

Alice: Hello and welcome to Queer as Fact, the podcast bringing you queer history from around the world and throughout time. I'm Alice.

Eli: I'm Eli.

Irene: I'm Irene.

A: Today I'm going to be talking about male sexuality in Ancient Rome

[music plays]

A: We have some content warnings before we start this episode. We're going to be talking about rape, sex between adults and minors, and slavery. There's also going to be explicit discussions of sex, and swearing.

Before we get started properly, I'm going to be talking about the Roman Republic and then the Roman Empire, from around 200 BCE to around 200 CE. We're planning some future episodes on specific Roman emperors, so today I'm just going to talk more generally about Roman understandings of and Roman attitudes to male-male sex.

I haven't included anything about women in here, because I would like to cover that in a separate episode rather than doing the thing that academics always do where they just give women as a small addendum to something that claims to be about homosexuality but is really just about male homosexuality.

So when I say I'm going to be talking about men, specifically what I'm to be talking about mostly is male Roman citizens – so that doesn't include slaves; it doesn't include foreigners living in Rome; and it sometimes includes, but sometimes doesn't include freedmen – so people who were slaves but have now become citizens. They're in a bit of a kind of grey zone between the two.

So Latin has no words for homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. Romans conceptualise their sexuality in a completely different way to us, so modern labels don't apply.

I: Wow, I'm shocked.

A: Yeah, that's that conversation.

I: It's almost as though sexuality is complicated.

A: [laughs] The Roman understanding of sexuality is all about phallic penetration and where you're putting your penis.

I: I am being very restrained and not asking about people without phalluses here.

A: We will talk a little bit about people without phalluses.

I: Okay...

A: But mostly we're gonna save that for when we do an episode on women.

I: Alright.

A: To understand Roman sexuality, you can picture a table, with two rows and three columns. This is very well structurally organised.

I: You said "picture a table" and I definitely imagined the furniture and was like, "This is going to be some kind of metaphor." [laughs]

A: Picture a grid.

E: Roman men were only comfortable having sex if it was over a table because the hardness represented the durability of the Roman soul.

[laughter]

I: Yeah look I'll believe it.

A: You're making this up, but like, it's one step away from something they would do.

[laughter]

E: I know.

A: In this table we have three columns, representing the three possible orifices that you can put your penis in: so the vagina, the anus, or the mouth; and the two rows represent whether you're the one doing the penetrating, which is often called the active partner – and I am gonna use that word, even though I feel like the active/passive dichotomy is a bit weird. [laughs] Like, more I mean the words are weird.

I: Do they still use the active/passive dichotomy when it's oral sex?

A: Yes, they do. So....

I: Okay.

A: ...the person receiving oral sex is the active partner, because they're the one doing the penetrating.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah.

E: This is why if you're a man and you go down on your woman... on your woman! [laughs] ...on your *wife*, she has unmanned you.

I: [laughs]

A: Yeah, going down on your wife is just like, possibly the worst sex act a man can do, in terms of like, his masculinity.

I: So other kinds of being penetrated are less unmanning than giving oral sex to a woman?

A: Yeah, because in most other kinds a woman can't penetrate a man.

I: Ah, okay. It's that's the one time when he can be unmanned by a woman.

A: Yeah, oral sex is really bad because a woman is penetrating a man. The two rows on this grid...

E: Mmhm.

A: ...are the active partner – the one doing the penetrating; or the passive partner – the one being penetrated.

E: So there's no deponent sex acts. [laughs] I'm sorry.

A: [laughs] No, there are no deponent sex acts. So in Latin there are therefore six verbs for having sex.

I: Oh my God, really?!

A: Yep.

I: This is some like, conlang nonsense.

E: Yeah!

A: [laughs]

E: If you put this in a fantasy novel, though, people would a hundred percent drag you.

I: Yeah.

A: But Latin does have this sex table, so it's got *pedicare*, which means 'to anally penetrate'; and the *ncevere*, meaning 'to be anally penetrated' and so and there's words for each of these things.

Within this model of sex, sex is seen as something that one person – the active partner – is doing to another person.

I: Okay.

A: And the most important rule for a Roman man is you have to be the one doing the penetrating.

I: Okay.

A: So the main idea at the foundation of the idea that a Roman man has to be penetrating is that a Roman man always has to be in control of everything. That's the most important part of being a Roman man, be that in con.... as a father in control of your children, or a husband in control of your wife, or a governor in control of a province. It's very important.

The Roman orator Cicero writes:

In nearly every soul there is something naturally soft, abject, lowly, in one way or another spineless and listless. ... but reason stands ready as sovereign of all – reason which, striving on its own and advancing far, finally becomes perfect virtus.

- which is something we'll talk about in a second, but it means kind of manly virtues like bravery and valour and... we'll discuss it -

That reason should give orders to the other part of the soul, the part that ought to be obedient – that is what a man must take care to do. "But how?" you will ask. That way a master gives orders to his slave, or a commander to his soldier, or a father to his son.

So Cicero has just presented us with this dichotomy...

E: Cool.

