sex with another man—

H: Solid.

A: —which makes sense. The second thing is that this text and most of the texts we'll see don't erase female desire or lessen it in any way compared to female-male relationships, and it does explicitly say it was better than the pleasure that could be had between a woman and a man, whereas in Western texts of... I was going to say of the time, but no-one's writing about lesbian sex at the time.

E: [laughs]

A: Even now, like people talk about lesbian sex and like "Yeah, okay, but we don't really know how that works, or what they can do" whereas if you're looking in this text, they're very explicitly like "No, they had sex, and it was really really good" so that was interesting and I enjoyed that.

Before we go on to discuss this anymore, I'm going to read you the end of the story, as it's found in the Encyclopedia of Pleasure. So the author writes:

*Hind was so loyal to Al-Zarqa' that when the latter died, she cropped her hair, wore black clothes, rejected worldly pleasures, vowed to God that she would lead an ascetic life until she passed away and, as a result, she built a monastery which was named after her—*

— so after al-Zarqa' —

*—on the outskirts of Kufa. When Hind died, she was buried at the monastery gate. Her loyalty was then an example for poets to write about.*

So this story is largely unverifiable and basically a fictional story, but it is worth noting that although it's not confirmed, other sources also do talk about a Hind who is the daughter of a king in this location and mention her building a monastery.

H: Hm!

A: So like, there could be some historical basis to this.

H: That's interesting.

A: Yes. And they also mention her refusing marriage proposals, not because she's not interested in the specific men, but just saying "No, I don't want to get married. That's not for me." Nobody appears to have done any work on connecting any of those sources or any historical texts together to work out if there's any basis to this story.

But yeah, overall, as I was saying, in a time when lesbianism was just absolutely not talked about in the Western Christian world, the Arab world was having a much more open conversation about it and not pretending it didn't exist and not pretending it was a lesser thing than female-male attraction.

H: Is this, like a standard treatment for the time? Because we know that the text is really hard to get hold of now – was it considered to be taboo erotica or taboo eroticism at the time or was it widely circulated?

A: It was much more widely circulated at the time than it is now. It was quite common at the time to circulate these quite erotic texts. It was an accepted part of like, sophisticated literature, and it was pretty fine to openly discuss sex—

H: Sweet!

A: —including same-sex – both lesbian and male-male - sex.

H: Nice.

A: So yeah, things have gone downhill in that regard.

E: Are we going to talk about why?

H: I don't think I'm qualified.

A: Yeah, I don't think I'm qualified. And it's outside of the period I'm discussing.

E: Alright, okay, cool.

A: So probably not, no.

E: Fair.

A: I do want to say that I'm not going to try and claim that this was a queer utopia and that there was no homophobia in this period. The story that directly follows the story of Hind and al-Zarqa' in one of the sources is the story of two women called Rughum and Najda, who are in a relationship. Rughum's brother is ridiculed because his sister is in a relationship with a woman, and so he murders his sister's partner.

H: Okay.

A: It does end, however, with Rughum inciting her partner's family to war to seek vengeance for her partner's death, and al-Yemeni, who's the author, writes

*This serves as an indication of the greatness of the pleasure they find in grinding, as well as an indication of their preference for grinding over the pleasure with men.*

H: Huh!

A: So even though he is telling us a story which is obviously demonstrating homophobia, he does bring it back to validating their relationship.

H: Because she went all thousand ships on him.

A: [laughs] I understand.

H: Launched a war to get justice for her beloved.

A: Yes, she did! I don't know how that war went, unfortunately. I don't have the end of that story here.

Yeah, so while people obviously are depicted as being uncomfortable with lesbianism, or outright violent towards lesbians, it doesn't seem overall to be seen as intrinsically or morally wrong, or as something which can't be talked about. So on that topic, I'd like to talk about what the religious attitudes were of the time, and some of the reasons why lesbianism might have been seen as more accepted.

So in medieval Islamic discourse, sexuality was much more celebrated than it was in Christian discourse of the time, and sex was not seen as being a sin, which – honestly when I read this I was like “Oh! Sex wasn't a sin!” and then I was like “That shouldn't be a pleasant surprise. I shouldn't be like ‘Wow, that's weird!’”

H and A: [laugh]

A: And yet.

E: It's not in Judaism either. This is such a Christian thing.

A: Yeah, that's eminently reasonable. [laughs]

E: Someone screwed up somewhere.

A: So yeah, it was a pleasant surprise that sex isn't seen as a sin, and not seen as something that harms your religious piety. You might remember that when we talked about Puritans a few episodes back, even having sex with your spouse was taking your eyes away from God for a while, and kind of like.... I guess you had to do it, but not great.

[laughter]

A: So, not that, which is fun. The Quran itself is quite vague on what the punishments for male-male homosexuality are, and also on whether it condemns female homosexuality at all—

H: Hm!

A: —or whether that's just fine. Various schools of legal thought at the time in various different locations have prescribed many different punishments for homosexuality, and that depends on the genders of the people involved, their marital status, whether they're the active or the passive partner – all those things. But overall the situation is that what's called *liwat* – which is male-male anal sex – was seen as a crime deserving of punishment, and kissing, intercrural sex between men and *sahq* – which is lesbianism – were maybe frowned upon but generally less serious.

