

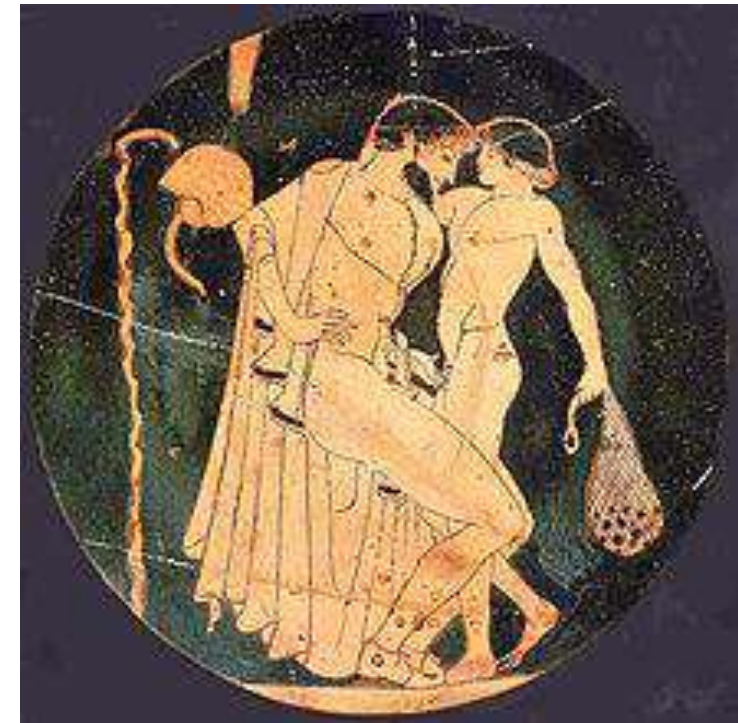
Sexual acts and sexual attitudes

Everyday Life in Athens
and Rome (HPHP4020)



Pederasty in Athens

- The “penetration model” – Kenneth Dover.
 - Examining texts and visual evidence (6th to 5th century vases).
 - Relationship between adult males and mid-teens.
 - Youth normally in second stages (i.e., growing a beard).
 - Dominance-submission relationship.
 - Primarily “elite”? Discursive focus on youthful beauty?
- *erômenos* (beloved) being courted by the *erastês* (lover); *erômenos* notionally as a “protégé”.
- Acceptable conduct of “beloved” – expected to resist physical advances – *hybris* laws.
 - For a youth does not share in the pleasure of the intercourse as a woman does, but looks on, sober, at another in love's intoxication.” – **Xen. *Symp.* 8.21.**



Brygos-Painter, 480–470 BC

Peer-homosexuality in the Greek world

- Age-equal homoerotic acts perhaps more common than assumed?

“In youth you can sleep the night through with an age-mate, Unloading the desire for lust action.” – **Theogonis II. 1063-64.**

“I expect my songs to make the crowned Hippokleas, Still more splendid to look upon for both his age-mates and older men, And a heartthrob to young maidens. For different loves tickle the fancies of different folks.” – **Pindar *Pythian Odes* 10.57-60.**



Attic Red-Figure Psykter (wine cooler), ca. 510 BC.
Attributed to Smikros. Getty villa, Gallery 104.

Female-female sexual attraction in ancient Greece

- Visual depictions seem to be peer-aged.
- Alcman fragment 1.64-77
 - Nanno, Areta, Sylakis, Kleesisera – homoerotic choral interaction.
- Sappho Fragments 94 & 96V.
 - Imparting her wisdom.



Plate from Thera, ca. 625 BC. Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religions Affairs, Culture and Sport.

Sexual violence and power

- An inscription between the pair represents running figure saying, “I am Eurymedon” and the other “I stand bent over”.
- Potential message “we buggered the Persians”?



Eurymedon vase” Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg – mid-fifth century BC.

