

**Episode 4: "A Pedestal is a Different Kind of Box"  
with Kelly Sue DeConnick and Adrienne Mayor**

Adrienne: Kelly Sue, I am just blown away that you invited me to talk with you today. I'm really excited, I've gone through the pdf of Historia - the Amazons several times, once with my husband just to see what he would think about it and he was blown away too.

Kelly Sue: Oh yay!

Adrienne: We've been fans of graphic novels and comics since before you were born so this is really a thrill for me, so thank you, great to meet you.

Kelly Sue: Ah, I am so excited, so I would love to tell the story ... I got the invitation to do this podcast and I've had kind of an embarrassment of riches. I'd say? this year? In that, I ended up with more work than I'm really able to comfortably handle, and I'm trying to frame that for myself as No. That is a good thing but really, it's a series of poor choices. But anyway,

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: So when I was invited to do this Podcast, I was like. You know, I really need to be better about saying no, but they mentioned that they were, that the model was that they would pair people up for conversations. And so I was like well, if you can get Adrienne Mayor, I'll do it and I thought that's not going to happen. So I just got out of it and then they were like "Okay, she's really excited". I was like what? So it was very exciting for me. I should also say that I. I became aware of your work when I

Adrienne: Well this is just really serendipitous.

Kelly Sue: I should also say that I became aware of your work when I was starting my research for Historia, which is DC comic about the ...well, the the version that's out right now, The the book book One that's out right now is The Birth of the Amazons, and, you know, this isn't historical Amazons and it's not mythological Amazons, because it's the DC mythology. But I wanted to be well versed in all of those things in order to decide what aspects would best serve my story. And uh, as I reach out to Mike Coal, and uh, because he is a kind of an expert in my mind on uh, classical armies and warriors, and

Adrienne: Mike Coal on Twitter

Kelly Sue: Yes and um,

Adrienne: I'm a friend of his on twitter too.

Kelly Sue: Yes, and then so I reached out to him and he was like, oh, here's what you need to read. And so, he gave me the title of your book and that was, I think the first one that I picked up to begin my research and I was immediately captivated.

Adrienne: Thank you but I'm I'm so impressed with the way you've been able to distill real mythology and the and real history...you've got Herodotus and Thucydides in there is just amazing and the way just the way you have retold the stories and recast all of the goddesses I love it it's just you're so knowledgeable you must have done incredible research I'm just really uh mightily impressed.

Kelly Sue: Ah, well, thank you very much. I think you know it's been and I suspect, and I would love to hear this story. This has been an interest for me since I was very young. Um, and I, I think that it's almost come full circle because I think my way into mythology and then from mythology into ancient literature was first through Wonder Woman.

Adrienne: Ahhh

Kelly Sue: But I was quite young. I know I read Agamemnon in fourth grade, which is a weird choice. But, I think you know that it was it. This predates the Internet. My father was in the air force, so we lived in Germany. We didn't get American television, so I read voraciously and because I was in a D.O.D school, a Department of Defense school, It was really small classes

Adrienne: Uh huh

Kelly Sue: And I was in a group that did a lot of self led studies, And so I was really interested.

Adrienne: You were an independent scholar even then.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, I guess so yes, I was really interested. and um,

Adrienne: Yeah.

Kelly Sue: And they let me pursue it. I. I did a scene with shock puppets. I performed a scene from...

Adrienne: Agamemnon?

Kelly Sue: Yes! So you know, totally completely fourth grade. Appropriate.

Adrienne: That sounds fabulous mean meanwhile...well long before that I was into Little Lulu comics because she always got the best of the boys and I...

Kelly Sue: Yes!

Adrienne: I thought that was really wonderful that's something I wanted to talk to you about in the historia and the story of the amazons is that I'm obsessed especially in...and it comes through in my in my book The Amazons... I'm obsessed with equality and egalitarianism rather than war between the sexes.

Kelly Sue: Yes.

Adrienne: But I think I've heard you in other interviews talking about how no drama is fine for real life but uh but when you're doing comic books you need drama and so...

Kelly Sue: Yeah.

Adrienne: Superheroes and these and your story of the Amazons is about revenge and I think we're both seeking justice but I'm really captivated by the way you're using making up this back story for the Amazons as all of the women who have been treated so unjustly and the way you you just really uh you really name name is in call out everything it's just fabulous and the way the art uses the vase paintings was also incredible so I wanted to ask you how much do you consult the artists about what the images are?

