

Episode 18 – The Warren Cup

E: Hello and welcome to Queer as Fact. My name is Eli.

A: I'm Alice.

I: I'm Irene.

E: We are a history podcast coming out on the 1st and 15th of every month, talking about people, places and things from queer history. Today we're talking about the Warren Cup. It's a cup, and it's gay! [laughs]

I: [laughs]

E: It's a silver Roman cup that depicts male-male sex scenes.

[intro music plays]

E: So content warnings for this episode: the only big one is that we discuss Graeco-Roman sexual mores, which involves adults having sex with minors and also with slaves at times, so there's obvious serious consent issues there. We also generally discuss sex in explicit detail. Apart from that there's some period-typical homophobia and misogyny for way back when the Romans, and also for the last couple of hundred years. If that sounds like something you'd rather not listen to we've got plenty of other episodes that have different uncomfortable material.

[laughter]

E: So feel free to go and listen to a different one instead.

So the Warren Cup is literally just a silver cup from the 1st century CE, so from the early Roman Empire. We're going to talk about the original context of the cup; we're going to talk about what it depicts and when it was created and what it would have been used for and how it survived to us and a bunch of stuff like that, but we're also going to talk about its modern history, so we're going to talk about its first modern collector and how it ended up in museums and how museums have dealt with queer artefacts over the last couple of centuries.

So first things first, please if you are able to, look at a picture of this cup before you listen to this episode, because we're very much talking about an artistic depiction on an object and I'm going to describe the scenes briefly, but it'll just be easier for everyone if you have seen it. And while you're googling this cup, there's two images on it, so there's two sides, and each side has a picture. Both sides depict a sexual encounter between two men. On the first side there's an

older male figure who's bearded; he's reclining backwards and he's got his legs bent under him, and he has a younger man in his lap, and the younger man has no beard and he's lowering himself down into the lap of the older guy. He's holding himself up with a strap for support, which is something that you see quite commonly in Greek and Roman depictions of sexual acts.

I: Okay. Like a helpful sex strap.

E: Yeah, helpful sex strap.

So on the second side there's also two men having sex. The older figure this time is about the age of the younger figure in the first picture, so he is a youth; he's got no beard or anything like that, and his companion is a boy. So probably the older one's kind of like late teens, early twenties, and the boy is like early teens-ish.

So the younger partner this time is in a much more passive position. He's lying down on his side on the bed and his older partner is behind him, slightly more upright, lifting his leg up in order to have room to penetrate him.

I was just going to make a note here that obviously exactly what's circumstance is being depicted is very debatable and has been much debated, but having said that, a few scholars I read did go out of their way to note that they thought what was being depicted there was a quite tender, mutual act, and they pointed to little pieces of body language such as on the first side the older man grabbing onto the wrist and the hip of the younger man to sort of support him and things like that. One scholar described as a scene of "gentle restrained pleasure". Now you can decide for yourselves if you think that is evidenced by that body language.

I: I felt like it seems like a fairly gentle scene to me.

E: And then you've got the other one where he is... I think the understanding is that his arm would be here and he's kind of clutching it for support, and things like that.

A: Oh yeah, yeah. That's a reasonable interpretation.

E: Alright.

A: When they made the cup....

E: Mmhm.

A: And they would have poured the silver into a mould to make the cup, right?

E: So there were some that were made that way; this one wasn't.

A: Okay.

E: What actually happened is that there's two bowls there. So there's a heavy inner liner inside it and then there's the bit with the images outside, and that's all done in relief, so it's hammered—

A: Ohh, okay.

E: —in from the inside to make all of the fine details. And you can see how detailed these pictures are. An enormous amount of skill went into making these. If you look at how they've rendered things that have very different textures – so if you look at the drapery as compared with the muscles of the man's arm and things like that—

I: Mm.

E: —it's very very well done.

I: He has a vaguely plausible looking beard!

A: I also think the hair is very impressive.

I: Yeah.

E: Yeah. There's also – so people have said that the three types of male figures' bodies have like quite a different kind of hardness to softness ratio on them—

[laughter]

E: —if you get what I mean. So the adult man is very muscled, looks quite different to the youth, and then if we look at the other one, he again looks quite different to the boy.

A: That's true! Yeah!

E: And that's very impressive. You've got folds of fabric...

A: You can see like, his like, sternum and ribs here.

E: Mm. Mmhm.

A: That's very impressive, yeah.

E: Yeah, yeah. And the reason why it required them to have like an inner bowl is because it was just so thin that it couldn't have functioned as a functional cup that you just drank wine out of with you friends—

A: Mmhm.

E: —otherwise. So it's an amazing piece of artwork.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about the context that this would have been used in. So it's an artefact from the context of Roman *convivia* which is essentially the sort of Roman social banqueting sphere. So it's from dinner parties, basically, and this is a key social occasion of the Roman elite where they get together to talk and bond and drink. So *convivia* were, as I said, a very key social ritual to the Roman elite - they allowed them to socialise and everything – but they were also opportunities to show off how wealthy they were to each other. So a key literary Roman representation of this is in the *Satyricon* by Petronius, in a section called the *Cena Trimalchionis* or *The Dinner of Trimalchio*.

A: *Feast of Trimalchio* is the translation I'm used to hearing.

E: Yeah, where Trimalchio is this freedman and he's very stereotypical to what Romans thought freedmen were like, where they had this enormous amount of wealth but they didn't know what to do with it – you know, they're like the *nouveau riche*.

I: Oh yeah.

A: So he was a slave and he's like, trying to move up socially.

E: Yeah. So—

A: But he doesn't know the appropriate behaviour.

I: So basically what he's about to do is throw an incredibly tacky feast.

A and E: Yeah, yeah.

E: So he throws this incredibly tacky feast and it's just awful and they end up like, running out of there.

A and I: [laugh]

A: They set the house on fire—

E: Yeah.

A: —and then the fire-brigade comes and they have to escape out the roof or something.

E: Yeah.

I: What... what happens at this feast?

A: Everything.

E: So much.

[laughter]

E: There's all of these entertainers and he loudly talks about how knowledgeable he is about myth, but he gets all the details wrong and things like that. Yeah.

I: So it's an awkward classist story.

A: Yeah.

E: It's a terrible classist story, yeah.

I: Alright.

E: It's also like, the least terrible part of the *Satyricon*.

A: He has all these really silly foods like a chicken served in an egg, but when you cut open it's still alive and then it flies away and like... it's just so over-the-top.

E: He has a dish that is divided into kind of twelve sections.

A: Ohh, the zodiac dish!

E: Yeah, and he has a food there going with the stereotype of each of the zodiac people.

A: Yeah.

I: I am weirdly invested in knowing what my zodiac food is now.

E: I'll look it up for you. We'll put one of those like, horoscope...

[laughter]

A: The signs according to Trimalchio.

E: Yeah. So most of the people having these parties aren't tacky freedmen who are being discussed in classist ways – they are just like the general kind of upper-elite. And you would have had to be quite wealthy to buy this kind of silver. So the cup, as it is today, weighs – do you want to guess how many grams it weighs? 359 grams. And it used to have handles, but it doesn't anymore, so it's estimated based off of other similar cups to have originally been about 485 grams.

I: I have to ask, do you think there was a set? Were there like Roman gay cups and gay plates and like....

E: Well! That is an astute observation.

[laughter]

E: Because cups like this – cups that we find from this setting – quite often come in pairs, and occasionally in—

A: Trios?

E: —trios? I was going to say triplets, and I'm like "...no."

I: At least you didn't say threesomes.

E: [laughs] Yeah. That might be more fitting. So quite often they'll have similar motifs – so some of them will just have quite similar flower decorations and things like that; you might have different aspects of myths on a cup...

I: Yep.

E: And people would drink out of these cups and they provided this like, talking point. So we could reasonably assume that there was at one point another Warren Cup.

I: Okay.

E: Yep.

I: Okay, with—

E: A second one. And as for what that would have depicted, if we assume that it would have thematically gone along with it, it might have also depicted two sets of male couples having sex,

or it might have depicted two sets of a man and a woman having sex. We have other examples of... so for example we have a glass flask where there's on one side a man who's having sex with a woman and on the other side there's man having sex with a boy – we have a few things like that.