H: So like, socks with sandals.

E and A: [laugh]



E: Should we just make a note that intercrural is sex where the penis is put between the thighs and... they enjoy friction.... I don't know, people tend to not know what this is.

A: Okay, yeah no, fair. Reasonable.

E: Yeah.

A: I've done too much Classics.

E: Yeah, me too. I've done too much Classics.

[laughter]

A: So lesbianism is often not mentioned in legal compendia at all, and sometimes when it is it's prescribed no punishment, or sometimes just a less severe punishment. I will note that when I say 'less severe', there is at least one source which prescribes up to 100 lashes for lesbian sex, so 'less severe' is not necessarily fine, but 100 lashes was the worst punishment that I came across and there were some that didn't offer anything. Comparing this to potentially being stoned to death for, say, adultery.

E: How's a human doing after 100 lashes?

A: I don't know.

E: 'Cause I know—

H: Quite poorly.

A: Not great.

E: 'Cause I know that in some places – I don't know what places I'm thinking of, not like, this context, just places where people have been whipped—

A: Yep, which is most places.

E: Yeah, which is most places. You know, people get prescribed, like, an amount of lashes and that's kind of just code for 'kill them' because they can't survive that amount of lashes. And like, it's not that. I'm just saying, how's a human doing after 100 lashes?

A: Not great. I don't know if that would kill a person or not. Maybe it would. Maybe I've underestimated how harsh this particular theologian was to lesbianism.

E: Yeah. I don't know. I mean I guess it depends on with what also.

H: Yeah.

A: Yeah. I don't know. Okay. The sex act that is Islam at the time did most strongly condemn is *zina* which is basically adultery - specifically penetrative sex between a man and a woman who is not his wife or his concubine.

E: You specified before male-male anal sex. Did they have feelings about anal sex between a man and a woman that you're aware that were like, different?

A: I don't know.

E: Okay, fair enough.

A: So *zina* - basically it's sex with the risk of pregnancy. So because of the cultural emphasis on female virginity and the scandal of unwanted pregnancy - both of which would affect not only a woman but of her entire family, all her male relatives - lesbianism was seen as being a very viable alternative to adultery; there's no risk of pregnancy, and so if it is found out that two women are in a lesbian relationship it's much much less of a scandal.

H: Hm.

E: Even if they're both married to men?

A: Even if they're both married to men, yeah.

E: Okay. Is that still seen as bad because they're married, and just like less or is that...?

A: It depends on where you are—

E: Okay, yeah. Cool.

A: —and a whole lot of things.

E: That's reasonable.

A: Yeah. So as well as religious attitudes I also want to talk about the medical or semi-scientific attitudes of the time where they tried to explain what caused lesbianism, whether it was innate or whether there was something that led to it, whether it's just an activity that people might enjoy, or an identity.

E: [laughs]

A: People might enjoy.

[laughter]

A: People hopefully will enjoy.

Al-Yemeni, who's one of the sources I mentioned for that story of Hind and al-Zarqa', in the 9<sup>th</sup> century outlines 'two kinds of grinders', as he says.

E: [laughs] Sorry.

A: You have to get used to that. I'm going to say this word a bunch. You can't laugh every time.

E: We haven't been!

H: But it's funny.

E: How did Grindr end up being called Grindr? You know, like, as in the gay sex app.

A: Yeah, yeah.

H: I mean I think they took as many letters as they could from Tinder?

E: Oh, right, yeah, Tinder.

A: No, no no no, Grindr came first.

E: Whaaat?

H: Huh. That's interesting.

E: Did Tinder steal from Grindr?

A: Yeah, Tinder stole from Grindr. Grindr came first.

E: Really?

H: Like, grinding on a dance floor maybe?

E: I guess that one.

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah. Grinding on someone.

A: Yeah, I just kind of assumed that was the origin of that.

E: I mean, my ultimate point is that lesbians deserve this app name more.

A: They do. Yes, so there are two kinds of grinders, according to the al-Yemeni. There are ones who, to quote, "love grinding, but do not hate the penis."

E and H: [laugh]

A: Sorry. These translations are weird.

E: The definitive article!

H: Yeah.

E: [laughs]

H: I'm strongly in support of naturalistic translations, but this is amazing.

[laughter]

E: Ahhh, wow. I need to get a like, bisexual slogan put up: *Loves grinding, but do not hate the penis.*

[laughter]

H: It's like the platonic ideal of the penis.

A and E: [laugh]

H: Like there's one that is kept in Baghdad under a glass case against which all others are measured.

A: This first type of lesbian that he talks about – he's basically saying they have found a woman that they're sexually compatible with and that's why they're sleeping with her but that doesn't mean they couldn't find a man. So in modern terms they're bisexual basically. Unfortunately, he does talk about – I'll just read you the quote actually, to illustrate this:

*This woman can be rescued from doubt as to what is just, and extracted from mood to truth by a skilled man who is rich in ways of intercourse, and can offer various forms of fucking until she finds one she prefers and which agrees with her appetite, and who then administers it to her.*

E: So that's.... not gone away.