Kelly Sue: Oh

Adrienne: Because your writing has to be so terse and concise there must be so much that goes into your discussions of the art.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, so the script is not concise...poor Phil. The script is verbose.

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: But so the smallest portion of the script is the dialogue that makes it to the page

Adrienne: Right

Kelly Sue: And then for a book like this, and I, I think with all comic books and everybody kind of has a different philosophy about this, but for me I say if I want to be God, I'll write a novel. Um, and a comic is a conversation. It's a collaborative conversation between the artist and the writer and it really now, this is in this model where there's a different writer and artist. There's another model where one person does the whole thing and that's very different. That's your God.

Adrienne: Yeah, right.

Kelly Sue: Again right. But in this case it's um, Phil and I both bringing our ideas and then responding to one another in a such a way that a third authorial voice develops, and I like to think about it in the same way that there's a third channel of story because you have

you know, because a comic it's static, right you? You have the words and you, and the pictures. There's no motion. It's, you know, it's very static. But this, this third channel of story happens in the reader's mind as they synthesize the words and the pictures, and they kind of fill in those gaps between the panels, and that doesn't exist anywhere except in the reader's mind. And I think in that same way, this third authorial voice that isn't Phil, and isn't me, that exists only in this book only in the way that this story is being told. it's neither mine nor his.

Adrienne: Right

Kelly Sue: And and when you do it really well, and when it gets going really well, there are sometimes things that you can't remember whose idea that was?

Adrienne: Right

Kelly Sue: And that's kind of fun.

Adrienne: Well I mean I'm probably a different sort of reader for this but I just really sense that energy between the two of you but also I have just amazed at how much in that third channel or can be the backstory and all the research and knowledge that is hidden behind your concise dialogue gets really amazing to me and I like the way at the beginning you set up all these alternatives and fables and myths about amazon's at the beginning so that we all all the readers have those alternatives in their minds too and the depth of that is quite astounding to me but I think it really adds to the um to the experience of readers who don't even know anything about the history or the myth they can sense how much of a panoramic story there is behind all your work into this it's astounding.

Kelly Sue: So the thing we wanted to do with that first page was, I'm: the worst at this, I'll start three sentences and then go back and pick a fourth one to finish. Um. But the the idea was that this would be like a history book, that the Amazons were writing for a young amazon. So the the reader in our minds is the young Amazon learning her history,

Adrienne: Yes.

Kelly Sue: And so there's a couple things that does one. Is it? It centers the woman reader right, and so that's a particular choice.

Adrienne: Yes.

Kelly Sue: Um, And it in in doing that we're not assuming a male default right, which is so much of our culture. And we invite men to read the book. Men are welcome to read the book. We love to have men read the book. But we're we're addressing the young Amazon, and then the other thing that that first page does. There are no images on the first page and it's particularly striking because the rest of the book is so richly rendered.

Adrienne: Absolutely, yes.

Kelly Sue: Ah, but the idea was very literally Topulrassa. So you think you know the history of the Amazons, but history is written by the victors, and in this case in the war between the Amazons and the world of men, the Amazon's lost. And so the histories that we've all read were written by the men. And so there's a line in there that says there is no objective history. Um, but you've read theirs and this one is ours.

Adrienne: Yes.

Kelly Sue: Uh, and I think that that is, and I'm and I'm interested in your thoughts on this as well because of, because you've spent so much of your life looking into our history. And I make the argument that we don't look into the history, Just to look into history. We look into history for relevance. In the present, We're looking for lessons to learn mistakes, not to repeat things that we've forgotten that we shouldn't have right.

Adrienne: Right.

Kelly Sue: We're looking

Adrienne: Continuity...

Kelly Sue: To enrich today. Yeah,

Adrienne: Yeah we need the continuity, yeah that's right I guess that is what I'm always looking for. You must have done a lot of reading before you uh before you actually started to write. Did you read any of the ancient sources like Herodotus?

Kelly Sue: Yeah.

Adrienne: Yeah I figure you did. That's going to be one that was going to be one of my books that I would send with you on the desert island but now I'm thinking maybe you've already read the whole thing.

Kelly Sue: Oh, no, but could take. I'll take it!

Adrienne: But I love reading Herodotus and every time I read it I find something new I mean I actually do like history for its own sake too because I'm I have all since I was a child really obsessed with well what what really happened what was it really like trying to cast yourself back into into history so...