I: I'm a tiny bit sad that they didn't go quite as far as like, Warren Casserole Dish.

E: [laughs]

A: Like the Victorian era, like the Warren Lobster Fork and...

I: [laughs] Yeah.

[laughter]

A: I think we can... this has potential.

I: [laughing] Warren Moustache Sippy-Cup.

E: There would have been two of them presumably, so that's nearly like, a kilo of silver. And so—

A: I hadn't fully thought about just how much that was.

E: Mm.

A: It's just like "Oh yeah, a silver cup."

E: Mmhm.

A: But not like, a kilo. That much silver, that's...

E: Yeah, yeah. Probably what happened was the person who commissioned the cup would have given that to the person who was making the cup and they would have just melted down that silver and made the cup out of it.

I: Yep.

E: And possibly also a gold coin because it used to be chased with gold on the details, but that's—

A: Ohh!

E: —left. I think it looks quite nice, and then you add gold and it's like, little bit too much.

A: Yeah, like when you say that, I'm like "That would've been super tacky!"

E: Mm.

I: I think often how we feel about ancient artworks to be honest.

A: Well it's like all those marble that were like, "Oh, this really nice white marble statue!" and it's like "Here it is painted as it would have been!" It's...

E: Well they're not ever painted as they would have been though. They're painted badly.

I: Yeah.

A: That's true, that's...

E: This is a thing that really annoys me, because you definitely see people being like, "Wow, imagine if they'd known how to shade in the ancient world" and we have such amazing artwork from the ancient world—

A: Yeah.

E: We just painted it badly. Like it is quite shocking to see them with paint I think, no matter how well it's done, because we have that very...

I: Like, minimalist, white idea of them.

A: Yeah.

E: Is very iconic, like we all see those fairly frequently.

I: Mm.

E: And because we're so into the ancient world we've got really into those statues looking like that. So I get that it's kind of confronting—

I: Mm.

A: Nonetheless I think that a silver cup with gold detailing would have been tacky.

E: But how will you know how rich Marcus was otherwise?

[laughter]

A: That's a good question.

E: [laughs] So yeah, this guy would have paid like, 250 denarii to buy these two cups. For some context, it could buy a *iugerum*, which is a standard unit of land, so it's about two thirds of an acre; it could buy an unskilled slave; or it could buy 25 amphorae of very good wine.

A: Oh wow.

I: For that same amount of money?

E: Mmhm.

I: Okay.

E: Yeah.

A: Okay.

E: So these are some ostentatious cups.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

I: Could buy a whole human or a cup.

E: Mm.

A: So do you think when they had like, several friends over to a dinner party, and they had like, the two super expensive gay cups, do you think like, Publius and Marius were like "No! I wanna drink out of the fancy gay cup!"

E: [laughs]

I: "You had the gay cup last time, Marius!"

A: "God!"

E: So also with these pairs – or sometimes trios – when you were at a dinner party you reclined, and you reclined on like a big couch with your friends, and there'd be like, two or three to a couch, and so it's suggested that maybe what happened is the people sharing a couch shared like, cup sets, which is just so cute!

A: I'm just kind of snickering, 'cause like "Here! You two on the couch! Have these cups of gay men having sex!"

[laughter]

A: "Have a nice evening!"

[laughter]

I: I hope he had awkward shipping cups for all his friends.

A: Yeah, exactly. Like, how do you set your friends up? Like this.

E: That Roman attitude towards sex in general and homosexuality in particular is obviously something that needs its own episode, so I'm going to give you a little bit of a run-down but like, we'll return to it. So that basic overall structure of the Roman attitude to sexuality was based on this binary between the active partner and the passive partner. So this was about reinforcing the place of the like, Roman upper-class male in the hierarchy of the world around him.

I: So is the deal that the active partner's doing the penetrating, and the passive partner's just chillin' there?

E: Yeah, it is.

A: Yeah.

E: Okay. So basically an elite Roman male was free to have sex with either men or women, and that wasn't a reflection on his sexuality or his masculinity or anything like that as long as he was the penetrative partner, within certain restrictions. So he wasn't able really to have sex with other men who were on the same social level as him.

I: Well this makes sense, because they can't both be the penetrative partner.

A: Exactly.

E: Yeah, yeah. So he's free to penetrate a woman, to penetrate any of his slaves, regardless of their gender or age, but he can't have sex with free Roman boys and he can't have sex with adult men who are on the same social level as him because then that starts to impinge upon his masculinity. And he can't ever be penetrated because then the world will end.

I: Alright.

E: Yep.

I: Seems only as stupid as every other set of sexual restrictions I've encountered.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah.

E: Yep.

A: Like, it has an internal consistency.

E: It does. Um...

[laughter]

I: It's not a great idea, but there you go, Rome.

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

A: It has an internal logic.

E: It extended to, for example, Roman men not being able to go down on women because that was basically as close as a woman could get to being dominant over them, so going down—

I: Her clitoris penetrated his mouth?

E: Yeah, I guess.

A: Yeah?

E: Yeah.

A: I think that was the thinking, yeah.

I: Okay.

E: Sure.

[laughter]

E: And so going down on your wife made you less of a man. Like.... ugh....

[laughter]

I: Alright.

E: Yeah.

I: Alright Rome.

E: Yeah. So mostly this was just a social stigma sort of thing; it was kept in place by social rules, kind of deal.

I: Yep.

E: But it was also sometimes literally the law. So if an adult Roman male had sex with a married Roman woman or with a freeborn boy he could at certain points in Rome's history go to court. This was generally not all that common a thing for people to go to court over but like, it technically existed at some points.

A: I was going to say, unless it was part of a wider campaign against them—

E: Mm, yeah.

A: —that they might bring it up.

E: But you have for example, Catullus, who was a Roman poet has some of his poems directed towards a woman, Lesbia, who is a freeborn woman of his general status and also to a boy Luventius, who is a Roman young man, and he didn't go to court over that or anything, he just wrote his dirty sex poems and it was fine.

I: Okay. So even so, the cup depicts an older man having sex with a younger man?

E: Yeah! So there's several questions that the cup raises within that context, even before we get on to what they're doing – the older figure on the first side has a beard, right? That's not a thing that Romans did at this time. It was very un-Roman for the 1st century, and so it's likely meant to be that he's intended to be read as a Greek man.

I: So is what's just happening here that this is just their sexy exotic Greek fantasy?

E: Yes.

I: Yeah, alright, cool.

[laughter]

E: That is exactly what I'm leading to. I don't need to do this section now.

[laughter]

E: Some other Greek things: so the garment that's draped over the youth's arm in the first side as well isn't a Roman toga, it's a Greek garment; both scenes as well have an instrument in the background – so one has a lyre and the other has a set of pipes, and these were Greek instruments specifically. They were associated with the performance of Greek poetry.

I: Is that a thing that happened? Like, Greek poetry got performed in Rome with a lyre or whatever?

E: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

I: Okay, cool.

[laughter]

E: Like, there are still Greeks around, and they're still carrying on their cultural traditions, they're just not the super-power anymore.

I: Okay, yep.

A: They were quite into importing Greek slaves for education.

E: Mm.

I: Oh yeah yeah yeah.

A: So they thought of Greeks as being very educated but at the same time they wanted to subdue them and thought that they the Romans were superior. So they might have a Greek slave get in to teach poetry and teach music.

E: So if what is being depicted are Greek figures, how does this line up with Greek sexual traditions? Now, we've already inferred that this is the Romans having their own exoticised sex idea of Greece, so not super well, is the answer. They had some similarities – they were also focussed on like, what the adult male citizen was able to do without shaming himself, but you were able to have sex with freeborn male citizens in Greece, and you were encouraged to, in fact, to some degree.

I: So, pederasty is not a thing in Rome.

E: No.

A: No.

E: No.

I: Okay, not at all a thing.

E: It was relatively common when you're talking about sexuality to debate the relative merits of having sex with women as opposed to having sex with men, with the subject figure being a Roman man saying what he prefers.

A: So this would make sense – you had like, the Warren Cup and matching man-sleeping-with-woman cup, and then you'd be like, "Well, I think *this* cup is better," "But I think *this* cup is better."

