**Mark:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Endless Knot Podcast,

**Aven:** where the more we know,

**Mark:** the more we want to find out.

**Aven:** Tracing serendipitous connections through our lives

**Mark:** and across disciplines.

**Aven:** Hi, I'm Aven.

**Mark:** And I'm Mark.

**Aven:** And today we're going to be talking about... oh,I didn't think this through. We're gonna be talking about how much women are horrible. No, wait,

**Mark:** I think, I think you'll find that the, the message is more how men have been horrible. Oh yeah.

**Aven:** We're talking about the word chauvinism. And I did not think through my original opening line before we started. So we'll get to that in a moment.

It's a video and we're gonna talk about it. But a couple of little things to talk about first, well, one really, which is that we have two new patrons, Graeme and Naomi, and I wanna call out Naomi in particular [00:01:00] because she has her own podcast and is also a friend. Her podcast is Sweater Weather, and it is a podcast about.

Canadiana and Canadian history arts and culture and music, and it's great. There's episodes on Anna Green Gables and the sweater, the hockey sweater for instance. And anyway, it's really good show. So if you're interested in any of that, that's a good podcast to check out. But also, thank you Naomi and Graeme.

Woohoo. All right, so we're going to be talking about misogyny and chauvinism and gender relations through the ages. And so the cocktail we've gone for is in fact, one that goes right back to the roots of this story, at least in Western civilization for all the use of that phrase. So we're drinking a Pandora's jar.

This is a recipe from Liv Albert's cocktail book that's Liv Albert of Let's talk about Myths Baby. The podcast about mythology,

and it's [00:02:00] essentially impossible to drink it out of this, but that's okay. We're drinking out of jars because it is after all Pandora's jar.

**Mark:** You get a nose full of garnish. That's fine. Would you like to explain why it's Pandora's jar instead of the popular conception of Pandora's

**Aven:** Box? Pandora's Box?

Well, why don't I, I don't, I will, but why don't I read from Liv's book? "Pandora had a jar. It wasn't a box until a millennium or so later when someone translated the word pithos, an enormous storage jar, into variations on the word box.... This cocktail, Pandora's Jar, plays homage to the story of Pandora, whose jar of evils was never about curiosity or decision making at all." And this is a cocktail of blueberries and gin and lemon juice and creme de violette and soda water.

What do you

**Mark:** think? It's very refreshing. I think a lot of my, it's, I've separated more than

**Aven:** you have. Well, mine is too. You can't see it as well. It's there. And there's a layer of froth at the top too. Yeah,

**Mark:** I've, I have a [00:03:00] layer of, you know, soda water at the top and then a very distinct bottom layer of crushed blueberries.

Crush blueberries. Yeah. Yeah. But it's tasty. It's tasty, it's refreshing,

**Aven:** and it looks sort of murky, like all the evils of the world might be hiding in there, so thank you to Liv and if you are interested in other mythology themed cocktails, do check out her book, which we've mentioned before.

Nectar of the Gods, which has all sorts of mythologically themed cocktails, recipes, and it's really good and available anywhere, I think

**Mark:** available from all fine book

**Aven:** sellers. And it's got really, really great illustrations too. I really like the illustrations. We'll put a link. Of course. So that's all I, we have to start off with.

So why don't we turn to the video? Any introduction you wanna give it?

**Mark:** Well, I mean this, this video was basically inspired by the etymology of the word chauvinism, cuz I just thought it was kind of cool. It was interesting, etymology and and so yeah, that's, that's

**Aven:** why I think that's really it. [00:04:00] Okay. Well, why don't we listen to that and then come back and talk more about it.

**Mark:** If you heard the word chauvinist today, you’d probably either think of a quaint term for a man who looks down on women as inferior, or of someone who is blindly and excessively patriotic. The second meaning is the older, so let’s start there. The word is in fact an eponym, meaning it comes from a person’s name, in this case the possibly legendary Nicolas Chauvin, a soldier who supposedly served in the French Army under Napoleon. There isn’t any evidence that he actually existed, but nevertheless he became famous as a figure of blind patriotism and fervour for Napoleon, long after the Emperor’s ousting, and thus a figure of ridicule. The word in French goes back to the 1830s, and makes its way into English at least as early as the 1860s. Towards the late 19th century, the term broadened to refer not only to excessive patriotism but also to other forms of excessive loyalty or belief in the superiority of one’s own kind. It was then picked up in Communist Party circles in phrases such as race chauvinism [00:05:00] and white chauvinism, in particular to counter racism in the United States. And following the model of those phrases, women in the Communist Party seem to have coined the term male chauvinism in the 1930s. After a brief vogue, the term mostly disappeared from view, that is until the feminist movements of the 60’s and 70’s. The children of former Communist Party members apparently revived the word, and from 1968 it took off again. However, the term didn’t seem to have much staying power and began to decline in frequency from the late 1970s. The phrase had been further expanded to male chauvinist pig, perhaps initially to soften its effect through humour, though this was soon picked up by mainstream media to mock feminists — in fact the earliest citation of that full phrase in the Oxford English Dictionary is in Playboy magazine, so perhaps it’s not surprising that the term fell out of favour!

Before the word chauvinism arose, the word misogyny could be used to refer to hatred of women. Greek misogynia and misogynes, used originally in reference to a disease or to a comic trope of a grumpy [00:06:00] old man who hates his wife, are composed of the elements misos “hatred” and gyne “woman”, distantly related to the English word queen. Misogyny and misogynist make it into English in the 17th century, and develop an extended meaning of prejudice against women in the 20th century, but as we’ll soon see, starting much earlier, Greek misogyny played a significant role in the development of western misogyny. But first we have to finish looking at the word chauvinism and related terms.

It was around the time that the term male chauvinism came into vogue, specifically in 1970, when the word patriarchy started to be used by feminists to mean a society dominated by men at the expense of women. The word actually goes back to Greek, coming from pater “father” and arkhein “to rule”, and was used in various Christian senses such as referring to certain bishops in the early church, with patriarchy first appearing in English in a 1561 translation of a text by protestant reformer John Calvin, after whom the Calvinist church is named. John Calvin, or Jean Calvin as he was known in his native French, is tied [00:07:00] into this story in another way, as the name Calvin is the Northern French equivalent of the name Chauvin, from which we get the word chauvinism. It should be further noted that the name Chauvin is derived from the French word chauve meaning “bald” from Latin calvus. So I suppose you could say that this etymology, along with the paternalistic fatherly patriarchy, at least coincidentally, highlights the fact that we have old men to blame for sexual discrimination.

And it was this coincidental connection between Calvin and chauvinism that inspired me to look at the religious roots of misogyny and the ties between chauvinism and other types of discrimination. It turns out that the confluence of the Christian tradition and Greek philosophy created a toxic environment for women in western society for 2000 years. Of course the west doesn’t hold a monopoly on misogyny, which can be found in many cultures around the world, and all available evidence suggests that misogyny is the oldest human prejudice, but since we’re looking at English vocabulary we’ll have to stick with western culture. And to do that, we’ll have to first turn to the Jewish tradition, which would [00:08:00] later become the foundation of Christianity.

That early Jewish society was patriarchal is not particularly surprising in the context of the ancient world. What is notable is that they had a monotheistic religion with a fall of man creation myth. In the book of Genesis, Adam was created by God in his image and placed in paradise, the Garden of Eden. Eve was more of an afterthought, made from Adam’s rib. Now of course different churches which share this story--which is found in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam--interpret the culpability of Adam and Eve in their expulsion from Eden differently, but as the story in Genesis goes, Eve gave in to the temptations of the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then shared that fruit with Adam, and following this they both become ashamed of their nakedness. Thus many have held Eve doubly responsible, or at least more responsible than Adam. In addition to their expulsion from paradise, they are made to live mortal lives and Adam must work for the necessities of life, in other words engage in agriculture, and Eve and all women who follow her are [00:09:00] given the extra punishments of being subservient to their husbands and suffering the pains of childbirth. So this story both justifies a patriarchal society with a lower status for women but also figures women in terms of their role in sexuality--remember the shame of their nakedness--and childbirth.