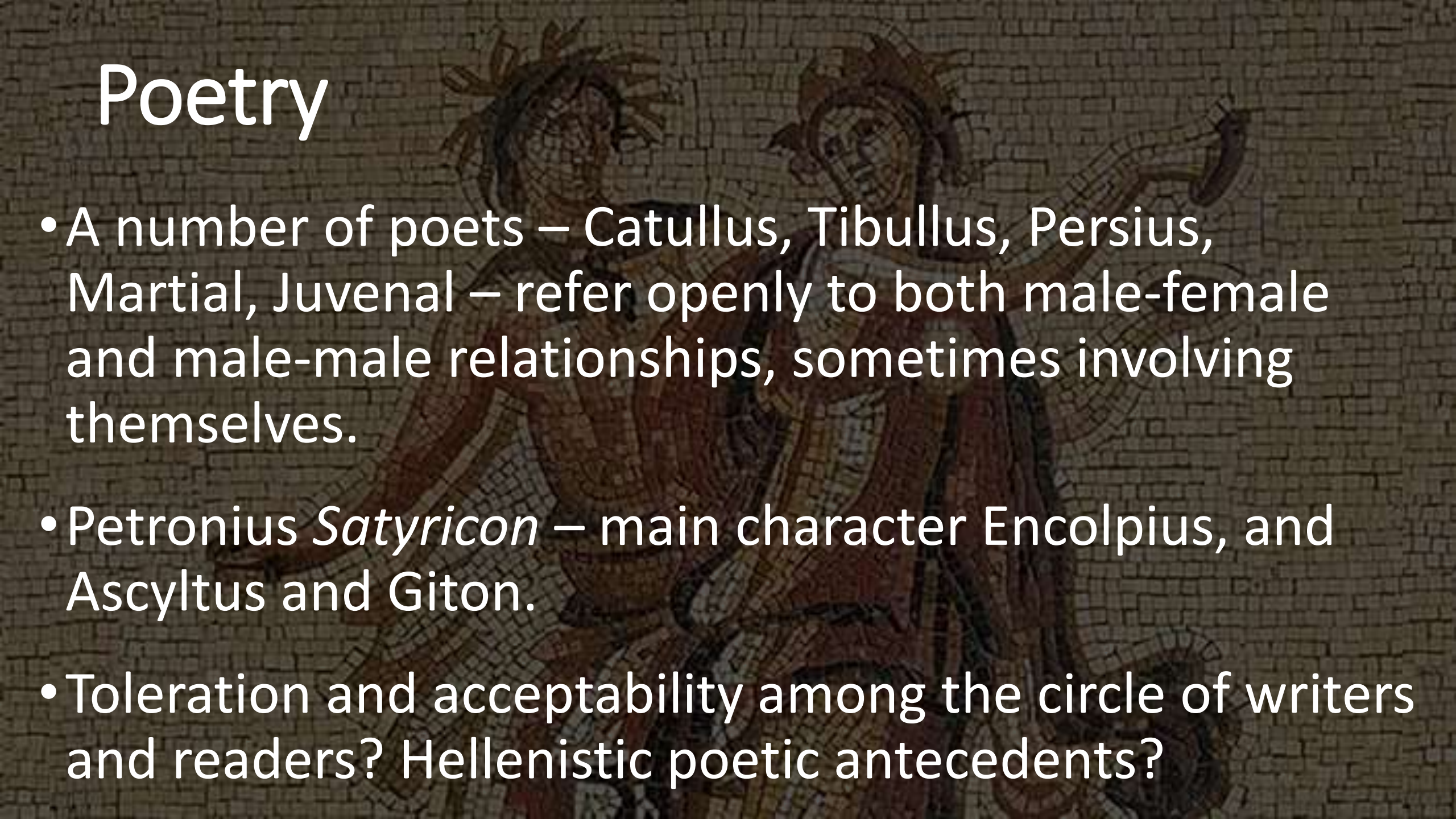
Sexual acts and attitudes in Rome

Variations in Roman attitude



- In Rome (as in Greece) for an adult male to physically assume the receptive role was to surrender masculine status and render one feminine.
- Legal prohibition on sex with free-born boys – lacking relationship of Greek pederasty – *Lex Scantinia*.
- Homoeroticism often represented in conservative Roman sources as a Greek import – the vocabulary consists of many Greek terms.
 - Could often be used as a slur – cf. Caesar as “Queen of Bithynia”.
 - Appeal of masculine, mature body?

Poetry



- A number of poets – Catullus, Tibullus, Persius, Martial, Juvenal – refer openly to both male-female and male-male relationships, sometimes involving themselves.
- Petronius *Satyricon* – main character Encolpius, and Ascyltus and Giton.
- Toleration and acceptability among the circle of writers and readers? Hellenistic poetic antecedents?

The importance of the phallus

- Usually represented in more detail in art than female genitalia.
- Phallus could be considered an apotropaic object.
- Apotropaic objects designed to deflect the harmful gaze from victims by attracting the Evil Eye.
- Apotropaic objects often placed at danger spots (crossroads, doorways, bridges, corners).



Phallic *tintinnabulum*



Herm

“Nor was access to the senate allowed: he [Valerius Asiaticus] was heard inside a bedroom, with Messalina looking on and Suillius formulating the charges: corruption of the military, who, he alleged, were bound in return for money — and worse — to every form of infamy; adultery with Poppaea; and, finally, sexual effeminacy. The last imputation was too much for the defendant's taciturnity:— **“Ask your sons, Suillus, he broke out; “they will tell you I am a man (*virum*)!”** – Tacitus *Annals* 11.2.2.