E: Yeah, and they get into talking about like, "Oh! The nature of love!" and "Oh! I'm a misogynist!" and all this stuff.

A: Yeah.

[laughter]

I: Okay, yeah. Yep.

E: Yes.

A: Good times, Rome.

E: Or else to spark a conversation about famous pederastic couples—

I: Yeah.

E: —in myth. Pederasty being institutionalised relationships between an adult man and a youth in ancient Greece, which we'll talk more about it a moment.

E: Or else to spark a conversation about famous pederastic couples in myth... Pederasty being institutionalised relationships between an adult man and a youth in ancient Greece which we'll talk more about in a moment. Pederasty to the Romans is very much a hallmark of the Greeks and it's something that they might've kind of idealised and, y'know, had as a bit of a fantasy, but it wasn't something that was a reality in their everyday lives in any way.

I: Okay.

E: The closest they could get was having boys who were not free Romans who they had sex with.

A: So often like young slaves and stuff like that.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah.

E: So a Greek adult male was able to have sex with women and slaves and so forth like a Roman...

A: Mhm.

E: But the chief difference for the purposes of this discussion is the fact that they had pederasty institutionalised where an adult Greek male was able to court a boy - it's debated, the ages, everything about this is debated - generally at some point in his teens until he reached adulthood and he took on this kind of educative role. We need to be careful about saying "the Greeks" because Greece was a collection of like, many, many, many city-states and they all to some extent had their own norms and we don't have really good evidence for any of them except for Athens, so a lot of the time people will say "the ancient Greeks had this custom" and they really just mean Athens. So there's some amount of crossover but how much, what kind? Welcome to classics!

I: Okay.

E: Yeah. And there was a lot of concern within the city-state over these boys being treated well. So if you're a Roman man and you have a slave, for example, who's a young boy who's your lover you can kind of treat him however you want.

I: Ah alright, yep.

E: If you're a Greek man, you have to court this boy and his father needs to approve of it and you can go to court if you're...

I: Mistreating him.

E: Not... yeah.

I: Okay.

E: And again, like, the realities of how often that happened and things like that are up for debate but, like, the state was concerned with these young men being treated well because they were

going to grow up and in a few years be adult Greek males themselves. And so they're not only concerned with the adult Greek man maintaining his honour, they're concerned with the Greek boy as well.

I: Yeah.

E: And so technically what was meant to happen was that they were never meant to have anal sex. Insofar as there was sex, there was meant to be intercrural sex, which is where the not quite penetrative partner, but the active partner puts his penis between the other one's thighs and through friction...

I: Has sex.

E: Does the sex, yeah.

I: Yeah.

E: Now, again, whether or not that's what happened is up for debate. Some scholars think that really anal sex is mostly what was going on but we're concerned with what's like meant to be occurring here.

I: Okay.

E: So the fact that this cup...

I: Why was anal sex not meant to be occurring?

E: They very much viewed penetration as being... It's just that association that your masculinity is being tarnished in some way if you're penetrated.

I: Okay.

E: Because of...

A: Misogyny.

E: So it's interesting that this cup depicts what is meant to be two couples who are probably Greek...

I: Yep.

E: ...men or boys but both of them are depicted having anal sex. And so essentially what's happening there is probably, y'know, that this comes from a thoroughly Roman context. A Greek

would never have depicted this on a vase. On the Greek vases we have, we occasionally see anal sex between men, but mostly not, by far not, when we have sex between men, by far it's intercrural sex. So as you said, our best understanding of what's happening here is that the person who made this is evoking a Greek fantasy for a Roman client.

I: So when he went in and like, commissioned this cup...

E: Yeah.

I: He would have gone in with his kilo of silver and been like, so I want like an exotic sexy Greek cup.

E: Yes. It's interesting as well because the silversmiths were quite often Greeks, so he's going into a...

A and I: [laughter]

A: That's so awkward.

I: That is.

E: It's a little bit awkward. I don't really know if we have looked into like changing attitudes of Greeks to sex as they stopped being the dominant power...

A: Mm.

E: ...and the Romans...

A: I mean, I feel like...

E: ...colonised them.

A: ...in this circumstance, it might well have been Greeks whose families had been...

E: Yeah, yeah.

A: ...living in Roman society for some time and may no longer have those Greek values.

I: Regardless, that's still kind of...

E: I mean, he would have constantly been depicting Greeks...

I: Yeah.

E: ...in weird, uncomfortable ways, yeah. It's probably worth noting that the time when we know a lot about pederasty happening in Athens is like the 4th, 5th century BCE and now we're in like the 1st century CE so like, considerable gap by now, I'm pretty sure pederasty kind of dies out over the Hellenistic period in general, but that's still very much the image Romans have of it.

I: Okay.

E: So some Romans were explicitly attracted to the idea of pederasty because it was this, like, hypothetical Greek-tinged fantasy, and then others who were more conservative were appalled and this is part of why legislation about young men becomes harsher in these times.

I: Oh yeah.

E: Because of perceived sexual loose morals that was linked with the influence of other cultures, such as the Greeks.

A: So I'm just noticing here.

E: Mhm.

A: Looking at this picture. There's a figure in the corner here on the right hand side.

E: Yep.

A: Who looks like they're just peering around the door.

E: Yes, that is occurring, we will talk a bit more about him, but basically that is also a trope of Roman sex scenes where there'll be someone kind of voyeuristically poking their head in. In this case, because of his haircut and his very loose garment, you can tell that he's meant to be a slave, so he's either there as a voyeur, or he's being called to...

I: Bring them wine.

E: Serve them, yeah, bring them wine or whatever. And one scholar made a point I liked where he's a very Roman figure, he's a Roman trope, he's dressed like a Roman slave, which probably means that he's not Roman, but y'know...

I: Yeah.

E: He's within the Roman context and he's poking his head in on this pseudo-Greek scene, so just as the Romans who used this cup in their banquets were Romans looking in on this pseudo-Greek scene, so is this figure within the scene.

I: Yeah, he's there being the sort of Roman perspective, like that's the point-of-view of the Roman.

E: Yep. And that's the general understanding of what this figure is looking in on sex scenes, he's meant to be a stand-in for the viewer who is also a voyeur on these sex scenes.

I: Okay.

A: So, I think it's interesting that this figure is meant to be the, like, Roman perspective but also he's a slave?

E: Yep.

A: What's up with that, Rome? You're not usually into that.

E: Well, Romans have a lot of weird dialogue about love and sex and slavery.

A: Mm.

E: So you have, to go back to Catullus again, for example, and a lot of other Roman love elegists, do quite often write about how they're metaphorically slaves to love and things like that, and I don't know if that has anything to do with this, but they do have an established dialogue of linking love and sex and slavery.

A and I: Oh yeah.

E: Sometimes explicitly involving them. So Catullus will write about himself being crucified, which is not only having love be this horrible torment to you, but is explicitly a form of execution that is used for slaves and people that have greatly shamed themselves and so forth. So it doesn't seem that weird for me as a connection for Romans to make.

A: Okay, yeah.

I: I mean, there's possibly something in there just about the slave being a kind of invisible figure.

A: Yeah.

E: It's someone who can poke their head in but is still a neutral presence.

I: Yeah.

E: Because slaves would quite often just be present whilst, for example, a married couple had sex. They're furniture essentially, to the Romans. So one scholar I read had an analysis of the cup

that I'm just going to run by you and we can talk about a bit. So he thought that essentially what was happening was that two different types of pederasty were being compared and contrasted on the opposite sides on the basis of age preference and general manner of sex. So on the first side, you've got a boy who is at the upper age limit of what would have been possible in a pederastic relationship, he's almost at adulthood, he's almost past the phase in his life where he's an available sex object for an adult man and on the other side you have someone who's at the youngest age limit, so he looks like he's not that far into adolescence and they're also... the penetrated partners are playing quite different roles. So on the first side, he's on top, he's the one who's lowering himself down for penetration, and on the other side, he's lying down and he's beneath his partner, who is raising his leg in order to facilitate the sexual act. So this scholar suggested that it's possibly contrasting the opposite ends of the spectrum of pederastic sex, contrasting experience and inexperience.