Interestingly, the Ancient Greeks also have a fall of man myth, the story of Pandora, whose name means either “all gifted” or “all giving”. In the story as told by Hesiod in the 6th c BC men--and only men--had a trouble free and happy existence, though they didn’t have the secret of fire and had to eat their meat raw. The Titan Prometheus illicitly gave fire to men, and as part of the punishment for this, Zeus ordered the creation of the first human woman, Pandora, not just as an afterthought but specifically as a punishment, as she is endowed with seductive qualities as well as a deceitful character, and she is referred to as kalon kakon “beautiful evil”. Pandora has with her a sealed jar that she is not supposed to open, but overcome with curiosity she [00:10:00] opens it, releasing pain and evil among men, leaving only hope in the jar. This myth and the fact that the king of the Gods Zeus is depicted in many myths as a serial rapist, provide a backdrop to Greek society.

Now outside of Athens there is a lack of evidence of what life was actually like for Greek women, but it’s Athenian culture which became the most profoundly influential on later western culture. Perhaps paradoxically, along with democracy, Athens in the 5th c BC developed an exceedingly misogynistic attitude. It’s important to remember that that democracy was extremely limited, including only adult male citizens, and supported through a slave economy. In this society, women remained legally children always under the guardianship of a man, they were--at least ideally--kept in a segregated part of the house and were not allowed to leave the house unaccompanied, and received little to no education.

In addition to the practical reality of women’s social inferiority in Athens, Athenian philosophers developed a theoretical basis for misogyny, and the two most responsible for [00:11:00] this are Plato and Aristotle. Somewhat paradoxically, Plato is sometimes taken as almost a protofeminist, since in his work The Republic he describes an ideal society in which women receive the same education as men and are among the ruling elite with the same responsibilities, and men and women only differ in their biological roles in reproduction. But this comes at the cost of the denial of their sexuality. His is a sterile imagined world in which breeding is regulated and the parent-child relationship is denied in favour of communally raised children. However, it’s Plato’s idea of dualism which was to cause the most harm in the long run. Plato developed the theory of Forms in which he makes a distinction between a higher reality in which exist ideal Forms of which physical existence is an imperfect reflection. Only the intellect could engage with that higher reality, and all the stuff of physical existence, including sexuality, was lesser, a falling away from perfection. This dualism then becomes the philosophical basis for misogyny, with men associated with the intellect and women with [00:12:00] sexuality and the imperfect physical existence. And the standard understanding of the nature of women in the ancient world, both in Greece and later in Rome, is that they are sexually rapacious as a result of their connection to the physical world. So the misogynistic response to this was rooted in fear of women and of their sexuality, hence the need to regulate and control them. Plato’s student Aristotle doubled down on this misogyny in scientific terms. He explicitly held women to be inferior to men, and believed that women were mutilated, undercooked, or imperfect males. Oh, and in an odd connection to the roots of chauvinism, he believed that the lack of baldness among women was proof of their childlike undeveloped nature!

Moving forward, it’s during the Roman period that Christianity grows out of the Jewish tradition, while also being heavily influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy. It’s a terrible irony that Christianity would become one of the systemic drivers of misogyny, given that in its early years women played a key role in its formation and spread. Jesus’s statements about women in the gospels are free from misogyny; [00:13:00] he frequently defended women, and there were women among his followers. And women seemed to have played central roles in the activities of the new religion as it grew and spread. The apostle Paul’s contributions to the nature of Christianity are perhaps only second to those of Jesus, and his attitudes toward women are somewhat contradictory. Though he states that “there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ” he also doubles down on the story of Adam and Eve, saying that women should be subservient to their husbands. And from Paul we get the notion that sexuality is sinful and that celibacy is the ideal, but that if one couldn’t handle chastity, it was better to marry than to burn. So early Christianity provided the opportunity for women to choose a live a life of celibacy, which at least provided women with some control over their own fertility, giving them perhaps for the first time institutionally sanctioned reproductive choice. By the way, the word celibacy comes from Latin caelebs “unmarried”, of unknown origin but perhaps connected to the Proto-Indo-European roots \*kaiwelo- “alone” or \*kehi-lo- “whole”, and only in the [00:14:00] 1950s came to refer not only to ‘remaining unmarried’ but also to ‘voluntary abstinence from sexuality’, but we’ll come back to this later. But it’s when Christianity adopts that Platonic idea of dualism that things really go downhill. The early Christian theologian and philosopher Augustine was influenced by neoplatonic philosophy, seeing his own struggles as a contest between the desires of the flesh and the striving of the will. And Augustine is largely responsible for the concept of Original Sin, that that first trespass in the Garden of Eden caused human beings to fall away from perfection, and ever since humans have carried the burden of that sin, at least until the crucifixion of Christ.

Over the course of the middle ages that dualistic divide would continue to be the source of misogyny, and paradoxically it would come along with the increasing elevation of the figure of Mary mother of Jesus. In AD 431 the Roman Church declared Mary was not only the mother of Jesus, but the Mother of God. She had also been declared a perpetual virgin. If God was thought to be perfect, the mother of God couldn’t be tainted by sin either. It’s actually kind of a domino effect. The early churches first argued about whether Jesus was human or divine or some [00:15:00] combination, and Mary’s status rose as a result of Jesus’s elevation. She was also deemed not to have suffered death, but to have been assumed body and soul directly into heaven, a notion traceable back to at least the 5th century. And she became known as the Queen of Heaven. But in the long run that wasn’t enough. To explain her perfection, theologians eventually came up with the notion of the Immaculate Conception, that from the moment of her conception God acted to keep her free from Original Sin so that she existed in the state of perfection that Adam and Eve had before the fall, effectively removing all notions of sexuality from her, thus giving women an impossible standard to live up to: be perfect like Mary or you’ll be the source of sin like Eve. The 13th century theologian John Duns Scotus, so named because he hailed from Duns, Berwickshire in Scotland, did a lot to develop this notion of the Immaculate Conception, though it didn’t become church dogma until much later. Scotus, by the way, is also known for engaging with Plato’s notion of Forms, specifically the metaphysical problem of universals, arguing that universals, basically qualities, [00:16:00] actually exist and are not just mental constructs. His philosophical followers, the Scotists, were later derisively referred to as Dunses by humanists and protestant reformation theologians, thus giving us the word dunce, which like chauvinist is a pejorative word derived from a person’s name. Duns Scotus is tied to the word chauvinism in another way, since Scotus’s ideas about intuitive cognition influenced Chauvin’s name double, the protestant reformer John Calvin, to argue that God can be “experienced”.

Speaking of the Protestant Reformation, it would have mixed consequences for women. The Protestants, who by the way downplayed the significance of Mary, allowed clergy to marry, doing away with the rule requiring priestly celibacy. This idea of celibacy had been gradually developed in the Roman Church but only became an absolute rule in the 12th century. The Protestant view contradicted Paul’s teachings about the sinfulness of sexuality even in marriage, and by doing so raised the status of marriage and therefore women. But they also got rid of the monasteries and convents, thus removing options for women, who could no longer choose a life outside of [00:17:00] marriage and have control over their bodies in terms of reproduction. Protestants stressed the importance of direct access to scripture, which meant it was important for both men and women to be able to read, thus improving education for women. But they doubled down on patriarchal family structure with the father leading the household in daily prayer. Reformers like John Calvin felt that the woman’s place was in the home, and John Knox, the founder of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, wrote a polemical work with the fiery title The First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women even attacking the idea of women holding any civil authority. In the 19th century and even later some churches, such as the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, opposed the use of anaesthesia for women giving birth, since that meant they wouldn’t suffer the pains prescribed as their punishment in the story of Adam and Eve. Now of course different Protestant churches had different ideas about women, such as the Quakers who did sometimes allow women to preach, and in more recent years many Protestant churches have supported social reforms like women’s suffrage, and in the 20th century women clergy. To date though women are still barred from the clergy in the Catholic Church. [00:18:00] And again, views differ around reproductive rights such as birth control and abortion with not only Catholics but also many Protestants digging in their heels.