A and E: [laugh]

A: No, it hasn't gone away. But yeah, no, that is one of the few examples of that that I did find though.

E: Okay.

A: That didn't seem to be a particularly prevalent attitude. But as now, it is an attitude that exists that a lesbian just needs a man to teach her how good sex works.

H: I suppose we don't really have a representative survey of the literature.

A: No, we don't.

H: So I suppose we can't really speak to the commonality of certain views.

A: Yeah no, that's very true. So this view existed; I don't know how common it was. It wasn't *the* view but it definitely existed.

The second kind of lesbian that al-Yemeni talks about is a lesbian from an early age. She described as being masculine and he says "She competes with men and resembles them and scorns submitting to them." So he's basically offered an example of bisexual women, and an example of women who are with women throughout their life and he sees them as taking on the role of men.

H: Who are butch lesbians. And as we know, the only type of lesbians.

A: Well, luckily al-Yemeni knows there's the second type of lesbian: the one who just needs a man.

Another source from around the same time draws comparisons between human sexuality and the sexualities of animals. He talks about chickens and pigeons.

E: Is there observed gay behaviour between pigeons?

A: According to Muthana bin Zuhair, yes!

E: I'm definitely googling 'gay pigeons' after this.

A: He says:

*I have never seen anything in man and woman that I haven't seen in the male and female pigeon.*

*I have seen a pigeon who did not want anyone besides her male mate in the same way that a woman wants no one besides her husband and master. I have seen a pigeon who does not forbid any male, as I have seen a woman who does not deter the touching hand. I have seen female pigeons who do not show their depravity until after much rejection and a great deal of insistence. I have seen it show depravity to the first male who chooses her and I have seen women of that sort too.*

*I have seen a pigeon who has a mate while she allows another male access—I have seen this in women too. I have seen one flirt with a male other than her mate, whilst her mate was watching, and I have seen one who won't do this unless her husband flies or flaps his wings.*

*I have seen a female pigeon who mounts male pigeons and one who mounts other female pigeons. I have seen pigeons who mount nothing besides other female pigeons and I have seen one who mounts female ones but does not allow them to mount her. I have seen a male who mounts one who then mounts him in return. I have seen a female*

*pigeon who feigns masculinity and who does not allow another to mount her. I have seen all of these kinds in grinders—feminine and masculine ones—and also among men who are sodomites.*

E: He—

H: That was—

A: There's more coming! I'm not done.

H and E: [laugh]

*Among men there are those who do not want women and amongst women those who do not want men... By God I have seen a male pigeon who would mount whatever he finds in his way without ever marrying.*

H: [laughs]

E: Does he imply that pigeon marriage exists, there are just some pigeons who don't, like, choose to do it?

A: I think so.

*I have seen a female pigeon who gave access to any one wanting her, male or female...*

Dot dot dot. So like, it's unclear whether it ends here.

H and E: [laugh]

E: So—

A: There may be more.

H and E: [laught]

E: He just—

H: So comprehensive!

A: [laughs] He was!

E: —has spent more time observing pigeons than anyone ever needed to do.

A: Yes.

[laughter]

E: What has happened?

[laughter]

E: Do you think that he is giving a hypothetical, or he truly has stalked pigeons?

A: [laughs]

H: I definitely would have believed that he owned a columbarium and like—

E: Oh! Yeah, true.

H: —had a crummy relationship with his brother and spent some time out there like, chilling with the pigeons.

E: It didn't occur to me that he might just own pigeons as opposed to just kind of going to the square every day and being like "Hm...."

A and H: [laugh]

E: "What pigeon depravity can I observe this day?"

A and H: [laugh]

A: But the moral of the story is that pigeons do all these things, and so do people, and it's portrayed as natural, like it happens in the world among many species.

Other medical texts talk about lesbianism as being very much based around, like, a specific physical and very clinical-sounding need. I don't know how to explain this so I'm just going to read you the quote. 9<sup>th</sup> century philosopher al-Kindi writes:

*Lesbianism is due to a vapour which condensed, generates in the labia heat, and an itch which only dissolve and become cold through friction and orgasm.*

H: Can you buy this vapour?

A: [laughs] Unclear, I'm going to finish the quote and then we can discuss.

H: Please do.

A: *When friction and orgasm take place, the heat turns into coldness because the liquid that a woman ejaculates in lesbian intercourse is cold, whereas the same liquid that results from union with men is hot.*

E: No.

H and A: [laugh]

H: From his extensive knowledge of lesbian sex...

A: Yeah. This is what he's discovered.

E: Can you imagine if that happened? Like, can you just imagine two women have an orgasm and being like "Oh God! Oh God! Freezing!"

H and A: [laugh]

E: Or some kind of like – sorry, I was about to make the worst comment - some kind of like, licking a pole in winter situation.

H and A: [laugh]

H: I can definitely see how this happened, where like, he's a man of science, and so he's like, sitting there in a chair in the corner of the room, and then once they're done he's like "No! Wait! Stop there! I have to get the thermometer!" Then he rushes out, and by the time he gets back they're both freezing.

A: [laughs]

E: Wow, okay.