A: I really want to know what was on the matching cup now, but we never will.

E: There may not be one.

A: Yeah, that's true.

E: But probably there was, yeah.

A: Yeah. I mean, I think that like stands up as an analysis, it may not be, like, the correct analysis that they were thinking when they made the cup but I think that holds up.

I: I... When you showed me the pictures, kind of imagined it as a timeline, like, I imagined that they were the same people depicted, like, ten years apart.

A: So kind of the Greek thing of, ah yes, I, a Greek man, sleep with you, a young Greek man, then you yourself, when you're a bit older, will go on to sleep with...

I: Yeah.

A: ...another young Greek man. I mean yeah, that's also true, it could just be kinda the timeline of how the cycle of pederasty forms Greek society. Yeah.

E: I think viewing it as kind of either a timeline or a spectrum or whatever of pederastic experience is...

A: Mm.

E: ...like a fairly natural reading.

A and I: Yeah.

A: Do you think the young man, the youth, on both sides is the same person?

E: I hold with the understanding that they're just kind of stock figures, to be honest?

A: Oh yeah.

E: So I think that they're men at about the same time of life, but I don't think that they have enough identity to be...

I: The same or not the same.

A: Yeah, okay, I think it's just meant to be a general youth.

E: Yes, general youth.

A: Okay.

E: So, I also wanted to briefly talk about some discussion one of the articles had about terminology. So obviously when we use terminology, any terminology to talk about sexuality even today, it's often quite fraught, but when we're talking historically, and like, thousands of years ago historically, it just gets more and more complicated. So a common line in texts about the ancient world that talk about sexuality is that using terms like homosexuality and things like that is anachronistic because they wouldn't have had concepts for being gay or anything like that in the way we do. That's a fairly accepted line at this point.

I: I feel like it's fair to say something is a homosexual act.

A: Yeah.

I: But not that they're a homosexual person.

A: I, I think you're right, like that is a homosexual act. It is an act between two people of the same sex.

I: Yeah.

A: But you would not then say this man is homosexual.

I: Yeah, it would be weird to say that the youth is gay.

E: Quite often what people will do instead of saying something like "homosexual sex" is to say "male-male sex".

A: Mhm.

E: This scholar disapproved of that, he thought it was faddish. I think he was writing in the '90s so...

A: [laughter]

E: That didn't pan out, but... And he would agree with you, that we can speak of homosexual acts without implying that they were homosexual people in the modern sense so, cool. But the real thing I wanted was to talk about is he makes this comparison between the words 'bisexual' and 'ambisexual'. So he refers to another text that isn't actually all that relevant in which the scholar who wrote it said that we can't use bisexual to refer to ancient people.

I: Mm.

E: Just in the way that you can't use 'gay' for example. And he argued with that, essentially saying that people misuse the word bisexual when they really mean ambisexual.

I: And what does he mean when he says ambisexual?

E: So he says ambisexual encompasses the full spectrum of sexuality between exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality. He says it's the lesser known but preferable term for attraction to both sexes, deriving from Latin ambo meaning both. Bi means twice, and thus it means twice the normal number of sexual organs and thus it should be reserved for lifeforms-

A: Bi just fundamentally doesn't mean twice!

E: -that possess the sexual organs of both sexes, be they human hermaphrodites or worms.

[laughter]

E: So I mostly just...

I: Worms. I'm sorry, if you said bisexual -

A and I: You're a worm!

[laughter]

A: It's just, there's just nothing in that argument.

E: Just a quick note as well though, as I like to do every time the word hermaphrodite comes up, we don't use that anymore for people. That's outdated. Historians generally haven't gotten this message, but we don't refer to intersex people as being hermaphrodites anymore.

I: Historians are slow.

A: Historians -

E: Historians are slow.

A: Yeah.

E: Especially classicists.

I: Yeah.

E: Before any classicists email me angrily, [stage whispers] I'm one of you.

[laughter]

E: But I think the point I really wanted to make was less let's mock this seemingly silly thing, but more to say that his argument is that we should be going very much on the nitty gritty of the etymology of the words - which I think has more legitimacy here when we are talking about the Romans, aka the people who spoke Latin, when we're talking about Latin roots than normal, but still - and not by how the words are currently used and I think there's especially an ignorance that they're not just words that are generally around in society, they're words that specific communities have to describe themselves and they have opinions on them and that probably the last word we should take on what they mean is from those communities. I think that you can't argue that, y'know, you're using it in a sense away from, like, modern sexual communities or something like that and therefore you don't have to pay attention to how modern bisexual people define bisexuality. I think that this term exists and it's fine...

A: And it has a meaning.

E: And it has a meaning, and bisexual people are allowed to define that meaning and they're not worms.

[laughter]

I: That's true.

A: Key point here.

E: Yes. Although, if we wanted to start using a worm as our pride animal that would be, like, solidly fine to medicore.

[laughter]

I: [laughter] Look, if you really into the worm as a pride animal, I'm not going to hold that against you, go ahead.

E: They're cute but kind of gross.

A: Yeah.

E: Like me.

[laughter]

I: There you go. Very relatable pride animal.

A: But I think, in conclusion, we shouldn't call these men gay but we can call what they're doing homosexual.

E: Well, more to the point, if you want to use ambisexual today, that's great, but I don't think we need to rewrite all of our text to put in ambisexual, because we have a word that works fine, you should listen to modern communities, historians. And like obviously there's the thing where someone's experience of being same-sex attracted or gender diverse today isn't going to be the same as it was two thousand years ago.

I: Mm.

A: Yeah.

E: But it's still like... women are quite often recognised to have very, very important voices in talking about researching ancient Roman women and we'd never dispute that...

A and I: Yeah.

E: ...even though obviously your experience of being a woman today...

I: ...is not the same as an ancient Roman one's, yeah.

E: Mm.

A: How common are like sex images on Roman dinnerware?

E: Quite.

I: I understood they were quite common.

A: Yeah, that's what I thought too, I was just like, wait, I should check this.

I: But this is the only gay one?

E: So this is our only example of gay sex depicted on a silver cup in particular. We have plenty of gay sex art from Rome, and we have it on things like terracotta and glass, which would have been used as substitutes...

A: I love Roman glass.

E: Mm. ...by people who were less wealthy. So we have fairly small corpuses, especially of more valuable things like silver. But sexual acts in general are very well depicted in Roman art. They weren't very squeamish about it like we are.

A: I remember the story about... is it Pompeii?

E: Probably.

A: It must be Pompeii, where they went into the first house and they were like, oh, there's all this sex pictures on the wall, must be a brothel.

E: [laughter] Yeah.

A: And they went into the second building and they were like, oh more sex pictures, must be another brothel, and they went into the third building and they were like, I guess we're in the red light district! And then they went across to the other side of Pompeii and they were like, the whole town can't be brothels...

I: [laughter]

A: So like I guess it makes sense if that extended to...

E: Mm.

A and I: Dinnerware.

E: And it was quite common for just ordinary houses to have sexual mosaics in the kind of more inner, intimate areas. Sex art everywhere, naked people, etc. So we don't actually have a lot of silver vessels surviving from the ancient world, most of them were either melted down or

otherwise lost somehow. Those that we do have have survived to us from hoards. So either from tombs or in times of political unrest, people would hide all their valuables somewhere and then sometimes they never came back for them.

A: I'm picturing a medieval man being like, yeah let's melt down all this silver to make like something new, yeah melt this one, melt - wait, no, don't melt this one, I like this one.

[laughter]

E: Many of the ones we have come from Pompeii.

A: Oh, yeah.

E: Yes. Pompeii has been a gift in terms of the artefacts it has given us.

A: So where does the Warren Cup come from?

E: Its provenance is quite dubious. We have papers about it from the modern day that say it was found at Batir, six miles from Jerusalem, twenty feet underground, and a report on it also says that it was found with coins that were from the time of the emperor Claudius.

A: Twenty feet is a long way down.