Getting back to the middle ages though, when more progressive ideas about women and sexuality did arise, the Church unsurprisingly tended to crack down on them. One dramatic example is the Church’s reaction against Catharism, from the south of France. The Cathars, from Latin Cathari meaning “the pure”, ultimately from Greek katharos “pure”, thus related to catharsis, literally “a cleansing or purging”, took the idea of dualism to extremes. They believed that there were two Gods, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. The Old Testament God created the physical world and was evil, while the New Testament God created the spiritual world and was good. Catharism had almost protofeminist beliefs, believing that gender wasn’t a part of the spiritual realm, and thus allowing women to preach and become part of the spiritual elite. They gave special significance to Mary Magdalene, who in the Bible was the first to see the newly arisen Christ and reported the news to the apostles, thus earning her the title apostle [00:19:00] to the apostles. Pope Innocent III cracked down on the Cathars, calling for the Albigensian Crusade to wipe them out. It was called the Albigensian Crusade after the town Albi in the south of France, from the Roman personal name Albius from a root meaning “white”. This word may have another tie in to our story in the word bigot, related in sense to the word chauvinist, though the more common etymology has a different connection. The usual theory about the origin of the word bigot, which had the earlier sense of “sanctimonious person or religious hypocrite”, is that it came from the Germanic expression bi God “by God”. The story goes that in the 10th century the Viking Rollo of Normandy, upon receiving his dukedom from King Charles the Simple of France, refused to kiss the king’s foot, saying “Nese, bi God!” or “No, by God!” Thus the French derisively referred to the Normans as bigots. In support of this theory of labelling a group by its favourite swear words, it’s been pointed out that in France during the time of Joan of Arc, the English were referred to as goddams, and during WWI American soldiers in France were called les sommobiches, but the story does still have [00:20:00] an air of folk etymology to it. Alternatively, in a less well-known but perhaps more plausible version, bigot might be an abbreviation of albigot in reference to the Albigensian heresy, in other words the Cathars, and the word does first appear in French at around that time in the south of France.

Now returning to more recent words for misogyny, though as we’ve seen the concepts it describes aren't new, it's in the 20th century that people have noticed them enough to need new words to label them, such as sexist and sexism. These words are surprisingly recent, at least in their modern sense of gender-based discrimination, and like male chauvinism have their origins in racial discrimination, again highlighting the important connection between sexism and racism, and I suppose at least retroactively demonstrating the importance of intersectional feminism. Sexist was introduced into feminist discourse by Pauline M. Leet in a 1965 speech given at Franklin and Marshall College, in which she explicitly proposed it as a term parallel to racist. The text of the speech was privately distributed among feminists, until sexism appeared in print for the first time in Caroline Bird’s [00:21:00] 1968 book Born Female. And that same year, possibly independently coined, the words sexism and sexist were used in a pamphlet written by Sheldon Vanauken, again with the parallel with racism explicitly made. Vanauken recommended sexism and sexist as better terms than male chauvinism and chauvinist, and in the end it looks like his advice was followed.

Of course the countering of sexism had its own terminology, and we can see a trajectory similar to that of male chauvinism with the term women’s liberation.The earlier term had been feminism, which first appeared in the 19th century originally as a generic term equivalent to femininity or in biological or medical senses, but soon enough feminism and feminist were adopted by 19th century advocates for women’s rights, and it should be pointed out that feminism when used by feminists themselves doesn’t meant hatred of men or discrimination against men, but instead equality of all people. After women’s suffrage was achieved, these words went into decline, and in the 60’s and 70’s feminists often preferred the term women’s liberation [which had been around [00:22:00] since the end of the 19th century]. But soon enough women’s liberation was adopted by their opponents in such formulations as women’s lib and libber, and by the mid 70s it too went out of fashion, with feminism reemerging to fill the void.

And so from this historical and etymological trail we can see the foundations of misogyny in modern western culture. We see the battle for control over reproduction informed by Eve’s punishment, not to mention body shaming and calls for female modesty and dress codes that frame girls as an irresistible temptation for boys, drawing them away from intellectual pursuits in schools. Thus women are the target of slut shaming, and the word slut provides an informative example. A word of uncertain etymology, slut originally meant a “dirty or untidy woman” and still can in some dialects. It gradually gained more pejorative senses such as a “woman of low character” or a “bold or impudent girl”, but could also be used in a playful way without implying serious criticism, much as we use the word scamp, originally meaning a “highway robber”, to refer affectionately to a mischievous boy. But there’s always a double standard, and by the [00:23:00] 20th century the word slut developed the disparaging sense of a sexually promiscuous woman. And still today women are policed for their sexuality with this word, are sexualized in the media, and are blamed for their own rapes. And women continue to be thought of as a sexual commodity, as we can see so explicitly with the rise of incels, short for ‘involuntary celibates’. The term, coined in 1993 by a college student known only as Alana to refer to a website and mailing list that offered a support group for lonely people who felt marginalised by things such as rigid gender norms, mental illness, or social awkwardness, has since been co-opted by often violent and dangerous misogynistic men, calling themselves ‘incels’, who are driven by their resentment at not having sex with women, and who call for “forced sexual redistribution” of the “resource” that is women’s bodies. Ironic then that a word which originally just meant “unmarried” and was associated with an opportunity for women to have reproductive choice should now be associated with the most extreme form of misogynistic control—basically government enforced [00:24:00] rape.

Now of course in this video I’ve only briefly summarised one strand of the story of misogyny, which is a deep and complex phenomenon. But hopefully looking at these etymologies and and their historical connections to philosophy and religion can provide some fresh insight into this ever present problem. So let me say in closing: don’t be a dunce, reject this bald sexism, and don’t be a chauvinist.

I suppose I should say that when I was writing this, I kept in mind that my target audience was other men primarily. And I think that's statistically

**Aven:** pretty accurate for our channel, accurate for

**Mark:** at least as so far as our YouTube analytics tell us that our audience is like mostly men, 70% men, at least, at least.

But, you know what could I possibly say to women about misogyny that they don't already know through lived experience. Right. I tried to keep in mind that I'm talking to other men who might be ignorant about the [00:25:00] topic, and hopefully that does some good. Mm-hmm.

But before we get into that, main topic I have one little extra tidbit to add about the original sense of chauvinism, the the excessive patriotism mm-hmm.

And a related or, or kind of parallel word. So, as that little piece already discussed, chauvinism originally referred to excessive French patriotism in particular. Well, the parallel word jingoism originally referred to excessive English patriotism. Right. It first appeared in the late 19th century and comes from the word jingo as in the expression by jingo, which I feel I have to say in a sort of over the top you

**Aven:** know, plu mmy

**Mark:** British accent, by Jingo,

By Jingo.

So Jingo seems to have originally been a sort of nonsense word from the 17th century used by [00:26:00] magicians in the phrase, Hey, Jingo to call for something to reappear.

**Aven:** So like, Hey, Presto. So

**Mark:** it's the opposite of, Hey, Presto. Oh, okay. Hey, presto, is what you say when the object disappears.

Okay, hey, presto, and you pull off the cloth or something and it's cloth or whatever, it's gone and the rabbit is gone or whatever. And then when you want it to reappear, you say, Hey, Jingo. And there it is again. Okay? But the word was soon adopted as minced oath or taboo deformation of the word Jesus.

Jingo Jesus with by jingo being used to translate. I found this quite interesting. Translate the French phrase "pardieu". By God. Right. Right. So rather than saying by God, which is, because it's an oath, Yeah. Sort of blasphemy. You would use this, you know, by Jingo. Now by Jingo became a common English interjection and was later used in a music hall song calling for an aggressive [00:27:00] military stance against Russia in the 1870s during the Russo-Turkish war. And so the chorus,

**Aven:** everything old is new again.

**Mark:** So the, the chorus of this song goes, " we don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do, we've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too. We've fought the bear before. And while we're Britons true, the Russians shall not have Constantinople."

**Aven:** I mean subtle.

**Mark:** Yes. Very [00:28:00] jingoistic indeed. Or chauvinistic, in it's original sense. And so soon after the words jingo and jingoism were used to refer derisively to blustering, patriots and Chauvinists calling for

**Aven:** war. Right. And of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Terry Pratchett book Jingo. Ah.

Which is about many things. But among other things, an island suddenly appears off the coast of the main city that the books are set in, and the city and another place both claim it. It just comes up from under the ground, like suddenly appears. And then this place that didn't even exist a week ago and nobody could have cared less about suddenly becomes they're gonna go to war.

And these people have been at peace forever. And so it's sort of all about that. And then spoiler, it ends by the island disappearing again. So it's like Brigadoon a little bit somewhat, but, but it's, you know, it's all about the foolishness of the, every, suddenly [00:29:00] everybody's all riled up. We've always hated these other people.