A: Yep. I have no idea what the basis of this claim is, like, where he pulled this from, but—

E: I suppose you could probably find context for it in like, medical theories at the time of... I don't know, I'm thinking about it – sorry to continuously bring this back to a Western context – but I'm thinking about like, ancient Greek nonsense about the humours and things like that.

A: Yeah, no, I was thinking about that too. He is not the only person that has this explanation, for the record. That was just one example of that, but it comes up. It's a thing people thought at the time.

H: Okay.

A: Other texts talk about women being born as lesbians because of what their mother ate during breastfeeding.

H: Okay.

E: So not born as lesbians?

A: Being lesbians from a very young age.

E: Okay. Forged in infancy.

A: Yeah. Based on what their mother ate during breastfeeding, so—

E: Okay.

H: 'Cause their mother ate lesbians during breastfeeding?

A: No. For the record—

E: She accidentally ate the vapour.

[laughter]

H: That's definitely the sort of thing that you'd find in a questionable shop in Byron Bay.

E: [laughs]

A: Lesbian vapour?

H: Yes.

E: As opposed to the non-questionable shops in Byron Bay.

A and H: [laugh]

H: There are three. One of them sells apples.

A: [laughs] Just apples.

H: Yes.

E: No other fruit.

A: For the record, the foods which you do eat during breastfeeding to make your child a lesbian are celery, rocket—

H: Wait, do you mean celery celery or do you mean sex celery?

A: It just said celery and I don't speak Arabic so I can't tell you.

H: I suppose if it's the 9<sup>th</sup> century sex celery is already extinct.

E: Ohhh!

A: Yeah, sex celery's extinct from the time of like, Nero.

H: Yeah.

E: You have to explain sex celery now.

H: Okay.

E: That's not common knowledge.

H: Sex celery is my favourite vegetable ever because I think it's the only vegetable that humanity has sexed out of existence. It's related to celery, it's related fennel also.

A: Yes.

H: And it has these lovely heart-shaped seeds that you see on coins that people theorise is the origin of that love-heart shape, but it was a really really effective oral contraceptive that people would take and also buy in enormous numbers, but it was impossible to grow anywhere except this one spot in the north of Africa, and then we just harvested it to extinction so that we could have a bunch of sex, and then the last stalk sold for its weight in silver to Emperor Nero.

E: Also, as soon as you said 'celery' I was instantly like "That's why Sappho has that one fragment that literally just says 'celery'!"

H and A: [laugh]

A: Does she?

E: Yeah. Yeah.

A: Ohh, that's great. Well, maybe this is why. We know now.

H: So good.

E: I'm so desperate and sad in my thesis. Save me.

H and A: [laugh]

A: And the last two things are melilot leaves – I don't know what melilot is – and the flowers of the bitter orange tree.

E: I'd go with celery.

A: I'd take rocket I think.

E: Okay. What would you take?

H: I really like celery.

A: Okay.

E: Well it's taken, so—

A: You can't both eat celery while you're breastfeeding!



H and E: [laugh]

E: I'd eat celery right now.

A: So just before we move on from the explanations of lesbianism, other reasons are they just couldn't find a man with whom they had a compatible sexual appetite; a dislike of scratchy beards—

E and H: [laugh]

A: [laughs] —women not being suited to be the passive partner during sex, which they would be with a man, and who want to be in charge of what sex they have and when they have sex, which apparently they can't be in charge with the man.

So as you've definitely noticed, and we've mentioned, something that comes up often is that they're not afraid to explicitly talk about sex, and explicitly talk about lesbianism. So I want to talk a bit about the cultural context of that, and why we have all these sex manuals and books on how to have sex.

These sources that talk quite explicitly about sex are often from a literary genre called *kutub al-bah*, which are sex manuals.

H: Huh!

A: And this genre is part of the tradition of *zarf*, which translates as something like 'courtly sophistication'.

H: Okay.

A: So it includes, literature, poetry, art – all these kinds of things. It originated in Medina, in modern-day Saudi Arabia, and spread to Baghdad in about the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, so around the time these texts are being written. So part of the idea of being sophisticated as part of this tradition of *zarf* was of examining love and sex with this kind of semi-scientific view - trying to explain, for example, why people are lesbians; also explaining in detail how people have sex. It's sort of scientific but definitely also they're also erotic texts, and so this included circulating these erotic texts and treatises on sex, on how to have better sex, and *zarf* was also characterised by a prominent role played by women of many classes – so the upper-classes, the rising middle-class and also their slave women often themselves wrote poetry and—

H: That's interesting.

A: —were involved in this. I would have really liked to find more on this but like, the main source was in German. I was sad.

Yeah, so there are women who ran salons, who read and wrote literature. There are some poems we have from this era that were written by women – unfortunately no lesbian ones – and this is definitely associated with lesbianism, these female salons, to the point where the word *mutazarifat*, which means 'courtly lady' – so that's from the same root as *zarf*, it's got the *z-r-f* in it – also means 'lesbian'. So that's where these texts are coming from.

H: Interesting.

A: I do also want to note that in most of these erotic texts, although I've talked quite positively about how there's a lot of talk about lesbianism and women can play a prominent role, most of them do focus around men; lesbianism is usually – as we find in queer texts today – just one chapter where

they're like "Also woman do this" and I didn't – although there are a few poems written by women that I came across – I didn't find any of these long treatises on sex written by women. All these sources are written by men.