E: Mhm. So that's 49-54 CE. So that fits in with the idea that it was from a hoard, uh, one scholar suggested that it was from a hoard hidden during the Jewish Revolt of 66-74 CE. Judaea, as it was called, was a Roman province at the time and the Jewish people were like, I don't like this, and the Romans were like, well we're gonna kill a bunch of you, and then they destroyed the temple. So probably what happened was a wealthy Roman who was in that area at the time fled as the conflict escalated and hid a bunch of their possessions and never came back for it for whatever reason. Alternatively, it could have ended up as plunder for one of the gangs of cutthroats, that's a good word.

E: The time and the Jewish people were like, I don't like this. And the Romans were like well are going to kill a bunch of you. And then they destroyed the temple. So probably what happened was a wealthy roman who was in that area at the time fled as the conflict escalated and hid a bunch of their possessions and never came back for whatever reason. Alternatively it could have ended up as plunder from one of the gangs of... cutthroats. That's a good word for that

A: Brigands

I: Hoodlums

E: Hoodlums who were ambushing and travelers on the road quite often at that time.

A: Oh yes they could have ambushed someone, stolen the cup and then buried it for later.

E: Yes, so there was no medieval king who was like I'll just keep this one for later. It was just buried.

A: Damnit. So when you said the provenance was dubious and, like, modern papers say this, is that still pretty certain that like that's where it was found. Or is that.

E: Well I found a lot of people saying on secondary sources that papers found concerning the cup stated this but I don't know exactly who wrote those or where they got it from. And also the whole thing at the start of the 20th century with provenance is just dodgy.

A: I mean having

E: It's just dodgy

A: worked in a museum I believe someone just went down in the storeroom and went and found this copy in the papers and was like oh hey here's a cup it's from Israel it's got gay sex, chool and nobody knows how it got there.

E: So like we'll talk a little bit later about exactly like whose hands it passed through in the modern day. But generally what's happening is this time there's like a black market and people are smuggling stuff out of countries and things like that. And so I am not terribly inclined to like automatically trust any provenance of any thing.

I: Yeah yeah. But it's definitely a Roman Cup. We know it's not fake.

E: No it's not fake. People have said that it might be fake. Literally just because it depicts gay sex because we don't have other ones that depict gay sex but like the science says that it's that old and it is stylistically similar to other Roman cups of roughly the same period like we can't date it very precisely like first century is several decades.

I: Yes

E: ten of them in fact. And that I think shows in the fact that like we have coins from the reign of the Emperor Claudius and then someone guesses that it was buried 20 years after that.

A: I mean that would make sense to like you still have coins in circulation from 20 years ago.

E: Yeah it just makes sense but that's guesswork. We can't prove it. So as we said the Warren cup was somehow eventually put into a hold and it stayed there for a very very long time like about 1300 years and then someone found it and sold it and the man they sold it to was named Edward Perry Warren and he is...

A: Aha

E: Aha. Of course, how it gets its modern name. Before I tell you about how he came across the cup. I'm going to tell you a bit of history about him in general.

I: Is he queer

E: Yes, he's very queer. Don't worry, gay stuff will happen. He was born in 1862 a wealthy paper manufacturer in Boston Massachusetts and he used the most eccentric of his siblings. He runs around in a little fake Roman toga.

A: Is this as like a small child or just like, throughout life

E: It's primarily as a small child. He dresses up in a night gown an old Japanese scarf on his head to read the morning prayer to his mother who was apparently quite indulgent. When he was eight he went to Europe for the first time and it makes a really big impression on him. They go to the art galleries there and his family gets bored and they want to go off and do something else and he goes no no no you go and just leave me here. And he gets left there to stare at the statues of naked Greek men alone.

I: And it's a formative experience.

E: It's very formative. Later on he would say that it was, quote, not wholly artistic and interest and he had crushes on boys at school and he wrote a poem comparing one to Antinous who was the favorite of the Emperor Hadrian. So from a very very young age he is first of all gay. And second of all linking that to his interest in ancient world. So in 1879 he goes off to university and he gets into Harvard and he isn't very happy there. He compares poorly with his older brother who's very sporty and he becomes increasingly occupied with wanting to have a male companion and with religion which has interested him for his whole life.

And these things are very in conflict with each other.

A: Is this like the study of religion or being religious.

E: I believe he is religious at this point, yeah. And he's unhappy for several years and he eventually decides that he's going to give up on religion and he's going to give up on Harvard

and so he convinces his parents to let him go to Oxford to study classics and 1984 when he was 25

A: I was gonna say when you said he went to Harvard and he was unhappy and he wanted a boyfriend I was thinking like should have gone to Oxford. They're all gay.

E: So he did what every Victorian gay man did and he tried to go to Oxford. And he idealized Oxford as so many men of that era did and I mean you know that's not stopped really I guess. And he also idealizes the university as the only kind of institution in the modern world where his understanding of what Greek ideals were was embodied. So it's this domestic all male society and it's based on his master pupil relationship and he's

A: Really into it

E: very very into that. Yes.

I: So what he's saying is that he has a crush on his tutor

E: No, he has a crush on being the tutor. And while he's there he meets a man who's a few years younger than him called John Marshall and they become very close. And so at first Ned does really well in his first year that he gets a first and then he ruins his eyesight and after a few years is only getting a pass.

I: This has happened to us, like, Seven Times!

E: I include this because I think that's the, like, fourth person who has ruined their eyesight at Oxford doing classics.

I: Don't do it guys.

E: It is the real queer experience

A: I'm glad you can still see

E: I'm not at Oxford. In 1887 he goes off to Naples and we think it was with John Marshall and he writes his first of many essays on love and this one's called A Tale of Pausanian Love. It's essentially a self insert novella with Ned as the main character and John Marshall as the only other character.

[Laughter]

A: This is also not the first time we've had somebody write a work of fiction that's just definitely about them in partner

I: Ah yes, two virgins in an attic.

E: Listen to the Yoshiya Nobuko episode to get that joke and hear about good lesbians. So it's got Pausanian in the title after Pausanias who is the character, although it's based on a real person, from Plato's Symposium who gives the encomium on heavenly love. So. Plato's Symposium is a series of dialogues and the conceit is that they are at a symposium So a little like dinner drinking party together and they all have to give a speech on the nature of love. And so they get into all these discussions about the nature of. And so, Aphrodite Ourania or Heavenly Love is in contrast to Aphrodite Pandemos or Common Love and the first kind is a stronger and more spiritual and more intelligent kind of love. It's not just physical desire. And Aphrodite Ourania was thought to inspire love between men. Pederastic love as opposed to Aphrodite Pandemos who inspired heterosexual loves. And Warren loves this.

A: So is Earthly love talking about the love that men have for women. Does it also refer to love that women have for men or is that not even covered

E: Like it is. But women aren't the focus of this at any point.

A: Yeah that's what I thought.

E: So he's basically managing to find a way to legitimize his feelings of men by intellectualizing them and placing them within this kind of Greek framework. So John Marshall is a very good scholar. He gets very good marks but also he's only doing classics as preparation to go into the Anglican priesthood.

A: Oh OK.

E: He's very religious. His parents are even more religious

I: But he's OK with the gay thing.

E: Look I'm unclear. Let's discuss. So, Warren spends a long time trying to woo marshal. And what he's trying to woo him to is implicitly to be his kind of life partner but explicitly to be his secretary.

A: So when you said before that Warren and Marshall became very close I assumed that when you said very close you euphemistically meant they were a couple now but you didn't mean that.

E: No. Part of what was happening was very much that the people who were writing these were like stuffy old British men who were being a bit circumspect. So someone would say they were companions. And then also later referred to them as lovers. And I was like do you want me to understand that there are a couple

[Scraping sound]

A: OK or so it's unclear if and when their relationship changes

E: So they're definitely living together. I don't think that you can read that that they just understand this to be a business relationship that maybe Warren got too into it. It's not entirely clear to me what is happening so I'll go on and we can talk about it.

A: OK.

E: In 1899 finally Marshall agrees to come and live with him full time and to be his secretary. And he writes "You were to me at first a quality, then a collection of qualities. And at last, well, you were Warren. And now everything you say and do seems inseparable from you and my love to you. That makes my judgment in the matter infallible.

A: OK that didn't sound like the most heterosexual piece of writing I have ever heard.