Kelly Sue: Yeah.

Adrienne: But I really like the way you started with just this black void with these stark white questions and things that people think they know about amazons and it's certainly true about victors writing the history and yet if you think about there are some cases where losers still write the history for instance Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta. Athens lost the war, Sparta won.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, yeah.

Adrienne: But Sparta didn't write anything about it uh

Kelly Sue: Yes,

Adrienne: Spartans didn't...they're the victors and went on to their society then collapsed and the losers became what really looms large in our idea of of antiquity so it's not always true that if you lose your story gets lost now it doesn't always happen and that's I think that's true about the amazons thanks to greek males ambivalence and fascination and horror and admiration for strong women I mean this

Kelly Sue: Yeah...

Adrienne: ...is something that just obsessed them and they surrounded themselves with stories and images of strong athletic powerful formidable women and and that is why we know part of the story of who of the Amazons so it's their own mixed feelings that that kept a story alive in some way so we have to thank them for that.

Kelly Sue: Really smart ...you open the Amazons, the history book with the Atalanta.

Adrienne: Oh she's the she's the want to be Amazon in fact I think she should be an honorary Amazon.

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: Yeah she's really powerful yeah

Kelly Sue: And you know, the first time I heard that name was in the seventies when I was a kid there was uh, Marlo Thomas did this series called Free to Be You and Me and...

Adrienne: I remember the title, yes.

Kelly Sue: She wrote. Yeah, She retold the story of Atalanta as a children's tale,

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: Because a lot of her work was on gender equity.

Adrienne: Yes.

Kelly Sue: And...

Adrienne: And that story is really wonderful and I love the the switch at the end when she actually gets off and gets to go off and live happily ever after with her chosen mate.

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: And they're so in love they're having sex near one of Aphrodite shrines or sanctuaries and frady changes them into lions and they're transformed into lions as punishment for for having sex and I was thinking well that just sounds like paradise...

Kelly Sue: I know!

Adrienne: They get to be lions forever hunting together and we know lions do hunt in pairs Sometimes and so I i just really I was so struck by this is all the scholars and scholars of myth and classes have said well look at this punishment this you know she's is changing to a lion along with her lover for the rest of eternity and I'm thinking well that's yeah, don't throw me in that briar patch.

Adrienne: That's like the best thing that could happen to them that's like a reward of sale so I really and I ended with that and I think it's really interesting that she she is the sort of force of of equality within Greek culture she is Greek she's a Greek woman.

Kelly Sue: Mmmm...

Adrienne: Who has a lot of characteristics of the Amazons who were foreign barbarian women which is why of course they have to be defeated because you can't have the greatest heroes of Greek myth not defeating foreign

Kelly Sue: Sure.

Adrienne: ...forces

Kelly Sue: Yeah

Adrienne: ...foreign powers so of course the males are going to win but that's the other thing that really struck me in researching amazon like women in other cultures in of antiquity the script is so different than than the ancient Greek script with amazons where the the greatest heroes have to fight these warrior women and they of course overcome them and they're they're almost equally mash and yet the Greek men have to not only defeat them but kill them as really grim and bleak and yet they are foreign women and they're formidable

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: Powerful forces that have to be, they actually show they the the Greek champions then show how brave they are but in all the other stories the script is different once again the Amazon or the warrior woman and the male that she's going to have combat with they're so equally matched there's such equal adversaries that they fight for days without anyone winning and they finally realize this happens in persian stories egyptian stories Central Asian stories, Caucasian stories and even Chinese stories they're so perfectly matched that they decide well we we should be we should be companions and they go they make a truce sometimes they become lovers and then they go off uh to fight other enemies together...

Kelly Sue: Mhm. Mhm,

Adrienne: ...for the rest of the epic poem or or what whatever the story is which really reminds me of what happened to Atalanta.

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: She and her chosen mate become lions who now go off and hunt on their own...and I was always struck by the fact that in all these non Greek stories the script is so much more satisfying and exhilarating.

Kelly Sue: Well, and I think that there's another... this dovetails for me with what you're talking about with, you know we want equality. I personally don't like the idea of the all female Utopia, Like the the idea that the themascura is by dent of being all women going to be this place of perfect peace with an absence of conflict. Right, and I think that that, I think when we put women on a pedestal, we actually diminish women. It's this idea that when...

Adrienne: You subtract half of their yeah you subtract..