In spite of the fact they're all written by men, these texts do have chapters on lesbianism, lesbians are often associated with love and devotion, portrayed quite positively, and these texts also talk about them having their own communities, their own subculture—

E: Ah!

A: They have groups and meetings, and schools on how to have lesbian sex.

E: Oh my God! Just everything about that was excellent. Just quickly though, you saying they were associated with love and devotion—

A: Yes.

E: Is that like, more so than relationships between two men or between a man and a woman, or...?

A: I don't know about relationships between two men, to be honest, but I think to some extent, yes, compared to relations between a man and a woman. So when I talked before, the story of Hind and al-Zarqa' that we opened with - there are several poets who have written about them, and we get quotes like, we have an unattributed quote from the man who wrote the Encyclopedia of Pleasure - so it's in that source but he doesn't say who the poet is that he's quoting - which says

*O Hind, you are truer to your word than men*

*Oh, the difference between your loyalty and theirs.*

E: Okay.

A: So they are compared positively to opposite-sex relationships, at least in that instance.

E: Okay.

A: So yes, lesbian schools. So I want to read a quote from one of these texts that's an example of this kind of depiction of lesbianism. This quote comes from a book called, in translation – and the translations are always really awkwardly worded – something like The Delight of Hearts, or What One Cannot Find in Any Book.

H: That seems almost self-defeating as a title.

A: Yeah, it does. [laughs] That's what it's called. Anyway, it's written by a 13<sup>th</sup> century Tunisian physician, philosopher and poet called al-Tifashi. So this book is an anthology of erotic texts including sections on lesbianism, and he writes about a lesbian community headed by a teacher named Rose. I assume that's a translation of her name – this didn't occur to me until this moment that like, her name definitely wasn't just Rose. Anyway. And he provides examples of the teachings in these schools and communities. He includes one quote on the appropriate sounds to make during lesbian sex.

H and E: [laugh]

H: You know how you have to take ages to learn duck calls to be an effective duck hunter, and the whole—

A: I never knew this.

H: —like, getting one of those, like, swozzles, or like a Punch-and-Judy thing where you have to like, put the thing in like [makes kazoo-like sounds].

E: So there's some like, device you have to put in your mouth to make effective lesbian sex calls?

H: Yes.

E: Alright, yeah.

A: And it's basically a kazoo.

H: Yes!

[laughter]

A: What he does say is "You should snort heartily while wiggling lasciviously."

H: I see. I wonder if that is a change in norms of sex sounds or if that's a crummy translation for the word 'snort'.

A: Well, this is one of the texts that did exist in multiple translations—

H: Okay.

A: —and the other translation I saw was not markedly different. I haven't got it in front of me unfortunately.

H: Okay.

E: Okay.

H: But it's not like, a grunt, maybe?

A: Yeah, grunt is probably better than snort. [laughs]

E: But like, we assume, based on what we think is normal.

H: Yes, quite so.

A: Yeah, and it may not be that that is still normal.

H: Man, my desire to take a time-travel sex holiday just went *woop!* down.

A: [laughs] This is lesbian sex. I don't know what men were supposed to be doing during sex.

H: No, good point.

E: You can fill a hole in the literature. I'm sorry for that phrasing.

[laughter]

A: So following the instructions on what sounds you should make during sex, he gives very specific instructions on sex positions et cetera. I have a long quote. I'm just going to read it all to you. This is the quote I mentioned before which also talked about saffron. So these his instructions on how women should have sex with each other:

*The tradition between women in the game of love necessitates that the lover places herself above and the beloved underneath - unless the former is too light or the second too developed: and in this case, the lighter one places herself underneath, and the*

*heavier one on top, because her weight will facilitate the rubbing, and will allow the friction to be more effective.*

E: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, which wasn't what I expected.

E: Yeah. I thought it was going to be like "Do not squish!"

A: Yeah, I thought it would be that way round but—

E: No.

A: Better friction.

E: Squish!

A: [laughs] Yeah.

H: He definitely makes it sound super codified. Like I was expecting him to say "In the game of love, it is traditional for the white pieces to move first."

E and A: [laugh]

A: That is true, yeah. And I think that's probably part of this *zarf* tradition, is like, sophistication and codifying of things like sex.

H: I'm imagining someone like has the manual open next to their bed, and is like, "Hang on, wait. I don't know this rule."

A: "Wait, which of us is lighter? Okay, right. You go on top..."

H and E: [laugh]

A: Yep.

*This is how they act: the one that must stay underneath lies on her back, stretches out one leg and bends the other while leaning slightly to the side—*

E: [laughs]

A: [laughs] Sorry. I was doing fine until you laughed.

*—therefore offering her opening wide open: meanwhile, the other lodges her bent leg in her groin, puts the lips of her vagina between the lips that are offered for her, and begins to rub the vagina of her companion in an up and down, and down and up, movement—*

E and H: [laughter]

H: These two separate movements.

[laughter]

E: It's just so exact! Like, can you imagine someone being like "Well, your leg's not bent at a 90-degree angle, so I was looking forward to having sex with you but now I'm going to get my coat."