E: Yeah, but at the same time it is very much a business arrangement. So, John Marshall is a bit lower class than Ned Warren and he wants to dine with the servants when he comes and lives with him. And Ned is like well no I wanted you to dine with me. And so he does and he gets paid 200 pounds a year. So he's getting a wage.

A: That's nice

E: I also just wanted to know the Marshall and Warren kind of look alike so they'll walk around the grounds of their house together and people can't tell which is which from behind. I also want to note that they call each other puppy. Because I love it.

A: I don't think you'd call your secretary puppy if you were in a strictly business relationship and I definitely don't think you'd call your boss Puppy if it was a strictly business relationship.

E: No

I: That is not what happens in my work place.

E: Yes

A: Picture... no, don't actually that's weird but yeah, like, that doesn't happen.

E: Yes, there is definitely something that goes beyond this being strictly platonic and professional.

A: Yes

E: But like how far, to where. I don't know. So they're living together at Lews Estate which Warren had bought that year. So it's this big beautiful house and Warren really wants to create this like very particular lifestyle there. There's a lot of studying and going out horse riding and doing other athletic things and they have good food and wine. Yep. It's also apparently quite uncomfortable so it's like Spartan and cold and it's very hard furniture. This kind of weird combination between a very like monastic life. But also he's got, like, his real like Greek focus.

A: So he has good food and wine but not like comfy furniture and good heating.

E: Yes

A: I kind of expect people to commit either way like I only eat bread and water and sleep on a cot bed or like I have good food and good wine and everything warm and comfortable and nice.

E: No

A: Well make up your mind Warren.

E: He's trying to create this kind of Greek inspired homosocial community. So it's not only John Marshall living with him but a bunch of other men as well.

A: What's his relationship with these other men?

E: I do not know. I know even less than I know about John Marshall. So he's very much imagining it that he'll be this older man presiding over his house of somewhat younger men and they're all adults to be clear. But still they're meant to be kind of benefiting from his financial support and also his guidance in life. So you can see how he's got that from that kind of Greek pederasty model.

I & A: Yes yes yes.

E: And he's also at this time building connections with important artistic and literary figures but also very important queer figures so Robbie Ross spends time there. He was best known for being very close with Oscar Wilde. He's generally understood to be the first man Oscar Wilde

ever slept with. And some of the Bloomsburys. I don't seek to do episodes with the Bloomsburys, and yet the Bloomsburys are always here.

I: I mean you literally did a cup from the first century and here they are.

A: And the Bloomsburys are still here

E: Yeah... yeah. So he's really creating this kind of alternate family structure is what he is trying to do and he creates a separate sphere from society. So the men who are living with him, he and they aren't often seen in public or in the town. It's also a very very communal way of life so clothes accessories and even personal items are just completely shared. They don't have any sense of property.

A: It sounds like the setting for a murder novel

E: The bathroom especially is a very communal space so it was fairly big you could fit like a few guys and there easily but it would often be just like brimming with young men after they go out doing something athletic like horse riding or whatever. And it was so important to the life there that when a man would leave and go off and live somewhere else he would be seen off with them saying "We shall miss you from the bathroom."

A: This sounds like a weird weird commune.

E: And I just feel like this is probably kind of gay.

I: Slightly. A little bit.

A: "We shall miss you from the bathroom" is very homoerotic.

I: It's not the straightest thing I've heard.

E: Yeah. So I mean it's obviously homosocial. I think it's more homoerotic to an extent. I don't know if it goes into full blown homosexual, you know I don't know if these men are forming relationships. But it's you know it's – it's kind of gay. There's also the fact that the staff were very very tight-lipped when a new staff member was hired. They were told by those already working there that they had to never speak of anything they saw or heard.

A: That makes me think that it is homosexual

I: That gay sex is happening

E: Potentially, yeah, but it's already very very socially unconventional without there just being sex everywhere. So you know it's clear from Ned Warren's writings that he very much like feels erotic desire but I don't know how much that's realized in his life. He does struggle with it. He has a private study in this house which is the most dramatic situation ever. He calls it Thebes it's set apart from the rest of the House. It's in the coach house. He wears the key to it around his neck on a gold chain and it's full of just like antiquities and books and all of the things like that and he envisions it as being a place for a good conversation and good study. He also has two bedrooms for emergencies it.

A: So wait he has his own bedroom. But two additional bedrooms for emergencies.

E: I don't know if he sleeps there all the time.

A: Wait, two bedrooms the coach house.

E: Yes.

A: Oh, I understand, I understand.

E: For emergencies

A: I see.

I: What, okay?

E: That's all I have. I saw that and I was, like, I'm writing that down.

A: Yeah, I don't know if that emergency is, like, "I stayed up too late studying and it's raining outside I'm gonna sleep here, or if it's like..."

I: I need to get away from the homosocial bathroom.

E: Yeah. So the staircase in the main building and all of the passageways are lit with electric lamps but Thebes and all the sitting rooms are all lit by candles.

A: How. What year is this?

E: Late 19th century.

A: OK. I just wonder if that was like notable they had electric lighting or not.

E: Maybe but it is notable that he is not using it to light all of his house when it started because someone asked him why didn't you put it in the sitting rooms and he goes for fear that it might be used. So it's just very dramatic.

A: So he likes his atmospheric candlelit setting.

E: Yeah.

A: With all his gay men.

E: Yeah it's been speculated that his kind of construction of a homoerotic homosocial social society might've been a reaction to the public perception of what same sex attracted men would like. Which was very much the model embodied by Oscar Wilde. It was a very like frivolous very feminine degenerate kind of man.

And he as we said had some internalized homophobia and likely would have been uncomfortable with that. Trials of people like Oscar Wilde often talked about how much, like, material possessions they had. And like in particular feminine possessions so lots of rings and lots of perfume. And it would talk about how overly luxurious their houses were and stuff like that. Yes so it's possible he's uncomfortable that. It's possible that he's just trying to stave off criticism of him as like a bachelor who has created this gay male domestic sphere.

I: It's a fairly unconventional thing to do

A: Yes yes, society definitely would have been talking about it in, probably you know, a not positive way.

E: What he wants to do with his life and what he needs a secretary full is the collection of classical antiquities. So he and Marshall began making trips to the Mediterranean and cultivating this huge network of contacts and buying a huge amount of vases and other antiquities. And then they spend the rest of the year at the estate sorting and mending and cataloguing and things. So, he is sending things to America because he doesn't think America has any like a good museum collections of antiquities. And then he kind of can't keep up pace eventually because it cost a lot so The Museum of Fine Arts Boston starts funding him and Marshall buying a bunch of stuff and they keep doing that. One of them is the head of Chios which he smuggled out of Greece. So the head is like the shoulders and head of a woman bought sort of upper portion of the heads missing it's quite iconic as Greek statues go.

A: Yep, cool.

E: We'll put pictures. So they get the market cornered. Arthur Murray who works for the British Museum says there's nothing to get nowadays since Warren and Marshall are always on the spot first.

A: Arthur Murray is just such a generic British man name.

E: It sure is. British Museum is such a generic name.

A: Try harder Britain.

E: And then the museum in Boston does a big rebuilding project and stops sending money to them. And Marshall gets a job as purchasing agent for the Metropolitan Museum in New York and their relationship falls apart 1902.

A: Oh. Goodbye, Puppy.

E: Yes. Goodbye, Puppy. And so he keeps collecting essentially. And in 1911 he goes to Rome to buy a mystery item.

A: Imagine if you were rich enough to just go to a Rome to buy like a mystery archaeological item. I mean, that's ethically dubious but ignoring that for a moment.

E: Yep. So he's traveling all the way to Rome for this one thing. He pays £2000 for it.

A: Does he know what it is at that point?

E: He definitely has some information about it.

A: Okay, good.

E: 2000 pounds is a huge amount of money at the time. It's definitely the cup.

A: Well we know that Marshall is getting 200 pounds a year don't we. So that's ten years wages.

E: I might check that.

A: I'd believe it. That sounds right to me. Anyway, the point is, this is a very expensive cup.

E: It's very expensive cup. And he describes it as the Holy Grail.