Oh, you know, all the rest. And they've been at peace for hundreds of years, but suddenly over this completely nonsense thing a whole bunch of this whipped up patriotism is used by various people for their own ends. So it's called Jingo. Just, I know there'd be people annoyed I didn't mention it if I didn't.

**Mark:** So now I think what we want to do is sort of go through chronologically. And talk about some, add some little bits, right? Add some, add some bits. I mean, the video went through all of that chronologically, but there's, there was so much detail that would not fit in the video, certainly at the length that we were trying to do them at the time.

And so there's a lot more to say. So we're gonna add a bit of that Depth and complex

**Aven:** Yeah. Complexity. Extra little tidbits of interesting things. So I'll start with the couple of things. You of course mentioned Pandora and that's why we're drinking the Pandora's Jar.

And you tell the little, the story about her as the, analog to Eve as the, Being the fault of a woman that all things bad have [00:30:00] happened. And you mentioned that it's Hesiod, well, actually her story is in Hesiod twice. So in both Theogony and Works and Days, which are both attributed to the poet Hesiod and the story that you paraphrase is given in its in more detail in a narrative form in the Works and Days, and it's introduced by Hesiod saying to his brother.

So this poem, it's near the beginning of the poem, and the poem is nominally addressed to Hasid's brother Perses, who he seems to have had a number of quarrels with. And so he sort of addresses Perses and says, I'm gonna tell you a bunch of important useful things for you to know, and you should lay them up in your heart and don't let "strife who delights in mischief hold your heart back from work".

Then he goes on to say a very famous line about there being two types of strife. There's strife that makes people compete with one another and it's good. And there's strife that causes war and evil. But he says, then goes on to explain [00:31:00] why you have to work so hard. It's because Gods have hidden the means of easy life from you.

They kept the means for life from humans. And Prometheus stole fire. And then it goes to that whole story that you told, and it gives the story of Pandora being made from water and earth and, making her to be beautiful.

And all of the goddesses give her gifts to make her beautiful. And it says, specifically, you say Pandora could mean all giving or all gifts. Hesiod says that it comes because she is all endowed, because those who dwell on Olympus gave each a gift to her. But she is a plague to men who eat bread.

So she's a plague to mortals. She's the sheer hopeless snare, and she comes down and, and becomes a gift to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. and as Liv says in the book, there's nothing mentioned about curiosity. It's just, she was sent to do this and she does it.

You know, it's not really her fault. It's not because of who she is. I mean, it is because of who she is, but [00:32:00] it's not because there's something about women that leads her to open the jar. It's because she's sent to do this thing. Fine. The other place that it's mentioned though, is in the Theogony, which is Hesiod's other work that tells about the birth of the gods and various demi Gods. When he talks about Prometheus, he then mentions the story of Pandora as part of it. He tells a different story about Prometheus, about him stealing fire, but then also tricking Zeus by doing the sacrifice where he tricks Zeus into accepting on behalf of the gods, the worst part of the sacrifice, so that men can get the good parts.

And it's that, that makes Zeus mad. And then he decides to make Pandora. And so here it's a little less narrative, but it's more, goes into more depth about why women are horrible. So since that's our topic, I thought I'd talk about it a bit more. "So forthwith, he made an evil thing for men as the price of fire". So the likeness of a shy maiden, and she was girded with silvery raiment, by [00:33:00] Athena, and made to be beautiful. And Hephaestus makes a wonderful crown for her. But when he had made the "beautiful evil", and that's a famous line about Pandora, the Kalos Kakon. Right, right. "The beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing". And everyone thought she was beautiful "for from her is the race of women and female kind". And interestingly, it doesn't go on to tell the story of her taking opening the jar.

This just says he made Pandora and from her came the race of women. Right. And that is the, is the punishment. Right? Evil. That is the evil itself. "From her is the race of women and female kind. Of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no help meets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth.

And as in thatched hives, bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief." And of course this is the ancient world where they thought the good worker bees had a [00:34:00] king and were male and the drones were female. "Bees feed the drones whose nature it is to do mischief by day. And throughout the day until the sun goes down, the bees are busy.

Lay the white combs while the drones stay at home and the covered steps and reap the toil of others into their own bellies. Even so, Zeus, who Thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows the women cause and will not wed reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years. And though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them. And as for the man who chooses the lot of marriage and takes a good wife, suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good for whoever happens to have mischievous children lives, always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him.

And this evil cannot be healed. " So the line basically is women are terrible, but if you don't have women, you don't get kids. And so you die alone. [00:35:00] And if you do have women, and even if you have a good woman, then you have kids. And kids are terrible. Now. Hesiod's a little depressed about life in various places.

But I think this is interesting because if you only had the Theogony, there's nothing in here about Pandora's jar, right? and really, you know, Pandora's jar is much more equivalent to the Eve story, right? That women causes an evil to be unleashed. But in this version, she just is the evil, women are the evil, they are the punishment for Prometheus's theft of fire.

And also it really highlights, you know, what is it, "a help meet only in wealth, not in poverty". Yeah. I

**Mark:** thought that was interesting that there's a class distinction there. Well,

**Aven:** no, it's, yeah. I think what he means is they are useless. They're like the drones. So they might be pretty and nice when you have lots of money, but they do nothing to contribute and they eat.

Oh, all they do is consume. They consume and they do not [00:36:00] produce. So, Which is obviously such a weird, and it's, it's really interesting and I will, I'll talk about this more when I talk about the next work that I wanna discuss. Cuz you would think that the most obvious thing about women is

**Mark:** all the domestic

**Aven:** work that they Well, I was just gonna say that they obviously produced, it's the most bio essential thing about them.

They produce children, right? Like they are, in other mythology and everything, what is the most fundamental thing about women? They are fertile. They produce, but he likens them to the drones and says they produce absolutely nothing. The only thing they produce is children, which is sometimes terrible.

In other words, I think it's a, very deliberate sort of twisting of something that is clearly obvious to everybody, that women; and then yes, second, women in the ancient world, just like at almost every time in the, recorded and unrecorded history did a humongous amount of work, domestic labor in the house.

What they did though, like the drones, they do it inside the house. They don't go outside the house. So he's, you know, this is tendentious [00:37:00] to say the least. And that's an important point about misogyny, right? It's, based on a lie. It's always based on a lie. But if you just say it, it sounds like could be real or could be, plausible.

and there's a whole thing about the, sort of, the jar of Pandora is there's a whole mythological thing about a jar is meant to be filled as a woman's womb is meant to be filled, but a jar also spills out evils because a woman produces evils if you, you know, depending how you wanna think about it, or it's connected to the household because a women is there to store up the domestic products in a, in jar like jars were the storage products of the ancient world.

**Mark:** It's, it's so odd given that the societal focus and, and necessity on the production of an heir for the man.

**Aven:** Right. Well, and that's what he says, right. Women are terrible and they ruin your life and they, they take all of your goods, but if you don't have [00:38:00] them, you will have no one to look after you when you're old.

And you'll die. Yeah. But the

**Mark:** second part of that is that your children will be

**Aven:** Yeah. But he then goes on to say that which is even more tendentious. Right. Like, sometimes you'll have bad children. What? Hello? Okay.

**Mark:** But most men most rejoice in having sons. Exactly. I

**Aven:** know. It's, it's, it's a, it's a very, that's my point.

It's a very like, yeah. It's contrary to say the least, but Yeah. but that's the paradox, that we see again and again in ancient literature, is essentially, goddammit, I have to have a woman because if I don't have a woman, I can't have children, and I need children. But women are terrible.

They can't live with them, can't live without him. You know, it's basically like fifties comics, but 3000 years ago, so let me, let me expand on that delightful sentiment with another very famous piece of literature from the ancient world about that is, I mean, it is just nothing but misogyny. And this is a poem usually credited to Semonides of [00:39:00] Amorgos It's from the seventh century BCE. There's a fragment. It's not entirely clear how much longer it was meant to go than what we have, or if this is the whole poem and basically it's going through the races or types of women that there are in the world. I won't read it all, but I'll, I'll start a few and it just lists them off.

And they're all compared to something, mostly animals, but some other things as well.