A and H: [laugh]

H: Or someone stripping off and being like "Goddammit! I forgot my protractor!"

A: *The operation is dubbed "the saffron massage" because this is precisely how one grinds saffron on the cloth when dyeing it.*

H: Precisely!

A: Precisely.

E: How.... What? With.... Okay.

A: I'm not sure how similar this is to when you grind saffron into cloth.

E: It has both up and down and down and up motions? Is that... like that's the only thing I can see that would be—

A: Yeah.

H: I mean or you literally grind it into the cloth with your vagina.

A: [laughs] Or maybe just your legs? Anyway, I really don't know.

E: I just imagine someone being like "Hey, what if instead of using our vaginas we used our hands?" and then saffron production just went way up.

H: [laughs] I feel like saffron cloth production would plummet.

A: That's what I thought was going to happen too.

E: Yeah, alright, true.

[laughter]

E: And then *something* happened to the rate of saffron production.

A: Yes.

H: [laughs]

A: Okay. It gets more specific.

*The operation must focus each time on one lip in particular, the right one for example, and then the other: the woman will then slightly change position in order to apply better friction to the left lip ... and she does not stop acting in this manner until her desires and those of her partner are fulfilled.*

E: So... Okay.

H: There's a lot of lip focus here.

E: Band name.

A: [laughs]

*I assure you that it is absolutely useless to try to press the two lips together at the same time, because the area from which pleasure comes would then not be exposed.*

H: Ah.

A: *Finally, let us note that in this game the two partners may be aided by a little willow oil, scented with musk.*

E: Huh!

H: That's the first sensible thing he's said.

A: Yeah, so—

E: So he doesn't really know about the clitoris, it seems.

A: No.

H: I mean—

A: Not explicitly.

H: Is he avoiding mentioning the clitoris, as 'the area from which pleasure comes' being exposed?

A: There was another text which I found which did mention the clitoris.

H: Okay.

E: But if you press the labia together... Oh, actually I guess he's thinking of the—

A: Yeah.

E: —like majora rather than—

A: I mean I assume so.

E: Alright yeah alright I'll allow it.

[laughter]

A: But yeah, there are other sources from this time talking about how women have sex that do talk explicitly about the clitoris, not in a very informed way, but they know that it exists.

H: For some reason I went to its projectile laser-beam powers.

E and A: [laugh]

E: Hamish.

H: I was—

E: Your sex ed class in high school was not good enough.

[laughter]

A: Yeah, so that gives us a good example of how explicit this gets.

H: You know the other thing that we should have in with the content warnings is "This podcast contains some questionable medieval sex advice which should be applied only at the viewer's discretion."

A: [laughs]

E: But you know, like let us know your findings.

[laughter]

A: Yes.

E: Someone just sends us a picture of like, a yellow gown.

A and H: [laugh]

A: Success! So I am going to end this podcast with another story of two lesbians.

E: Excellent.

A: Another fictional story, unfortunately. Once again an example of explicit descriptions of lesbian sex. And this one comes from 1001 Nights!

H: Oh!

E: Oh!

A: Which I was excited by.

H: Yes.

A: I had no idea there was explicit lesbian sex in 1001 Nights.

H: There is *everything* in 1001 Nights.

E: [laughs]

A: So, even though we've all obviously heard of 1001 Nights I do want to hear a little bit of background on what it actually is. It is a collection of folk stories – not 1001, 'cause some stories cover several nights; I always assumed there were 1001 stories.

E: Same.

A: There is no one definitive 1001 Nights; there's various permutations from various places and various times, which have some cross-over in stories and some stories that are unique to different versions. The earliest texts are from around the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the stories come from all around this region of the Middle East and North Africa and also parts of Europe.

H: And vary wildly in their levels of coherence.

A: Yes.

E: Is this where Aladdin comes from.

A: Yes.

E: Okay. 'Cause I definitely heard that like, in childhood editions of Aladdin stories but also that just could have been a lie.

A: Yeah. So this story begins on the 170<sup>th</sup> night, coming from the first critical edition of the work, which was published in 1994 and was based on a 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century Syrian manuscript.

H: Okay.

A: This is the story: Kamar al-Zaman, who is a prince - the son of King Shahrman - is incredibly handsome, but he's also unwilling to get married, and eventually he's locked up in prison by his father basically like "You're staying here till you get your act together and agree to get married."

H: Okay.

A: Princess Boudour, the daughter of King Ghayur, is in the same situation – she’s incredibly attractive, she won’t get married, and she’s locked up in prison.

H: Oh no! How will this be resolved?

A: They’re in two different prisons, for the record. But through the intervention of two djinn who have a bet on these two people falling in love, and which will fall in love more—

H: So as with about 60% of sex, with the intervention of some gin—

A: [laughs] With the intervention of some djinn, they eventually get together.

E: [laughs] I’ve got together with people because of the intervention of some gin.

[laughter]

E: Alcohol pun there for you.

A: And they get married. They’re later separated when Boudour is sleeping, Kamar finds a ring that’s tied to a string that’s on her clothing, on one of the fastenings on her clothing. He takes the ring outside to examine it; it gets stolen by a bird; he chases the bird; and he’s just gone.

E: Forever?