Kelly Sue: It's further othertering,

Adrienne: Half of their real life yes

Kelly Sue: it's further. it's it further. I'm sorry.

Adrienne: Yes well who made up that story man made up that story man made up that story.

Kelly Sue: Yes, exactly, exactly and um that's kind of the...Uh. This is so hard because I have like six different directions. I want to go with this but um, one is the discussion that you have in your book about, the misunderstanding of the origin of the term Amazon. Right

Adrienne: Right



Kelly Sue: That it? it not being against men, but it being coming...

Adrienne: Of men, yes

Kelly Sue: From yes, equals. And in that same way you know I, I think sometimes we can have this conversation where we're and this is, I don't know, "royal we" of culture. Um, that it that's somehow in saying that we should not be less than we leap to who we are somehow more than. And neither one of those things is actually liberal. It's it's a different kind of shackle is all.

Adrienne: Yeah I will, I'm always trying to gently dissuade people from getting absorbed into the patriarchy utopia and the Goddess studies that the world would be so much better without men and of course male and female is a spectrum as we know and...

Kelly Sue: Yes, that's a whole other thing to write.

Adrienne: There are just so many other I mean it just ignores and erases and eclipses so many important facets of real life so um I know uh that's often patriarchy theory or the sort of Utopian women only society is what draws a lot of people into studying Amazon our gender studies in antiquity but I think it should drop away uh I really can't believe that this theory that was started in like 1870 by a German male this matriarch thing...Baffin's matriarch studies and then of course taken up by Gimbutas the female archaeologist gets but it's ah there's just no proof for it and we don't need it like you say it's a way it's cutting off a whole part of the world and even Plato knew that when he said any society that uh doesn't grant it doesn't uh grant equality to women is only working at half half speed they he actually says they would be silly and stupid to do that it's incredible that Plato would say this yeah, he actually in his ideal world you know his ideal republic which is uh his ideal for how how Greece should be

Kelly Sue: Mhm,

Adrienne: He knows about the mythology from Herodotus and he knows about the real Scythian nomads whose lifestyle did have relatively egalitarian lifestyle for both men and women and that boys and girls were taught uh the same... the same writing and and shooting skills and and he actually says well we Greek should do that too we all we should train the women to be exactly as skilled and competent and confident and able to defend uh our society as the man it would be stupid not to.

Kelly Sue: Mhm...

Adrienne: So I mean if you have someone like Plato saying that in the fifth fourth century BC Greece and then not very many classical scholars even realize that it's just astounding to me that the blindness uh deliberate blindness to to all this acknowledgement in even in ancient Greece that...

Kelly Sue: Yeah.

Adrienne: There should be parity between the sexes.

Kelly Sue: Let me think, it's of the things that' treated like well, of course you know, like, of course women aren't as strong as men. Of course, women were the gatherers, you know, and so on and so forth, and of course...

Adrienne: Even that's not true...

Kelly Sue: ...because women are mothers. Of course they're more gentle.

Adrienne: Yeah yeah and even the hunter gather you read the uh most recent discoveries archeological discoveries in Peru and even in California, South America in the in the um hunter gatherer societies the graves that they have found of nine thousand years ago they were talking about hunter gatherers and you know the stereotype is the the women gatherer the men hunted not true... no longer true that has been completely overturned because of the graves that they have found of female huntress' with their weapons it's big game weapons for for not only for a big game for food but for trophies so that's over I mean obviously if you have a small society living in a harsh uh um landscape and you know really rigid originally defined sex roles you're not going to succeed you have to you have to if someone's a good hunter they get to lead the hunting party of course because you've got to survive it's just logical so...

Kelly Sue: I mean when we think about where we are today right and our world is faced with so many challenges from environmental challenges to the return of global populism. To I don't know, we're on the brink of another world war like it's and we continue to have to marginalize people by gender and by race and limit their ability to contribute and it's foolish. It's like opting to have a cancer like you've decided that these cells can't contribute to the well being of the whole.

Adrienne: Right it's it's amazing it'd be like using half of your body and never you know just cutting off half of your body the of the of a society it's amazing. I remember my mother when I was a little kid my mother was always saying to me you know in the future people are going to be astounded that men ran things because they had brute strength that they were stronger but of course that's what's so cool about the Amazons is that they had equalizers they had the horses and I have no doubt that it was the women who first domesticated the horses and decided to ride them and uh and they also invented this bow so you combine horseback riding and archery then the physical differences are erased.