This is a translation, by the way, from Diane Arnson Svarlien, which I will link to. "From the start, the Gods made women different", and this of course alludes to the idea that Pandora is a different, there was a different creation for men and for women. " One type is from a pig, a hairy sow, whose house is like a rolling heap of filth, and she herself unbathed in unwashed clothes, reposes on the shit pile, growing fat. Another type, the gods made from a fox: pure evil, and aware of everything, this woman misses nothing good or bad. She notices, considers and declares that good is bad, and bad is good. Her mood changes from one moment to the next. [00:40:00] One type is from a dog, a no good bitch, a mother, through and through. She wants to hear everything, know everything, go everywhere and stick her nose in everything and bark.

Whether she sees anyone or not, a man can't stop her barking, not with threats, not, when he's had enough, by knocking out her teeth with a stone, and not with sweet talk either. Even among guests, she'll sit and yap. The onslaught of her voice cannot be stopped. One type the gods of Mount Olympus, crafted out of earth their gift to man.

She's lame and has no sense of either good or bad. She knows no useful skill except to eat. And when the Gods make winter cold and hard, to drag her chair closer to the fire. Another type is from the sea. She's two-faced. One day she's calm and smiling. Any guest who sees her in your home will praise her.

Then this woman is the best in all the world and all also most beautiful. The next day she's wild and unapproachable, unbearable even to look, look at, filled with snapping, hate, ferocious like a bitch with pups. Enraged at loved ones and at enemies alike." Goes on about [00:41:00] that. There's another one who's like a mule or donkey.

She's used to getting smacked and won't give in until he threaten her. She'll do her work, okay? But then she eats all day, all night. She eats everything in every room. "And when it comes to sex, she's just as bad. She welcomes any man that passes by. Another loathsome miserable type is from a weasel, undesirable in every way, but sex crazed too.

But anyone who climbs aboard her will get seasick. She steals from neighbors and sacrificial feasts". Another is a horse with flowing Mane. "She avoids all kinds of work and hardships. she would never touch a mill or lift a sieve or throw the shit outside or sit beside the oven.

All that soot. She'll touch her husband only when she has to. she washes off her body every day, twice, sometimes three times. Then rubs herself with perfumed oil. She always wears her hair combed out and dressed with overhanging flowers. Such a wife is beautiful to look at. For others. For her keeper, she's a pain unless he is a king or head of state."

Another is from an ape who's ugly and horrible. and then [00:42:00] the last one, "another type is from a bee. Good luck in finding such a woman. Only she deserves to be exempt from stinging blame. The household that she manages will thrive. A loving wife beside her loving man, she'll grow old. Having borne illustrious and handsome children, she herself shines bright among all women, grace envelops her.

She doesn't like to sit with other women discussing sex. Zeus gratifies mankind with these most excellent and thoughtful wives, but by the grim contrivances of Zeus. All these other types are here to stay side by side with men forever. Yes, Zeus made this greatest pain of all: women." And then he goes on longer to say, if she seems to wanna help, that's when she does her keeper the most harm.

"A man who's with a woman can't get through a single day without a troubled mind. He'll never banish hunger from the house. Ungrateful, unwelcome, hateful, lodger, hostile God. She'll pick a fight, A household with a woman is at a loss to give out gifts [00:43:00] and welcome to a guest." She goes around sleeping with other men.

"Each man will diligently praise his own and blame the next man's wife. We don't see that we all share alike in this hard luck", and then it ends with, or at least we think it ends, as I said, and we're not sure if this is actually the ending: "Zeus made this the greatest pain of all and locked us in a shackle hard as iron and never to be broken ever since the day that Hades opened up his gates for all the men who fought that woman's war", which is a reference clearly to Helen.

Helen, right, right. So the greatest, so in some ways it makes sense as an ending because it, it's a reference to the greatest terror, the most awful woman who did the most awful thing. But it's not clear. It's actually the ending. So, it's just a terrible poem. And even the Bee woman, he says, so there's a whole bunch of terrible women, and then there's one who's perfect, but he says, good luck finding her.

So it's, it's almost, it basically suggests either they're so rare or they're essentially impossible. Such a thing doesn't really exist.

**Mark:** I, I'm guessing [00:44:00] we, he wasn't happy in his marriage.

**Aven:** Well, but you know, we see this elsewhere, right? Yeah. Like, this is the most distilled form of this, and it's the most expanded on, but it's a theme we see over and over again.

And you note, you know, what are the basic themes again and again, it's the same thing as in Hesiod. Unproductive, eats too much, consumes your resources, does not produce resources. And whether that's with food or sex, and she can't win of course, as always, either she's too dirty and unwashed, or she's too washed and too beautiful, right?

Both are wrong. Either she doesn't care enough about her appearance or she's ugly. So it, there's no, you know, every extreme It's impossible experience. It's impossible. Yeah. Yeah. but again and again, it's about hunger. and in one way, this does make sense in an economy and in a world, this is the seventh century that's, you know, subsistence or just barely above it.

What is the most important thing is productivity in the home. So if you're going to get mad about something, you know, it's an easy thing to [00:45:00] accuse someone else of, of wasting your resources and not producing, because people who don't produce are, are a real drain on your society. But it also, I think it really is that sort of core of a lot of the misogyny, I mean, you see these, these same things are exactly what people have said, you're gonna come back to, I'm sure all of these themes in one way or another. And also, I think it also really emphasizes an ongoing thing, which is the complete devaluing of the work women do do; whatever it is they do is ignored. And they're compared to men. And if they don't do what men are doing, they are wrong.

Right? So, because they don't go out of the house and work in the fields, they do no work. Right. it's not a double standard so much as simply there's one standard, which is that men are right. And if a woman does not act, I mean, of course if she did act like a man, it would be terrible too.

But, you know, because a [00:46:00] woman's work or life or whatever does not exactly match what a man does, whatever she does is worthless and of no of no consequence. And you know, that basic premise undergirds so much of even today and certainly in the past the dismissal of, when we see it all the time in talking about things like emotional labor or domestic labor and not, not being appreciated and, you know, all the things that men repeatedly don't see. In a systemic way, not individuals, but like in a cultural way as being important. Even in things like when a particular area of the labor force starts to get more women in it, the salaries go down. Right. and vice versa, because if a woman can do it, it can't be important. That's the basic premise.

And we see it at literally the beginning of, the written tradition in Western Europe. So The other really famous, really strongly misogynistic ancient work that I could talk about, but I'm not going to is satire 10 by Juvenal.[00:47:00] And it's a long poem, and in a similar way it doesn't have this sort of straightforward structure of here's all the different types of women, but basically it lists off a whole bunch of terrible things that, ways that women can be terrible with individual women named, though it's likely they aren't actually meant to be real people.

They're just sort of types. But it's, it just lists off all the terrible things that women are like. And A, it's very long and I've already read a bunch of stuff, and B, it's just really vile. it's very useful for understanding What the ideals of womanhood are, because by inverse, you know, he talks about all the terrible ways that women act.

So it gives us a sense of what they ought, what the Romans thought they ought to act like. So it's useful as a sociological document, but it's just, this one at least is sort of funny a little bit maybe because it has all the animals and stuff, but it also doesn't get into as much detail. And Juvenal really gets into a lot of detail.

It's just, it's really unpleasant. So I just don't actually want to read it.[00:48:00] It was influential, like everything Roman and, and Juvenal was an important author and an important progenitor of satire in particular. And it certainly influenced, you know, medieval renaissance misogyny, no question about it.

And I encourage you to go look it up if you want, but I just don't wanna, so I'm not going to. So that's all I wanted to really focus on. And then we can pass swiftly over the Roman world. And obviously we've talked about gender roles in Rome before. Yeah. This is something we've discussed quite a bit.

So why don't I pass it back to you for the next period, no pun intended.

**Mark:** So when I talked about the Middle Ages, I mainly focused on the religious side. But I think one really important aspect of misogyny and concepts about gender and gender roles in the Middle Ages is tied up with the courtly love tradition.

Right. Yeah. And much of the language of [00:49:00] courtly love was borrowed from religion. So the two are very much intertwined and especially from the cult of Mary, right? The, worship of Mary is very much figured or used in the sort of courtly love tradition. And, you know, for, for those who haven't fully theorized the idea of what courtly love is.