A: No, he’s coming back.

E: Okay.

A: But gone for like, quite a time, like this is a lot of the plot is that he’s gone.

E: Is it a pigeon?

A: No, it’s a kite.

E: Okay.

A: There is another story which I’m not talking about here because it’s French, from the same time period - and there was obviously interaction between the two, which is why I’m bring it up; it’s not totally off topic – which is also about lesbians and also includes a kite coming in and kind of facilitating the original lesbian relationship, so apparently it’s a thing.

H: Huh!

A: Anyway, so while they’re separated, Boudour has to go and find Kamar again, so for safety while she travels around trying to find him she dresses as a man, and the male name she uses is his name.

H: Okay.

A: Just to make this confusing she’s now called Kamar.

E: So she goes around being like “Have you heard of Kamar, who also is me?”

A: Yes. “Have you heard of me?” So she eventually arrives at a place called the Isle of Ebony. Unclear if that’s a real or fictional place. I’m assuming fictional. The king there is very old and when he meets this Kamar he recognises – I don’t know what pronoun to use—

H: Them.



A: Them. He recognises them as being of royal descent, so he marries them to his daughter, and abdicates so that Kamar or Boudour can become king.

H: Man, this was a sweet outcome!

A: Yeah, this worked out pretty well for them.

H: Yeah.

E: No longer really need Kamar back.

A: Yes. So the daughter's name is Hayyat al-Nefous. I have a quote here from the section of the text about Boudour and Hayyat's wedding night.

*The servants made Hayyat al-Nefous enter into the room where Boudour, daughter of King Ghayur was, and they closed the door on them. They lit the candles and lights for them, and spread the bed with silk. Boudour entered into Hayyat al-Nefous.*

So that's—

H: Yes.

A: —sex, yes.

E: Good job, Alice.

A: Yes, I understand how this works. And later on it describes a lot of hugging and caressing and kissing and talks about their relationship quite a lot and quite explicitly. On the third night of their marriage Boudour tells the truth to Hayyat.

H: Which was not previously apparent.

E: So she's entered this other woman...

A: Yes.

E: So what are we meant to be understanding about the anatomy present now?

A: Unclear.

E: Okay.

H: I mean I'm sure that the same person who successfully managed to convince a king that they should give over their kingdom to them can swindle an unmarried virgin into thinking that this is... this is just how you do it, guys! This is.... This is how you do the sex!

A: Yeah.

H: This is completely normal!

A: There's later on they decide they have to fake her losing her virginity and they use the blood of a—

E: Pigeon? [laughs] Sorry.

A: —chicken, I think—

E: Yes!

A: [laughs] —to stain the bedsheets.

So on the third night of their marriage Boudour tells Hayyat the truth, that she is in fact a woman and the whole story about how she's looking for her missing husband, and the quote reads:

*Boudour spoke to Hayyat in a soft, feminine voice, and this was her true, natural voice, and she unveiled the truth about her situation. She told her what had happened to her and her beloved husband Kamar al-Zaman, and she showed her vulva and said to her 'I am a woman who has vulva and breasts.'*

Hayyat is described as being 'pleased at the news'.

E: Cool.

H: That worked out.

A: Yeah.

E: This has all just worked out—

A: It does.

E: —extremely well.

A: Yeah, it does. It just kind of works out. So she's pleased and the descriptions of their interactions from here forward both their conversational and their sexual interactions begin to use reflexive verbs; so I don't speak Arabic, but from what I understand this difference comes across as rather than being 'Boudour kissed Hayyat' being 'They kissed'.

H: Okay.

A: So it's portrayed as being much more equal, not being an active and a passive partner, but being two equal partners.

H: Sweet!

A: So they continue to have sex, and they also have open conversations about this situation - the fact that there's a man involved who's not currently here. Eventually Kamar turns up. Boudour admits this whole story publicly; she abdicates; Kamar becomes king in her place; and he also marries Hayyat.

H: Kamar gets a sweet deal out of this.

A: Yes.

E: [laughs] "I've been chasing this bird.... Oh I'm a king!"

H and A: [laugh]

H: He definitely didn't put in any of the effort here.

A: [laughs] No he just ran off after some and then he came back and his wife was like "So I found this hot girl and this kingdom, and..."

H: [laughs]

A: I can't do a thumbs-up, we're on a podcast.

[laughter]

H: Yes, you couldn't see that incredibly amusing thumbs-up.

E: And this kind of like 'Not bad!' expression.

A and H: [laugh]

A: I don't know how to end that sentence without being able to do a thumbs-up.

E: I think we've ended it now.

A: I think it's clear. Yes, so he marries Hayyat, so he's now married to both Hayyat and Boudour, which is fine and normal at the time. Interestingly, when Hayyat's father asks Kamar to marry Hayyat, now that he knows that Kamar is in fact the man of royal descent that he wants to rule his kingdom—

E: I mean, sort of also the person she's already married, given—

A: [laughs]

H: Yes.

E: —someone showed up and was like "Yes, I am Kamar."

A: True, yes.

E: "Oh look just... Let's just put it back how it was" kind of.

H: "I'm too old for this nonsense."