Exclusivity

- “He was of an extreme lust towards women, completely lacking in experience of men.” – Suetonius *Divus Claudius* 33.2. – Suetonius does not a word for heterosexual.
- “In sexual matters, he was more inclined towards males, and then none but the hard-bodied and those past their prime.” – Suetonius *Galba* 22.



Roman Views on Oral Sex

- The vagina and anus are unproblematic in terms of being passive, the mouth is more problematic.
 - contaminating the mouth (*os impurum* – filthy mouth).
- It was considered most shameful to perform it on a woman.
 - *Fellator* (performing oral sex on a man); *cunnilinctor* (on a woman).
- The *cunnilinctor* is viewed as being passive – for a man to commit cunnilingus is to be “f*cked” by a woman.

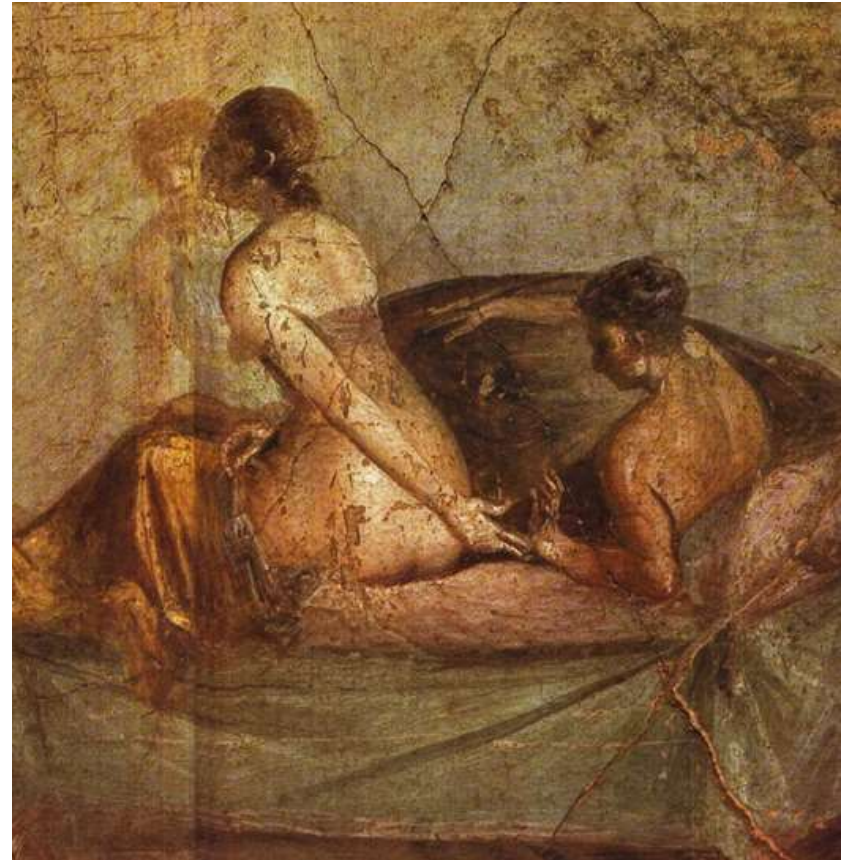


Suburban Baths, Pompeii

Female Sexuality and the idealised women

- Female sexual “activity” is defined as abnormal or an oxymoron
 - Women “passive” but not necessarily devoid of sensuality (*morigera*).
 - “And if nature denied you the gift of achieving a climax, moan as though you were coming, put on an act!” – **Ovid *The Art of Love* 3.798-99.**

“Breast-band! confine the swelling bosom of my mistress, that I may be able to cover and press it with my hand.” – **Martial *Epigrams* 14.149.**



House of Caecilius Iucundus, Pompeii



Fresco with two Roman women, ca. AD 1-75.

The active woman

- The sexually active woman seen as an adulterer, prostitute, nymphomaniac, or transgressive (cf. Apuleius *Metamorphoses*).
- Difficult for Roman (male) authors to conceive of lesbian acts in a non-phallocentric way (active is defined as penetrating with a penis).
 - The ***tribades*** engage in a form of intercourse by rubbing their vulvas together or by one using a dildo on one another (Seneca *Controv.* 1.2.23; Martial *Ep.* 1.90, 7.35, 7.67-70; Juvenal *Sat.* 6.304-13).

“Philaenis the tribad (*tribas*) butt-fucks (*pedicat*) boys fiercer than a husband’s erection, hacks eleven girls every day...

After these things [various manly exercises], when she’s horny, she doesn’t suck (*fellat*)- she thinks this unmanly (*parum virile*)- but simply devours the middles of girls. The gods give you back your mind, Philaenis you who think that licking c*nt is manly.” – **Martial**

Epigrams 7.67 lines 1-3, 13-17.



What might an ancient Greek or Roman have made of such a T-shirt?