You know, the idea is that there is a male lover who worship s a woman who is remote or distant or unavailable in some way. You know, often she's figured as his Lord's wife

**Aven:** or usually she's married or in some other way. Yeah, she's married, or

**Mark:** if she's not married, she's, you know she's very high born and the king's daughter or something.

Completely out of reach. Completely out of reach. And so it's this sort of love from afar and this devotion to this object. And she really is sort of objectified, right? She is put on a pedestal and not allowed to get off that pedestal. And so You know, in a lot [00:50:00] of ways the cult of Mary was a sort of sublimation of sexual desire for women.

Right. You could, kind of get past the sinful nature of that sexual desire if you kind of focus that devotion onto the Virgin Mary who is the ultimate in unobtainable women. Yeah. And, and so courtly love was an extension of that, right. It sort of, figuring that pattern onto the secular world.

And so what goes along with that is the chivalric behavior of men. And that their devotion to fine behavior and virtuousness and all of these. Really admirable qualities. Yeah, admirable qualities. And so that again, was supposed to suppress the sexual desire in favor of a more noble kind of love, right.

Courtly love and the way that it's figured in the literature is not, base erotic desire. Though there, there's sort of an element of that

**Aven:** and that's sort of one [00:51:00] facet of the idealized courtly love. There's quite a lot of the stories about from that period actually that go more into sex than mm-hmm.

Than sometimes I think people talk about, but yeah.

**Mark:** And of course the other thing to remember about this is that this is all a literary fiction. Yes. So, yes, we shouldn't read any, medieval courtly literature and imagine that, that this was the way everyday

**Aven:** life was like. Yeah. Not only is it not about real people doing real mm-hmm.

When their, and their individual real relationships, it's also not how relationships were going on except in a few places where we can see people emulating it. Yes. Right. So life imitating art. But yeah.

**Mark:** So, indeed the chivalric lover worships the object of his love and note the use of the word object there.

And the beloved either reacted with cool disdain to him or with chaste virtue. But she wouldn't Embrace that, give in. Right. That would, be against the rules. And so very often the [00:52:00] relationship would never be consummated, though. In some cases it was, but if it was, then it was always with disastrous consequences.

**Aven:** Yeah. And maybe we should point out that if this is all sounding familiar, one of the most famous examples of it though, not maybe the most prototypical one is the Arthur Lancelot And Guinevere relationship. And that's one where it is consummated with disastrous consequences, disastrous consequences.

**Mark:** Yeah. Now, interestingly, the Italian poet, Dante, brought this full circle with, the courtly love relationship with his beloved Beatrice in the Vita Nuova, the earlier work, that's very much, a, a work of courtly love where he just sort of goes on and on

**Aven:** a better far about how wonderful she is without ever actually doing anything about it, without ever

**Mark:** having actually probably spoken a word to her and seeing her only once in his life or something.

Yeah. But then it turns to religious salvation in the Divine [00:53:00] Comedy in which she is, she

**Aven:** ends up being

**Mark:** in heaven. In heaven and, you know, the perfect the perfect woman and, you know

**Aven:** leads him from, leads him out of purgatory, into, yeah. Into heaven. Yeah.

**Mark:** So it brings that secular back to the to the religious.

Now the courtly love tradition began in the south of France. And particularly it's associated with the world of Eleanor, of Aquitaine. Who was you know, the first was first the wife of Louis, the seventh of

**Aven:** France. sorry, little tangent. As you started to say "who was" my brain filled in "she was everything. He was just Ken" because Eleanor of Aquitaine was everything and every man around her was just Ken. Yeah, that's true. Sorry. Please go on to explain who she actually was.

**Mark:** Yeah, well, I mean, she, first she was the wife of Louis the seventh of France, and then later on Henry II of [00:54:00] England, before, he became king, but mm-hmm.

So, she was at various points, married to, the big

**Aven:** Some of the most powerful men in that part of the world, some of the most, most powerful men in the world. She also owned a whole lot of land on her own part. Well, that's the thing.

**Mark:** And, and that's due to holdovers from Roman law that were applicable where she was that enabled her to inherit.

property. And thus she held basically the whole of south of France herself. Independent of her, In her own name. Yeah. In her own name, independent of various husbands or other men around her. And so she was an example of like a huge amount of secular power and influence.

And in her circles, this form of poetry arose. And so this is the, period and place that we associate with the, the Troubador poetry. And so, that's where we get this literary tradition within which then spread. And, when she married Henry and moved to England,[00:55:00] that's the entry point into the English literary tradition where this court, all of this stuff gets in there.

Yeah. Literature gets in there. Yeah. Now in the Middle Ages when more progressive ideas about women and sexuality did arise as it did in part through this courtly love literature, the church was bound to crack down

**Aven:** on it. Though I will just say that courtly love has its own strong trend of misogyny. Yes. Right. Because the woman is idealized. But if she gives in, she's a whore. Well, and

**Mark:** it's a, well, it's this very fine line. She can't give in, but if she refuses,

**Aven:** she's too much. She's also responsible for the death of the lover, or,

**Mark:** yeah. Well, and she will be the, the target of invective as well.

Yeah. So there's a lot of courtly love language, you know, attacking the cold woman who, cold-hearted woman

**Aven:** who refused him. Dashes his heart. Yeah. And so she, it's not only she can't win, but also the idea of what a [00:56:00] woman is. You mentioned object. Right? Like that's also a misogynistic approach to women because it's, denying them agency.

Yeah. In all sorts of ways. So just because obviously courtly love and chivalry are often held up as, Putting women on pedestals. And isn't it good as the opposite of misogyny? It's really important to be just clear that that is in fact just another kind of misogyny. Yeah. In, in many, not all, many of its

**Mark:** instances, and I'll, I'll be coming back to that with one particular example, but Right.

There are obviously many. So as I said though, when the potential of a more progressive idea about women did arise the church had to crack down on it. So for instance, the church looked disapprovingly at the courtly love tradition, which often elevated women to almost divine status, as I said.

There's this very, clear connection between the cult of Mary and courtly love tradition.

**Aven:** Right? So sort of blasphemous on the one hand, or adulterous on the other hand. Yeah.

**Mark:** And the target audience of the sexually [00:57:00] charged literature was in large part women. So, what are women doing having this whole,

**Aven:** how dare they even think about such things?

Yeah,

**Mark:** yeah. Though it should be noted as I said that the dualist notion that I kept going on about can be found here, as you say it's this impossible dichotomy for women, right? If the woman rejected the lover's advances, she could be the target of invective.

If she doesn't, but if she does give in, if she does give in, then she's a fallen woman, a fallen woman. And even more dramatic is the church's reaction against Catharism from the same part of the world that the troubadours who kicked off the Courtly love tradition came from, the South of France.

So that whole Catharism stuff that I talked about, right, it's all located in in that same region. In that same region. Now, the one particular example, there's so much, and I could, I would just be talking about this forever, but I'm not gonna do that. But, you know, just to pick on English [00:58:00] literature and specifically the Canterbury Tales, which is so complex in its treatment of this issue in particular is, is like probably the most important theme of the Canterbury Tales in a lot of

**Aven:** ways. In multiple stories. Yeah. In multiple ways. Yeah.

**Mark:** And so there is a complex teasing apart of these many issues, particularly in the so-called marriage group of stories that scholars refer to now, there's a bunch of stories that kind of seem to, to reply to each other Right. And make a, a running theme out of it. So in the Knight's Tale, this is a sort of straight well, on the surface it's a straightforward courtly love romance. Right, right. With a love triangle, with two lovers, male lovers competing for the hand of the beloved who is not interested in either of them and their advances, but is given no choice. So when it finally is presented to it, so it's set in that's the

**Aven:** ancient one, said ancient Greece, Athens, right? Yeah. With, with Theseus. [00:59:00] And so when though, it's the least Greek ancient Greece you could possibly imagine. But anyway, yes.

**Mark:** So when, when Theseus is presented with this conflict of these two men, you know, vying for this woman, she doesn't want any of them.

And, he basically decides, okay, well the two of you have to fight it out and whoever wins gets her. Yeah. without any consultation with

**Aven:** what she wants. Just neither of them. Yes.

**Mark:** And she sort of prays to Diana to, to save her from it. Yeah. Somehow. But so you, get that on the one hand, but on the other hand you get the wife of Bath.

Who, has had five husbands and has in her own way managed to navigate that to her advantage. And ends up as a, prosperous woman with her own business and her own ability to generate income. And that is, one of the other few ways that women could have some level of autonomy through widowhood.

Yeah. Right.