Kelly Sue: Yeah. I've seen you post, share some of the work of the like, Mongolian archers, and uh, that's incredible!

Adrienne: It's so exhilarating

Kelly Sue: There's stuff that I...there's an area of research I haven't had the time to get into like I'd like to, but there there is an area of research that suggests that there is this idea that women are smaller and not as strong, Is Also a like that is a reality because of a kind of cultural Darwinism, right? That there's nothing about...there's no advantage to our being smaller and not as strong, But that this ....we have basically bred ourselves to me. That's for you know.....

Adrienne: Well you have to think of a ninja think of ninjas uh I mean ninjas are not big hulks for instance they're very effective fighters so uh yeah we've we've had a reverse Darwinism going on I guess yeah.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, yeah, it's really interesting.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

Adrienne: Okay well I already mentioned Herodotus and I suspect that you've read a lot of Herodotus but if I was going to a desert island I would take cardus and so I'm going to send the full works of Herodotus along with you he's just got so many astounding characters and he has such curiosity and I just feel like that would suit you so I'm I'm recommending Herodotus in your backpack. The other two books I was going to suggest are kind of strange one of them is by a Gustov Flaubert...

Kelly Sue: Okay...

Adrienne: Salamambo, which I just sort of rediscovered I read it when I was fourteen and it's about Carthage and it's was written by Flaubert after Madame Bovary was banned and censored and so he then turned to something even more sensational and lurid the story of a priestess of Molluck or Baal to which the Carthaginians dedicated their children sacrifice their children and it is so sensational and lurid and bizarre that I think you would really enjoy it got a lot of criticism because it seems to make the carthaginians into the other monstrous others and yet he did an incredible research the way I think you did he read everything he could about ancient Carthage and of course everyone says that the only important thing about Carthage is that they were defeated by the Romans so once again here it is someone trying to find out what the losers Carthage were really like and so I recommend that and it has some versions have some sensational illustrations by Malan Blaine who was a very mysterious author who also did pornography so when what....

Kelly Sue: Hey, we've brought him full circle!

Adrienne: Full circle...it would be cool to find out what you think of it I mean I read this when I was fourteen and it was my introduction to ancient history believe it or not which I think might explain a lot about me be going back to it I'm just: astounded. The other one is by Bernard Weber and it's a French book that's translated into English called Empire of the Ants I don't know if you've ever heard of it

Kelly Sue: I have not.

Adrienne: ...but it is a follows, it is an epic it's like an epic Homeric epic but it's about ants uh and it there is a young female warrior ant and she has to deal with like poisoned beetles and vicious termites and savage birds and

Kelly Sue: Oh, wow,

Adrienne: ... and then humans so I recommend the Empire the Ants now of course those are my three books but I also hope you have in your backpack just this book called worst case survival handbook...it's good I think it the full title is Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook and it's actually you know for being in a survival situation so it's how to escape quicksand and wrestle alligators and all that stuff.

Kelly Sue: I think my son has it. Actually, so...

Adrienne: Everything that can go wrong you'll just naturally have that one along so those those are the books I'm recommending for desert island.

Kelly Sue: Okay, um, oh, my gosh. Alright. so there's a crazy coincidence happening here that um in in book two of uh, Historia, which I think will be out by the time this airs, So I'm going to feel free to spoil something. Oh, no, it's not book two. it's here's a spoiler for book three, But when that, when the gods declare were on the Amazons, the first salvo is uh, uh, Heracles and Um, and when he comes to challenge the Amazons, we have a whole thing where he, when he steps out of his chariot, he he, he steps on an ant, and he kills an ant, and you see like we're and then and then he takes his sword and he plunges it into the earth, and when he does it, it makes all of these lines in the underneath the ground, and it, It sort of sends these messages to these ants and then he calls out an uh, one of the Amazons to face him because he thinks he's sort of going to battle them all one on one. And and it's it's so Antipe is down to face him, And it's it's Hipota who realizes we don't have to play by his rules, And so all of the Amazons come and face him at once. And of course, even though he is this tremendous warrior who's like literally twice their size, he's one. and at the same time that there's a parallel narrative, so you're watching this happen at the same time you're watching this,, praying mantis has picked up uh, an ant and bid its head off. But then, as that ant is dying, that aunt sends the signal to the other ants, and and all of those ants come in. And so when you see the Amazons kind of devour Heracles, the ants devour the praying Mantis, So...