A: Yep. So when Hayyat's father asks the true Kamar to marry Hayyat it's Boudour who answers, and the text says:

*So Boudour replied, "By God, for me like for her. A night for me, and a night for her."*

Which is the standard practice in this polygamous marriage at the time – a night with one wife and a night with the other wife. And then she says,

*"And I will live together with her in one house, because I have gotten used to her."*

which was not the common practice at the time. The two wives would live separately, but Boudour's like, "No, I want to live with her! We've had some good times together."

H: Nice.

A: So this comes out weirdly sounding like just a fine triad.

H: Yeah! 'Cause presumably the... oh no, I supposed Boudour didn't bring her kingdom with her.

A: No, I assume not.

H: 'Cause it would have been interesting to have like a kingdom-wide triad.

A: Yeah, three kingdoms just like in a solid alliance 'cause the three parties are married.

H: It's sweet.

A: That's a positive outcome. A very like, good portrayal of lesbian sex and how it leads to ruling kingdoms.

H: Well done, you three.

E: If only England historically had had a lesbian queen, and also France and Spain, instead of those three countries constantly—

A: Yes.

So yes, these two stories I've told you – so the one about Hind and al-Zarqa' and the one about Boudour and Hayyat – are just two of many examples of same-sex female relationships and crossdressing in Arab folktales. These I chose because they were the most explicitly lesbian ones. There are others which, you know, say things like "Oh, you know, she wasn't interested in men. She was interested in women," but we don't really see a big description of a lesbian relationships, it will just say "and this was her partner" or things like that. That's why I chose these ones. I really hoped when I was researching that I would find a historic queer woman that I could talk about, but I could only find these fictional women. I did find one woman called Walladah bint al-Mustakfi who has been described as the Muslim Sappho.

H: Ah. So she's poorly understood and frequently misquoted?

E: [laughs]

A: Yeah! That's why I didn't talk about her.

[laughter]

A: When I was talking about *zarf*, she's one of the most well-known poets of that tradition and she's sort of said to be the person who exemplifies that. The only poems of hers we have that survive are about men, but I kept finding references to the fact that she had written poems about women.

E: Okay.

H: Okay.

A: And they all led back to this one source in German, and the rest of the sources in Arabic, so I never worked out if these poems really existed. That was my closest to a real lesbian historic figure I could find and that's why I couldn't talk about her. So instead I had to talk about these fictional stories and these medical texts and religious attitudes and hopefully that can give us some insight into what the life of real lesbians might have been like in this period and into how people felt towards them, and what sort of attitudes there would have been towards their relationships. But the most interesting thing I thought when I was doing this research was basically just the fact that they didn't demonise lesbianism, and they didn't deny that it existed, and Western texts have for so long just been kind of pretending that lesbians don't exist.

E: Yeah, so you mentioned with the first story you told us, that one of the women was Christian—

A: Yes.

E: And I know at this time religion in this area is complicated, doing things... Are many of the people talked about possibly Christian? Is Christianity just functioning differently in this part of the world than in the West where it's not having a fun time for anyone at all?

A: I think so and I don't...

E: I realise that's probably something that someone needs to like, do a very difficult PhD on.

A: Yeah, I don't know.... I can't give a, you know, a comprehensive answer on that, but she was not the only Christian woman that came up. There were several stories where one partner was Muslim and the other was Christian.

E: Okay.

A: And there was a whole array of stories that I didn't go into because I didn't really have the time and I didn't understand the reasons behind them, but there is a whole array of stories where there's a Muslim woman and a Christian woman – or sometimes a man. Anyway, a Muslim and a Christian partnership where the Christian ends up fighting with Muslims in the Crusades against other Christians.

H: Huh.

E: Okay. That's an interesting trope.

A: Yeah. And several of those stories included same-sex attracted women—

E: Okay.

A: —which I didn't go into 'cause I just didn't understand why that was happening.

E: You know, if you happen to be the one person in the world who's done a thesis on this and you're listening to this podcast, let us know!

A: Yeah.

E: What's up with that?

A: I don't really know how Christianity in that area of the world was functioning in its attitudes to sexuality 'cause I focussed my research on Islam, although there were Christians involved, so I can't really answer that.

E: Yep. Fair enough. Cool.

A: So one final quote I wanted to read to end, just illustrating how positively lesbians were portrayed a lot of the time and how their relationships were seen as being very valid – it's a quote from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century poet al-Farzdak about Hind and al-Zarqa', and he writes in a love poem

*I was devoted to you, in a time that you bestowed kindly  
as Hind was devoted to Hussan Yamani's daughter.*

That brings us to the end of the episode. We're Queer as Fact. Once again, I'm Alice.

H: I'm Hamish.

E: I'm Eli.

A: If you enjoyed this podcast you can find more of our episodes on Podbean; we're also on Facebook as Queer as Fact, on Tumblr as Queer as Fact, on Twitter as Queer as Fact; we're also on iTunes now, so you can listen to us there. Please review and rate us 'cause it really helps us. Also you can email us directly at [queerasfact@gmail.com](mailto:queerasfact@gmail.com).

H: And we would love to hear from you.

A: We'll be back on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, when Eli will be talking to us about Michael Dillon, the first trans man to undergo a phalloplasty. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.