**Aven:** [01:00:00] Yeah. Like in Rome it was true in Rome, not Greece so much, but Rome widowed was a good status, a good

**Mark:** status to have in that world. Yeah. And in the wife of Bath prologue she, and this is like, I think it's the longest prologue, but it's certainly the most fascinating

**Aven:** prologue. It's certainly the most famous.

**Mark:** She tears apart the anti-feminist literature tradition. And it's, it's very, I mean, obviously this is Chaucer writing but it's a very learned and knowledgeable run through all of this material, all of these

**Aven:** texts. Can I just say that anti-feminist in this phrase means against woman?

Woman, yeah. Not against feminists, because there were no feminists. Sorry. It's just, it's a term of art there, so, yeah. Yeah. And so she, she actually knows her literature Yes. Incredibly well as portrayed. Well,

**Mark:** and the funny thing is, one of the arguments that she uses is she favors experience over [01:01:00] Authority. So, literary authority, textual authority. But she values, Experience over that authority. Yeah.

**Aven:** She's saying, I have lived with four, five husbands. I know what I'm talking about. I know much more about the relationship between men and women than any of these authors who have written all these things and clearly know nothing about what they're talking about.

And yet, in doing so, she demonstrates, she shows her authority

**Mark:** Yeah. Her, her knowledge of all of that textual tradition. Yeah. So I mean, it's a wonderful tour de force piece of literature. Yeah. Piece of literature. And, on the one hand, because the way that Chaucer presents this, he doesn't give one point of view that this is the right thing mm-hmm.

In any clear way anyways he kind of gives the opposites. On the one hand, one might be curious, if I could go back in time and ask Chaucer, well what do you really think about this, this issue? On the other hand, I'd be so curious to know, did any of this play out in his actual marriage?

And I would like to talk to his wife and know if there's any, or is this just all an [01:02:00] intellectual thing for him? Yeah.

Who

**Aven:** knows?

**Mark:** But let's move on from the Middle Ages because I could go on forever about it.

And turn to the early modern period. And so this is when we really wanna think of that whole. Witch hunt thing, right? And yes. So many of the misconceptions is the witch burnings all that happened in the Middle Ages. It did not, it, it was, it's mainly a feature of the early modern period of the Renaissance mm-hmm.

So the word witch,it obviously carries a lot of baggage with it.

**Aven:** Yeah. Which is amazing cuz you wouldn't think you'd fit on the BoomStick.

**Mark:** For one thing, it's obviously a gendered word referring specifically to women. And beyond its magical sense, its sort of main, core sense of the word. The, term witch or old witch can be used contemptuously as a term for a disliked woman. Oh, that witch. is so mean.[01:03:00]

Right. So it's, it, can be used completely outside of that magical sense. Yeah. Yeah. Witches in the middle Ages and the early modern periods were suspected of many things, including prevention of conception in women and attacking male fertility. Sometimes actually stealing men's penises and storing them in large chests or in bird's nest in trees.

**Aven:** Is this an excuse to put the penis nuns picking the penises off the trees picture up? Cuz I will take any excuse to do that. Go for it.

**Mark:** Historically many women have been persecuted for the supposed crime of witchcraft, justified in part by the 15th century Christian treatise Malleus Maleficarum. " The hammer of witches". And you can tell this is specifically women targeted here because of the feminine ending "-arum", "maleficarum". So that's referring to women, not men. It's hard to know how many women were [01:04:00] persecuted, tortured, and burned during the witch hunts of the 15th through 18th centuries.

But some estimates place it at 60,000 to 200,000 to even as high as several million. And this is

**Aven:** across Europe? This is across Europe. Not just England. Not, no, not just England. Not just one. Because in fact there were sort of pockets where it got really bad at certain periods in Germany or in Holland or whatever.

Yeah. Yeah.

**Mark:** And it's perhaps little surprise that the word "wicked" is derived from the same Old English root that produced the word "witch". So I guess you could say that the phrase Wicked witch is etymologically redundant. It's a tautology. Yeah. So, witch comes from the Old English word wicce, which means witch in old English.

And it has the masculine form, wicca meaning male witch or wizard, however you wanna translate it, from which we do get the modern word wicca in reference to neo paganism. But [01:05:00] it should be pointed out that there is no historical line of connection for this word, from Old English to the present with the word having been reintroduced into modern English in the 20th century.

Right.

**Aven:** It was found in older texts and brought back, yeah.

**Mark:** Now the further etymology of the word witch is very disputed with many suggestions being made. The brothers Grimm, who I suppose would know a thing or two about witch stories since many of the brothers Grimm stories dealt

**Aven:** with, well, yeah.

They, they basically created some of our stereotypes indeed about witches. Yes.

**Mark:** Well, they proposed that Old English wicce and wicca come from the Proto-Indo-European route wake \*weik-, which means to separate or divide, reflecting the practice of cleromancy. That's sortition, the casting of lots. Mm. Which according to the Roman ethnographer, Tacitus, was a part of early Germanic religious practice.

So it would be something [01:06:00] that, you know, that might go back that far, might, might be there in Anglo Saxon England.

**Aven:** Though, really, I don't believe any of those early German nationalists when they suddenly find something in Tacitus because they were really excited about looking for the roots of Germany in, in the past. So I'm going to reserve my judgment on that based on no knowledge whatsoever.

**Mark:** Well, that's one suggestion that it comes from this magical practice. The Indo Europeanist Calvert Watkins, on the other hand, proposed that it comes from the root \*weg- meaning to be strong or lively in the sense to wake or rouse reflecting the magical practice of necromancy.

So in other words, one who wakes the dead, and if that's true, then it would be cognate with words like wake, watch, and wait.

And there are numerous other suggested etymologies, but I'll only mention [01:07:00] one more that it might be traced back to the homogenous root \*weik-. So, this is a different word, but a different word, but it's sounds the same in Proto-Indo-European Which in this case means consecrated or holy and a number of other derivatives.

connected to religion and magic. For instance the German word for Christmas Wein nacht, holy night. So it's this sort same religious night or whatever. As well as the from the same root would be Latin victima, from which we get English victim, which is about

**Aven:** the sacrificial thing.

The

**Mark:** sacrificial animal. Yeah. Yeah. But on the subject since I've mentioned the, Possible estimates of the number of women killed during the witch hunts. The WHO, and so this is slightly out of date. I got this from a book published in 2003. So this slightly

**Aven:** out outta date as in 20 years out of date.

Yeah. Yeah. But the World

**Mark:** Health organization estimates that [01:08:00] around 70,000 women die every year because of having unsafe abortions. Which would mean that this is as many or, or more than were murdered and annually at the height of the European witch hunts in the 16th, 17th century.

**Aven:** And frankly, I would be very surprised if that number is not much higher. Right. Higher now than it was Yeah. In 20 years ago, because the world is terrible.

**Mark:** Yeah. So, a thing to think about particularly as as

**Aven:** those rights are being restricted everywhere, those rights are being restricted. Well, not everywhere, very specifically.

**Mark:** Yeah. So of course, there is a kind of irony that the printing press, which was used to spread misinformation about superstitions, like witchcraft in particular the witch's hammer. Right. Was a printed book. Also led to some improvements for women because of the translation and printing of the

**Aven:** Bible, which allowed women to actually read it.

Which themselves,

**Mark:** which, [01:09:00] which was a a huge boost to the education of women. Right. Right. It suddenly became necessary to to have everyone literate.

**Aven:** Because, you know, and suddenly, yeah, suddenly it was a virtue for women to be able to read the Bible for be able to read the Bible. Right.

Becau, and that's Protestantism, not just the printing

**Mark:** press. Yes. So Protestantism, was sort of anti clericalism. Right. So the idea was that, everyone should have a direct access to God and to scripture, and so therefore everyone needed to be able to, to

**Aven:** read.

And that "everyone" for once included women. Women, yeah. Not a given. So we should always single that out when it's true, of course.

**Mark:** You know, the person who took over the role of the clergy in a sense was the father of the home. Right.

**Aven:** And, and not in every sect of Protestantism, but in many of them.

In

**Mark:** many of them, yeah. All right. From there we move on to the enlightenment. And as western culture moved toward the enlightenment and religion played a less central role in [01:10:00] society. I mean, it obviously it didn't disappear, but there became other,

**Aven:** a couple of civil wars would beg to differ wwere one to suggest it did, for instance. Yes. But

**Mark:** in any case, philosophy kind of moved on. And so John Locke, who was the father of liberalism, For instance, left behind that old dualist idea and believed that the mind was a blank slate at birth.