Adrienne: And of course ants answer are all female

Kelly Sue: So I am going to get myself a copy of the Empire of the Ants right now,

Kelly Sue: So I'm very excited about that, Um, so I, uh, my choices for you are, a bit more, Uh, a tongue in cheek, Unfortunately, because honestly, I am intimidated by by the idea of curating books for you, so I went instead with the Desert Island idea, and um, if you are the, you know, the idea of the. The desert island is, if you didn't have anything else you had to tend to, right, so

I have like, if you had nothing else in your life that you had obligations to, and you could just kind of explore. Well, um, uh, I've chosen for you a c. a collection of uh, encyclopedias, Um, because, uh, I think that would be handy for you, as you were kind of deciding what new aspects of interest would you want to go through?

Adrienne: Perfect

Kelly Sue: Um. I've also decided, that even though you are on a desert island, you're not...they can reach you. There's a plane that goes overhead. So I've gotten you a subscription to Popular Mechanics, because I know that you've also written about robotics and what and what the idea of robotics is, and what that means, and sort of culturally, and I, I think you'd be interested in keeping up on what's going on with that and maybe trying to do a little bit of robotic building for yourself on your island. And then also, I've selected for you LYnda Berry's work, and in particular LYnda Berry's work on Storytelling, which I am going to say also comes with a sketchbook and a pen, because Lynda Berry has a an absolute belief that we can all draw that we are all cartoonists and in in allowing ourselves to think and tell our stories, and pictures were opening up different parts of our brains, and as your brain astonishes and delights me, I like the idea of what kind of comics you might make.

Adrienne: that is....again you have chosen something very serendipitous that you did not know this about me but before I ever began writing I was a print maker artist making I read ancient greek texts as fuel for my artwork and so I was making etchings of amazon's fighting griffins and amazon setting off to war and so and and I had a printing studio in my in my house when I uh I sold my etchings in Washington DC and Utica, NY and then I just gave it all up in order to write instead so I didn't feel like I had enough ax to be an artist so I was just illustrating and so I thought well I was telling stories of my art and now I'm gonna do it on paper so I actually uh have made draws of of amazon so I but I love Lynda Berry so this will stimulate me to take it up again.

Kelly Sue: I love it. This makes me very happy. Thank you.

Adrienne: Thank you for these three book ideas and I love them thanks

Kelly Sue: I literally order Empire the Ants as soon as we get off this.

Adrienne: I hope you like it.

Kelly Sue: No doubt I will.

Kelly Sue: I want to come back for a second to the idea of—the inventor of Wonder Woman was also a proponent of I mean, he had a lot of like bad theories, to be quite honest with you.

Adrienne: This is you know just knowing that makes me nervous about wonder woman

Kelly Sue: Yeah, Well, I mean, his whole thing was that women should be in charge of everything, and it, he had, like a real ....

Adrienne: Bondage problem.

Kelly Sue: had a bondage thing. Yeah, but it was the like that thing that like you know, the thing. It just makes me like a pedestal is another kind of box, right that that?

Adrienne: Yes

Kelly Sue: That um, this like oh, women should be the gentle authority and they should dominate everything. And and you know, and but what that does is that like you can't say. women are this way any more than you can say men are this way. We are as varied as our numbers.

Adrienne: It's like the spectrum we were talking about that it's completely uh holistic in a spherical way it's not even a spectrum it's not just a circle the spectrum is a circle of course um but it's uh it just denies the whole holistic reality of of human beings it's but as you say we've had a sort of d reverse Darwinism going on but is saying that women should be the gentle authorities on everything and the um the benevolent domino tricks and that all this weirdo stuff that he had but he's not the only one in superhero comics I mean all the Superman and Batman comics also had weird bondage fetishes if you look look through them.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah. oh, And and actually, one of the uh, there's a whole secret life that one of the creators of Superman had doing bondage comics. That's it's own.

Adrienne: So I don't know if comics lends itself to that or don't know...

Kelly Sue: You know, and like, no kink shaming, but uh, but but I think when we get into like our theories of uh, when we start getting into the actual permissions of what what women are allowed to do in our culture,

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: Maybe, maybe put that away.

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: But uh, but I, one of the things that I am a little worried about going forward with this book and I'm not really worried overstates it more. It's more like I'm just kind of girding myself.