A: [laughs] I'm just picturing if Jesus had the gay cup at the Last Supper. So it is the Holy Grail of...

I: Gay sex.

E: Yep. So he has the cup now. And he loves the cup, and he keeps it at Thebes and he looks at it and thinks about how gay he and the cup both are. And he begins working on his magnum opus, which is called *A Defence of Uranian Love*, which was a term at the time for they gay, basically. It was coined by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, I believe.

A: Mm, okay.

E: And it's a...interesting text. It's pretty dodgy. It compares a Greek ideal with a Christian ideal, essentially, and he prefers the former. And he characterises the Greek idea as being masculine, based on aristocracy, nobility, and the secondary place of women. And the Christian ideal, which he viewed as been feminine, and about democracy, purity, and equality of the sexes.

A: [snorts]

E: So...

A: Christianity is known for equality of the sexes.

E: Yeah. SO first of all, that's massively misogynistic, which isn't very surprising, but is gross.

I: Yeah, that vague exasperation about the way 19th century gay men always have to frame their love of men as...women being bad.

E: But yeah...but basically it's just this text where he, as he has always done, is trying to come to terms with how he feels about men, and also about ageing. Um, at this point, because he believes that, within this model, he retains value because he is able to be an educator and pass on knowledge to younger men.

A: Yep.

E: So it's very very blatantly gay, as a book. He publishes it under a pseudonym, but even his friends don't like that it was published, because they feared that their own reputations would be damaged.

A: Despite the fact that Marshall has left, is he still living in his house with his...homoerotic men?

E: Yep. A bit later he gets another secretary, but I don't know if secretary is inherently a...

A: Euphemism.

E: ...Romantic position, or not.

A: [laughs] Okay.

E: Um...Mostly they ignored it and they avoided talking about it in the house. And he seems to have been in this kind of awkward position where he's almost realised the like perfect life he wants in this house, but he's the only one who's like, really committing to it.

I: Yeah.

E: And so he's kind of in the environment that he wants, but he's also ultimately alone.

A: Awww.

E: It's quite sad.

A: I'm sad, even though he was kind of misogynistic in his writing. I'm still sad for him.

E: And then in 1928, Marshall dies, and he leaves Warren as the executor and beneficiary of his will. And the same year, Warren dies as well, and his ashes are buried in a cemetery in Italy in the same tomb and Marshall and his wife.

A: Marshall and Marshall's wife?

E: Yep. Marshall and Marshall's wife.

A: Oh! Okay.

E: Ned Warren never married. Most of the staff stayed very very loyal to him until the end. Not many people attended his funeral. Most of his friends had either moved on with their lives or had otherwise distanced themselves from him because he was quite eccentric.

A: I guess that also makes sense if he has that model of him being the older man kind of educating the younger men, the younger men are gonna, you know, move on with their lives, and more younger men are presumably gonna turn up, and...

I: Yeah.

E: Mm, yeah. But yeah, that's the life of Ned Warren. So, he dies, and a tremendous amount of antiquities are left behind, including The Holy Grail.

A: [laughs]

E: Some of what he collected was given to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and was put on display and what not, but there was the problem of what to do with all of his stuff that depicted sex on it.

I: So he had a whole collection of...gay antiquities?

E: Not Gay antiquities necessarily. But sexually explicit antiquities.

I: Okay.

E: So I mentioned earlier a...I think it was a glass vase or cup or something like that, I can't remember exactly, that had a male/male sex scene on one side, and a male/female sex scene on the other.

I: Ah yes.

E: That was one of the things he collected. So yeah, just a bunch of like, sexually explicit things like that. And not even necessarily sexually explicit. Even just like, naked people, were a bit too far for early twentieth century museums to deal with.

A: Yep.

E: So they accepted the Warren Collection of Erotica of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art, but they were very very quiet about it, and they didn't officially catalogue it until the 1950s.

A: So this is the Boston Museum of Fine Art?

E: Yes.

A: Yep.

E: And they just kind of kept it all in the basement for like over half a century.

A: Whoever got that cataloguing job must've had a lot of fun.

E: [laughs] So they looked at the sexual exuberance on some of the vases, which is a euphemism for an erection, generally.

A: [snickers]

E: And they just took to the these wonderful ancient artifacts, black paint.

A: What??

E: Yep, painted over them.

A: What year are we in?

E: I dunno.

A: So I can safely assume that they did not use removable like—

E: No!

A: Museum appropriate paint?

E: No no. So this is from like, the fifties onwards. So they ruined these priceless artifacts because they were frightened of seeing penises. There was also the case of statues, right. So the phallus of one statue was displayed, and they decided that, well, that's not okay, and they removed it, and they chipped the phallus off, and one of the curators kept it in her drawer, and then she quit, and she didn't tell anyone.

I: [laughs]

A: So did it stay in the drawer?

E: Yep! And then one of her successors found this small marble penis in a drawer, and had to go and figure out which statue it belonged to.

A: Walking up to them like, "Ehhh....?" Is that how I picture this?

E: Yep!

A: Trying to match it to different statues?

E: Yeah. And it was reattached, yeah.

A: 'Cause, I know I've definitely heard this story about the Vatican lopping the penises of all the statues, and just having massive boxes of marble penises, and then people having to like....play penis jigsaw.

I: [laughs]

E: It's not uncommon, which is really really sad, because...

A: At least it's easier to stick a penis back on a statue than it is to unpaint a painting.

E: Yeah. And so, the reception by various museums of his collection is just sort of mirroring the general state of the market in dealing with sexually explicit antiquities at the time. So, Pompeii and Herculaneum were excavated in the 18th and 19th century, and they turned up a lot of very graphic depictions of sex. And also over the 19th century, museums are becoming more and more accessible to the public, and so this public conversation about what is appropriate to show, and how they should be contextualised really starts. And most of that conversation at this point is just people being like, "I say, how dare you have that in a public space!"

A: Yep.

E: And so in 1820, for example, all items that were deemed offensive were removed from the Herculaneum Museum, or from its public display, rather, and they put it in a separate room, which was called the Cabinet of Obscene Objects, and—

A: I feel like a lot of people would come to that museum and be like, "Well, heading straight for the gay room now."

E: Well, we'll talk about that in a second. It contained 200 abominable monuments to human licentiousness.

A & I: [laugh]

A: They really sound like they were kinda trying to advertise this but I assume that they weren't.

I: There's definitely a weird thing where they kind of idealise ancient Greece and Rome, and they're like, "These civilisations are like the pinnacle of civilisation, we want to become this...except the penis part."

E: Yeah.

I: We don't want that part.

E: There's a lot of times where people in like the 20th century and the 19th century refer to all of the homosexuality that goes in Greek texts as like "that lamentable vice", or something. It's like, "Ah, they're so great. It's a shame about all the gay stuff." And the British Museum likewise had a secretum, which is a secret room, and that ended up having about a thousand objects at its peak. The last item that was put there was put there in 1953, and it was a series of 18th century condoms, that were made out of animal membranes.

A: Yeah.

E: So in order to go to the British Museum's little secret room of sex objects, at least, you had to provide a formal letter, and the director would then assess that applicant's credentials and motives before they would allow them access.

A: So you yourself wrote a formal letter, or you had to have a reference?

E: I think you had to basically write a formal application letter being like, "Hello, I'm a researcher or whatever, this is why I want to see this particular object. Can I?"

A: Okay, yep.

E: You couldn't just be like, "I'm an interested member of the public", because then they'd be like, "Oh dear god, no."

I: [laughs]

A: Okay. Yeah, yeah.

E: I would assume that if you're a woman it was just like, nope, automatically, you know...

A: Yeah, I would assume that.

E: Yes. And so it's into this atmosphere that the Warren Cup comes. When he dies, they try to auction it off and they can't get rid of it. And so it just kind of stays in the attic until the '50s, when they try to sell it again. There's a potential buyer in America who's a bit like uncertain, but he'll see it, and so they send it over there, and then customs stops it because it's pornography, and they just kind of keep it for a year trying to decide whether or not to let it in the country, and they send it back.

A: So American customs hangs on to this cup for a year, before they're like, "Nah."

E: Well, I think they thing was that it was trying to get release, so it was going through various people's like...