**Aven:** And which means it's not gender, it's well,

**Mark:** yeah. And so human differences should be seen as the product of culture, not nature.

So there's no difference between men and women. From first principle, from from birth. And so all of these things are external influence. And so therefore, philosophically if you follow that mindset, women should be considered equal. Right. And so there suddenly, there were people, espousing This idea and this for instance, became an important one to the, feminist discourse that followed in particular Mary Wollstonecraft. So I think any discussion about [01:11:00] misogyny and reactions to it, yeah. Feminism, we have to mention, mention Mary Wollstonecraft. So she, for instance, called for equal education for women to free them from their socially inferior position.

her idea was this is trained into them. This is not innate. Now, I suppose the one criticism that could be made of what Wollstonecraft said is that she accepted that mind body dualism, Encouraging a rejection of passion and beauty. Right. She said, I'm not gonna write in flowery words.

We need to be like men.

**Aven:** Yeah. Yeah. it's one of the ways that women have tried to deal with this problem is to say, well, femininity is what seems to cause all our problems. Yeah. and it's been placed upon us. So if we reject femininity and try and are like men, then that will be equality.

**Mark:** And that goes back to Plato's Republic, right? That was his version of equality for men and women, was that women were basically just men. Men,

**Aven:** yeah. Yeah. And men [01:12:00] weren't really very much like men either. Yeah. In a way. You know, they were, they were both pretty much sexless.

**Mark:** So moving very quickly on to the misogyny of the Victorian period.

And this is a period that we very often associate with. Backwards attitudes to women. While the earlier misogynistic response to women was fear of them and their sexuality, in Victorian Times, division was drawn upon class lines that echo the dualist philosophy. So good women, the angels in the house, and I'll unpack that term in a minute, were believed to be almost asexual, not really interested in having sex at all, and only giving into it for their husband's sakes. In other words, lie back and think of England as Queen Victoria is probably Apocryphally supposed to have said. Yeah,

**Aven:** yeah, exactly. Which Just shows that it doesn't matter which way it goes, it's still misogyny.

Cuz obviously, like we've looked [01:13:00] back at the Greek misogyny, women are figured as rapaciously sexual. Yes.

**Mark:** And it's such a difference,

**Aven:** isn't it? Yeah. That but in both cases,

**Mark:** in both cases, it's wrong. These impossible extremes. Yeah. Right.

**Aven:** Yeah. And, and, and bad and bad. That's the important thing.

**Mark:** So, the thinking at this period was that only fallen women of the slums were sexual, thus providing conveniently

**Aven:** enough an outlet for the men prostitutes because it didn't matter.

They were already fallen and they were of no value because they were low class already. Yeah. So there was

**Mark:** some outlet for those overly sexual men, you know? I mean, a good Victorian gentleman probably wouldn't need that,

**Aven:** but he did. But if he did, there's Right, there's some outlet for, but they didn't matter.

Yeah. Yeah.

**Mark:** And it was even proposed by some physicians of the day that taking pleasure in sex could lead to disease in women. It would cause, you know, like cancer or whatever. And yeah, so this is a reverse of earlier notions in the ancient and medieval world in which women were [01:14:00] more driven by sexual desire for men.

Now suddenly they're thought to be, well, actually they don't really like sex at all. And they'll give into it if they have to. But

**Aven:** now you see bits of that, that there are some Roman texts that suggest that the primary difference between a wife and a prostitute is how much she moves during sex that a wife doesn't.

And there's even some medical texts that suggest a woman's orgasm will prevent conception, which is interesting. So, well, there's others that say it's necessary for conception. views differed, but, It was not completely uniform in the perception of how women, so again, there's a good woman, bad woman right.

Thing there. Right. Like a good chaste wife won't be interested in sex.

**Mark:** So yeah, it's just a, a different version of the dehumanization of women and the removal of agency and the removal of agency. Yeah. Women figured in only two impossible extremes. Either they're perfect or they're completely

**Aven:** depraved.

There's no middle ground and, and worthless. And worthless. And like, you don't need to worry about what you do to them. And once you see that, I mean, [01:15:00] even before the Victorian period, you see that in like the Jane Austen stories where like once a girl falls, once falls, yeah. She's lost, there is no re redemption and mm-hmm.

And, and now anyone can do anything they want. And I mean, that's what's so scary about it. once she falls, she has no protections left at all. Anyone can do anything they want to her because she doesn't count anymore.

**Mark:** So again, it's that philosophical concept of dualism.

Now I started to explain this angel in the house phrase, right? It comes from, in particular, one specific poem. so it came to be used to describe the ideal of the Victorian woman, wife, and mother who was selflessly devoted to her children and subservient to her husband.

But it comes from this narrative poem by Coventry Patmore first published in 1854 and expanded until 1862. It is the Victorian ideal of [01:16:00] women. And it's sort of written, the, setup is it's a poet writing about his wife. And so Patmore in fact, based the poem on his actual first wife Emily.

Who he believed was the perfect woman

**Aven:** Uhhuh.

**Mark:** But in the poem, he creates a persona for himself. He uses a different name and a different name for the woman. And it's sort of, Expresses this Victorian theory of the separate spheres, which is again, a very old

idea,

**Aven:** but as the woman, woman is, in charge of the house and the man is outside in the world.

Yeah.

**Mark:** So domestic public dichotomy. Right. Women are naturally predisposed to the private or domestic sphere, so they take care of the house and the children. And men are naturally disposed to the public sphere, so they leave the home for work and civic engagement. And yeah. So this goes back, you can see the same thing in Greece.

In [01:17:00] Aristotle you know, with, it's the opposition between the oikos, the home, and the poli the city. So again, there's the dualism again.

**Aven:** Well, don't we like turning everything into dichotomies? Yes. Everything or nothing. We like turning everything or nothing in to dichotomies.

**Mark:** And so obviously, as with many things, the, modernist writers of the early 20th century turned on everything Victorian. And so you do indeed see later writers most importantly I suppose Virginia Woolf, specifically ridiculed this idea of the angel in the house.

**Aven:** And, and also she ridiculed it and she also I think examines its toxicity. The way it, it curls women up on themselves and, poisons them and makes them unable to function and do the things they wanna do. And like, I think of Mrs Dalloway these women so constrained by that sphere that they are twisted and and [01:18:00] hurt by it.

So it's, it's ridicule, but it's, there's, there's also the, the pain that comes from it Yeah. I think is really important too.

**Mark:** And so having taken us into the 20th century, I'm gonna stop there. Yeah. I think I, gestured towards enough elements in the later 20th century and beyond.

**Aven:** And also that's what people tend to be more familiar with. Yeah. I mean, I think we, unfortunately are all too familiar with 20th century misogyny in some ways. So,

**Mark:** I will say, a lot of the research that I did for that original video Came from a book called A Brief History of Misogyny, the World's Oldest Prejudice by Jack Holland.

And he's got a lot of interesting stuff about the 20th century as well. And, from different political vantage points, you know? Looking at socialism and communism on the one hand, and fascism on the other hand. And so there's a lot of interesting stuff there. I don't mean to No, no, that's fine.

Let's leave it off at that point,

**Aven:** but, go read that if that's something you're [01:19:00] interested in. Yeah, yeah. No, I think that's a good place to stop. It's a huge topic. I mean, gender relations, like there's a few things to say about it, you know? Indeed. And it becomes more and more relevant every day.

Sadly, some of this stuff We could talk about how, you know, homophobia is often an expressed an expression of misogyny. We could talk about lots of things, but I think we should stop for the moment. but if people have reactions to it or, would like to continue the conversation, it is certainly a conversation worth continuing and we could talk about it more.

And it's a topic that is worth thinking about, where the habits of thought we have now have come from and how they reappear in the different forms over and over again. And with that, we'll stop and we will be back next time with more possibly more uplifting topics.

Though I really can't promise anything. I mean something else, it might be more uplifting. Who knows? It might not. Do we know right now? No, we do not. [01:20:00] So have a good evening, day, morning, whatever you're having, and thanks for listening. Bye-bye.

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We'll be back soon with more musings about the connections around us. Thanks for listening.

**Mark:** Bye.[01:21:00]