Adrienne: Yeah that's an obstacle

Kelly Sue: Yeah the thing that made me want to do this book was....you know, so I had this fascination when I was quite young.. it's always been a part of my life in my thinking, but I kind of got away from it. And then I had a reaction to the 2016 election. Um, where I was kind of walking around in a little bit of a haze for a couple of days. Uh, and I couldn't quite identify what I was feeling and at some point I realized I was like, Oh, I'm grieving I'm...

Adrienne: Yeah

Kelly Sue: ...grieving. You know what I thought was going to be. I am grieving some naive ideas I had about the country that we are.... I've had a loss and I am grieving my loss, And so then in my head I was like Okay, So what do you do with grief? And I remembered like a poster I had seen in college. That was Robert Kennedy talking about how, when his brother died that he turned to Escalus, and so I was like, Well, I guess, when you're grieving you go to the Greeks. I don't know. I mean like literally, this was my thought process and so I kind of escaped into ancient literature for a while trying to to deal with that grief. And then I found myself at about the time that I got the call from DC. comic label saying, Would you know? Would you like to do a book with us? Um, uh, I found myself want, like craving a Homermian epic centered around a woman.

Adrienne: Yes

Kelly Sue: And so when I did do this pitch, I pitched it. I pictured it actually for nine books, so it's pitched to be a gigantic project because these are nine, sixty four page books right,so I like was. Yes, I was going all in on epic, right,

Adrienne: Homeric homeric ambitions

Adrienne: Yes

Kelly Sue: Um, and they've only approved three so far, but so I'm I'm pushing to get to all nine.

Adrienne: Good

Kelly Sue: We've got three. As in two has gone to press. Three is in production, Um, and this is all centered not around Diana, although Diana is obviously a really important character, but it's centered around Hapolita

Adrienne: Right

Kelly Sue: Hapolita as the Homemian hero.

Adrienne: Yes

Kelly Sue: Um, but one of the things about these epics is they are not perfect people

Adrienne: Oh no

Kelly Sue: And they make

Kelly Sue: They make difficult choices. And you know I, I did some reading on Martha Nustbund, talking about tragedy in a way that really resonated with me where she talked about how you know you. You, as a modern human being, may not have to make the choice between sacrificing your daughter or your army, but you will at some point have to make a choice between two terrible options,

Adrienne: Right

Kelly Sue: Two things where you don't win and it doesn't have to be on that scale. But maybe it's you get to be there for the opening night of your daughter's play, or you attend a very important meeting for your job, right? And there are no win situations in life. You don't always make a supernerd reference here, but you don't. You don't always get to Kobe Shi it right like you can't just cheat and change the rules. And that, really, and I don't know if it's bad. I'm in my fifties now and I think at this point in your life you sort of embrace complexity. But uh, as we go on, Hapolita is going to have to make some very difficult choices that....

Adrienne: She already has of course

Kelly Sue: yes,

Adrienne: In this first book, and of course I mean if you think about the greek heroes they're not good guys I mean they're they're not they may be heroes because of their war skills and or Odysseus because of his underhanded skills but that and they the other thing that really struck me is that these heroes when I really started looking at the hero trying to compare Amazon heroines to greek heroes: both have heroic heroic lives but it turns out that the Amazon's in all the myths they there's no no Amazon dies of old age they all die young and beautiful which is what every they do.

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: There are no old amazons in the myth and and you never hear of them dying in any other way except in battle in face to face combat and they never they're never shown gesturing for mercy they're always running toward danger they're very heroic and dying young and beautiful is in combat face to face combat is exactly what every greek hero desires and is seeking and not one of them achieves it. I mean achille is a shot from from behind in the back of his his foot with a with probably a poison arrow he does not get to face his attacker he dies ignominiously be because of that Odysseus is killed by a son that he didn't even know he had who accidentally kills Odysseus with a sting ray, a sting ray spike and Odysseus is an old man a Jason of Jason and the argonauts he gets old and he's taking a nap uh next to the rotting ship



that he you know had all these glorious adventures in the argo and and a beam from the from the rotting ship hits him on the head and he dies an old man in that really humiliating way Theseus the founder of Athens he's pushed off a cliff by another old man I mean none of them die in a heroic way so the they're tragic figures in that way so not only do they have personal flaws but they don't even achieve the heroic ideal that they seek so

Kelly Sue: Yeah, yeah,

Adrienne: The Greeks are really into tragedy and sort of character flaws and fate fate causes you to make or cause it pushes you into corners that were not of your own choosing, yeah

Kelly Sue: Love... I've I' never noticed that I never put that together, and...