A: Oh, I see, yeah yeah yeah.

E: Desks, in terms of like "What do you think?" or like "Can you do this paperwork?" or whatever, and then eventually it was like nope, rejected.

A: Mm-hm, yep.

E: And then there were more attempts to sell it. Various museums declined, until an anonymous collector bought it in 1966 for 6000 pounds. In the '50s they'd tried to sell it to the British Museum, and the British Museum was like "No..." So it's occasionally exhibited in the second half of the twentieth century, and then eventually the British Museum does buy it, in 1999, for 1.8 million pounds.

I: Wow.

A: Why so much?

E: Because it is an enormously significant artifact. To the history of like, the depiction of sexuality, it's entirely unique, and in terms of silver cups, we don't have a lot of them, and it is by far one of the best made ones.

A: Okay.

E: As an artefact, this is very important.

A: SO by the time we were in the 1999, they recognised its important—

I: They had got over their hangups about homophobia.

E: Mm. This was the most expensive item ever acquired by the museum at that time. And it was a huge huge deal, at the time. Every major British newspaper covered it. Newspapers all over the world covered it. There were political cartoons drawn about it.

A: So, newspapers all over the world covered it. We they just like reporting it, or were they angry that they'd spent all this money on a gay cup?

I: Or just that it was so expensive. I mean, you said it was the most expensive—

E: Mm, yeah.

I: I mean, the most they'd ever paid to acquire an object.

E: I don't think there was really much negative reaction, to be honest. Yeah, it was enormously expensive. I cannot stress enough how significant this is as an artifact.

A: Yeah.

E: And also it's very sexually explicit, and that sells newspapers. The quiz show *Have I Got News For You?* covered it.

A & I: [laugh]

E: And it's still there today. I got to meet it this year. It was much smaller than I thought it was going to be. And it was really really exciting.

A: That's very good.

E: It's obviously very very recent that museums are willing to display objects like the Warren Cup, and to have queer themed exhibitions and things like that. Until really recently our conversation on the Warren Cup and things like it essentially were very limited. They just dismissed it as pornography and an obscenity, and so forth, and that isn't accurate to how it was understood in its historical context, and it really does it a disservice again as a very important artifact, and it's just a beautiful piece of art, to be honest. Like we talked about the amount of skill that would have to go into that. It received its first detailed analysis in 1993, which is just shockingly recent. And the only reason for this is because it depicts gay sex. And that's it.

A: Yeah.

E: So yeah, I don't have a lot to say on that apart from the fact that homophobia is just very detrimental to scholarship, and to queer communities who benefit from having these objects publicly available. And museums failed at their role as institutions in the world, until recently.

A: It is good to know that recently they have improved, and—

E: Yeah, yeah.

A: They are starting to put things like this on display.

E: It is good. And we start seeing like, specifically queer exhibitions, and things like that.

A: Yeah, yeah.

E: So that's good. And hopefully we'll do exciting things in the future.

I: Regardless of whether it was viewed as pornography at the time or whatever, I feel like the idea of dismissing something as an artifact because it's an obscenity or its pornography, even if it is pornography, is wasting sort of a whole, fairly significant social field?

E: Yeah, no I – I absolutely agree. But my point with that is less like, "It wasn't even pornography, it's a serious piece of art," or anything like that. More just that, the Greeks and Romans, their thoughts on sexuality and queer things and things like that – there's like a very

rich field, and like a very rich field of evidence to look at, and we've just kind of binned that until recently.

A & I: Mm, yeah.

E: And that's just a tremendous waste, and it's just, such like, fundamentally bad scholarship to be like, "This is offensive to my sensibilities, therefore I'm not even going to think about this."

A: Yeah, it's like all those editions of poems, like we were talking about Catullus, that used to be published just like, "Poem 17 is not read."

E: Mm.

A: And it just wouldn't appear in the book.

E: It's been displayed now for what like, 18 years.

A: Yep.

E: And it's been met with very little controversy. Like, it is still a very sexually explicit image, and one of them at least involves a very young person.

If it was a new piece of art, that would be a massive deal in the papers and so forth.

A: Yeah.

E: So is it the fact that it's very very old? Is it the fact that it comes from the particular culture it comes from? Is it the fact that the British Museum...

A: We respect the British Museum's voice on what's....a museum object?

E: Yeah.

I: I do think people may have just become more and more willing to accept that the morality they hold at the moment is not sort of eternal and universal. Like I think people might be more willing to accept that – the sort of cultural value that they place on something like, I guess, not having sex with a teenager – is significant now but wasn't significant at times in the past.

E: Yeah. I think I really kind of struggle, ironically, as someone who's spent like a fairly long time at this point studying the ancient world... I really don't have a good sort of, cultural barometer. Like I've definitely had times where I've mentioned pederasty to people, and they've been like, "Oh yeah", and I've definitely had times when they've been like, "Oh god, what?" and they've

been really upset, and I really just don't know, what like the general public reaction is to things that would previously have been considered obscene in the ancient world. Like it could've just been like, "Yeah, yeah, well, the Romans did some interesting stuff. Oh well."

A: I'd also be interested to see how – and you said you've seen it – how it's displayed? Like what does the label say? Does it describe what you're seeing, or does it just say, you know, "First century silver cup from Rome"?

E: It is quite small and unassuming. The article I was reading that was questioning like, why this is our current public reaction to it, suggested that like, maybe people just don't notice what they're looking at. [laughs]

A: Yeah, that's like, what I was thinking. People are just like, "Oh yeah, a Roman silver cup", and you know, there's so much stuff in the British Museum, you're not going to look closely and be like, "Oh, and that one's got a young boy having sex on it."

E: Yeah.

A: Especially if they have the young boy having sex side turned to the wall, which they may well do?

E: They don't. It's on a kind of plinth.

I: So you can walk about it?

E: Yeah, you can walk around it.

A: Okay.

E: But yeah. I was thinking that the suggestion that the British Museum kind of legitimises things might make sense, but like, I also think really, what the British Museum chooses to display is a cultural barometer of attitudes that are formed already.

A: Yeah. The British Museum is not known for being sort of cutting edge.

E: It wouldn't be, it would be. It would be the case that, you know, they were offered the chance to buy it, and they declined it, because they knew it would be controversial to the board and to their public. By the time they agreed to buy it, I think even in the thoroughly modern day, it would be because they knew it would be a safe thing to buy at this point.

A: Yeah, yeah, I think that's true. And in the modern day you can argue that it's a very important artifact, regardless of what's on it, and also I guess, because of what's on it, where if

you tried to say “Oh, but you know, it’s a very good silver cup,” like fifty years ago, they would’ve been like, “Well, we don’t care if it’s a good silver cup, it’s porn.”

I: “It’s a gay silver cup, we don’t wanna know.”

E: Mm. Jeffrey Williams who was responsible for acquiring it, and who wrote a little book on it, that you can get at the British Museum – I’m not advertising the British Museum, they don’t pay anything.

A: [laughs]

E: Um...viewed it as being very very relevant to the role of the museum in the modern world, to kind of investigate and to inspire thinking about what other people thought at other times.

A: Okay.

E: Yeah, and so that would be correct thinking about it, I would say, and it’s good that at that point...

A: Yeah, that would be a good attitude to it.

E: And so I was like, “I know the Warren Cup’s here somewhere,” and I had to hunt it down, and now there’s like...and I was very excited. So, thank you very much for listening. This has been Queer as Fact. I’m Eli.

A: I’m Alice.

I: I’m Irene.

E: If you want to find us on social media, we are on Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook, as queerasfact, and if you want to email us directly we are at queerasfact@gmail.com. If you had anything that you’d like, anything that you didn’t like, anything you’d like to see in a future episode, we’d really really love to hear from you. You can also subscribe to us on iTunes, and while you’re there, you should give us a five star rating

A, I & E: [laughs]

E: Or whatever you think we deserve. Although if you’re gonna give us a one star rating, maybe put it at the bottom of your to-do list. And give us a review, it really really helps us. We’ll be back on the 1st of December, which is World AIDS Day, and we’ll be talking about the history of the AIDS epidemic in Australia. Thank you very much more listening and we’ll see you then.

[outro music plays]