Adrienne: I hadn't noticed it either until I started trying to figure out what is so heroic about amazon how they get to achieve this heroic ideal.

Kelly Sue: It's interesting in that it sort of further the framing of them as a male fantasy, though, right like that, it's...

Adrienne: Yes yeah yeah... they are noble heroes in a way that their own heroes: of course they want to get.. they're foreigners so they can do whatever they want with these

Kelly Sue: Right, right,

Adrienne: Barbarians anyone who doesn't speak Greek is a barbarian and Amazon's are not Greek women a lot of people don't realize that that Amazons were were thought of as foreign women

Kelly Sue: Yeah,

Adrienne: Powerful enemies but foreign yeah

Kelly Sue: There's really some messy thinking in history that we. we couldn't. I did a little bit of just like finger waving like it's a comic book, you know, but um, I, I just didn't want, I wanted to represent women worldwide and like in all different kind of body types and expressions in the Amazons, so that...

Adrienne: Yeah that was well done, they were very diverse.

Kelly Sue: Yeah, and it, it and there's also there's...your work is is, direct....we didn't get the pointy hats in, but um, but there are Cynthian tattoos

Adrienne: Yes!

Kelly Sue: on the Amazon figures, but our our kind of finger waving of that was that uh, either know, the souls that are pulled from the well are women who died at the hands of men in in violence, and that those souls would come from all over the world, so that the the Amazons could manifest in all of these different ways, and then because many of the seventh tribe Amazons, who are the the mortal Amazons, um, or the Amazons that were born human, they were taken from, slave caravans, so they could have been captured foreigners, so that we were able to have a kind of nice inclusion.

Adrienne: And of course there are you know strong women warrior stories all around the world

Kelly Sue: Yes,

Adrienne: So that is that is a not only timeless but universal.

Kelly Sue: And I know, I know we need to wrap this up and I could literally continue talking to you for days.... I've enjoyed this so much!

Adrienne: Me too

Kelly Sue: oh, yes, yes, and we wanted to be able to, we wanted to be able to....I kind of like I'm trying to have my cake and eat it too, with this book and you know as a Westerner I feel relatively comfortable, appropriating Western culture, and like you know, reworking all of these myths, Um, uh, because this is: you know this is the tradition of my people. I'm not taking from other people, but in, but like, I'm trying to both to have my cake and eat it too, and that I'm doing that in this kind of Western tradition and in the DC tradition, which is you. You could argue the mythology of my own people. but um, uh, also, inviting in these physical representations of other cultures to sort of underline that a lot of this is really universal.

Adrienne: Yes. Yeah it's well done I hope you can I hope you're going to do nine books because that that would be fabulous yes yes!

Kelly Sue: Well, thank you. I hope so too! All right, I, right before we call this a place to a stop. I. I also want to just compliment you, um, uh on your beautiful necklace, and to say, um, I have a special fascination. The Nautilus is a really important symbol to me. And so, um,

Adrienne: The spiral, I love the spiral yes

Kelly Sue: Yeah, and in fact, you'll see it see how in book two, which I will send, uses the The Nautilus and the Golden Ratio in his depictions of Hera and me, Just the idea that we continually are outgrowing our chambers and making new spaces for ourselves and our ideas.

Adrienne: And you have created you and uh your artists have created a new Hera and I really think that that's really a triumph of the imagination because she is I think the most difficult goddess to like.

Kelly Sue: Yeah.

Adrienne: And you have somehow given her so much depth I really compliment you on that that's the recasting of Hera as a kind of tragic figure on her own and but extremely powerful in ways that we didn't know i think it's really I think I think it would have impressed the Greeks

Kelly Sue: Oh, that makes me so happy! Thank you for that. It's was really important to me. I think that if she is the goddess of women, the idea that she is um, this sort of jealous and petty hag, ugh.

Adrienne: It's really tedious.

Kelly Sue: It is. It's diminishing.

Adrienne: But remember the Greek gods up on Olympus are were sort of like soap operas for the great

Kelly Sue: Yes! Yes, Well, it's time for her to have her face turn so yeah.

Adrienne: Yes exactly yes well this has been fabulous thank you so much for inviting me.

Kelly Sue: Well, it has absolutely wonderful. Thank you for taking the time.

Adrienne: This has been great, thank you so much.

Kelly Sue: Thank you