A: ...where one half of your soul is soft – which is a very common word that Romans will use to talk about women or young boys or effeminate men; so that half of your soul is the feminine half of your soul – and one half of your soul embodies *virtus*. So *virtus* comes from the Roman word *vir*, which means 'man' – as I said before, it's the very manly virtue; it's just basically all the things that are involved in being the ideal Roman man.

I: Okay. So if we just translated it as.... having said this, we can translate it as like 'manliness' and we'll be okay.

A: In this context that's probably not a bad translation.

So the masculine half of your soul...

E: Mmhm...

A: ...has got to control the feminine half of your soul...

E: Mmhm... [dubious]

A: ...in the way that Roman men have to control everything.

E: Mmhm... [increasingly dubious]

A: [laughs]

I: Right. [laughs]

A: So if a Roman man allows himself to be penetrated, he's giving in to the feminine part of his soul - he's allowing someone else to do something to him, rather than doing something to other people, and therefore that's not masculine.

I: I'm sorry for Roman men.

A: I'm sorry for them too.

E: I'm sorry for everyone they ever interacted with much more.

A: Yeah.

I: I mean that's fair enough, that's fair enough.

A: Yeah.

I: I'm sorry for them as well.

A: If you failed to exert your masculinity in sex, that implied that you were gonna fail to exert your masculine control in all areas of life, and that you just weren't a good Roman citizen.

I: And then Roman society will collapse.

A: Correct!

I: Got it.

A: Time to talk about what you might be called if you let people penetrate you. If a Roman man allowed himself to be penetrated he might be called a *cinaedus*. So we're gonna discuss what this word means and its implications to help us understand how Roman thinks about the world.

So, the word *cinaedus* is literally a type of Greek male dancer that suggestively shakes his arse in a way that Romans thought implied anal sex. So this brings together three things which Romans consider effeminate and un-Roman: foreignness – and specifically Greekness...

I: I remember the Romans and their weird Greek sex fantasy from the Warren Cup episode.

E: Romans have very complicated feelings towards Greece.

A: They really do, yeah. Yeah. But for this present moment the point is that Greeks are effeminate.

I: Okay.

A: They're not manly like Romans are. Dancing is also effeminate; and being penetrated. So the Roman author Aulus Gellius writes:

Plutarch tells us that Arcesilaus the philosopher used strong language...

– so that's implied to be the word *cinaedus* -

...about a certain rich man, who was too pleasure-loving, but nonetheless had a reputation for uprightness and freedom from stuprum...

– so *stuprum* basically means inappropriate sex. We'll talk a bit more about it later.

I: Okay.

A: Sex you shouldn't have.

For when he observed the man's affected speech, his artfully arranged hair, and his wanton glances, teeming with seduction and voluptuousness, he said "It makes no difference with which bodily parts you people are cinaedi..."

– that's the plural of *cinaedus* -

"...the ones in back or the ones in front."

So I mentioned earlier that there is no word for homosexual in Latin...

E and I: Mmhm.

A: But a lot of scholars have translated *cinaedus* as 'homosexual', or specifically as 'passive homosexual', and then they've seen negative comments about *cinaedi* as evidence of homophobia in Rome very similar to modern Western homophobia.

E: What scholars? When?

A: Like I'm talking more about in the past than like...

E: Okay.

A: Yeah.

I: But *cinaedus* could also refer to a Roman man who only ever had sex with his wife, but he was giving her oral sex.

A: Yeah! Exactly, exactly. Or a Roman man who was too interested in how his hair looked.

I: Okay.

A: Or a Roman man who liked dancing.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah.

I: I mean to be fair, as a society we've used 'gay' in a bunch of these ways.

A: That's true, we have, yeah. No, we have. I guess it's a similar thing in that way. But yeah, basically my point here is that as Aulus Gellius tells us, whether or not you're actually penetrating or being penetrated, and who you're doing that with – regardless of that, you can still be

considered a *cinaedus*. And there's actually nothing in Roman writing to say that being penetrated by men *is* a definite prerequisite for being a *cinaedus*, so they're implied to go together, but you can also be considered a *cinaedus* for a whole lot of other reasons, and that can include having too much sex with women.

I: Yes!

E: Edward II.

I: Yes.

E: [laughs]

I: I remember this discussion.

A: Oh!

E: Yeah, this briefly came up in Edward II. It's really funny how constantly talk about how things change across time, and this is like, nothing to do with any modern context...

A: [laughs]

E: ...but also you see like, similar paradigms...

A and I: Yeah.

E: ...crop up across so many different societies. But yeah, it was a thing in Medieval England as well – and that's in a Christian context, so that is genuinely quite different from this...

A: Yeah.

I: But...

E: ...in some ways, anyway – that if you were like, too into any sin, basically, then you weren't controlled and you weren't manly enough and having excessive sex with women was an example of that.

A: Yeah! That's basically exactly the same idea have here, except we replace the word 'sin' with 'pleasure' or... you know, something like that.

I: I mean, I feel like in like, Medieval Christianity, sin and pleasure may have been interchangeable.

[laughter]

A: Look, I think that's true. [laughs]

E: Mm.

A: But yeah, what I was gonna say next is the most important of that passage of Aulus Gellius, I would say, is actually when he describes the *cinaedus* he's talking about as being “too pleasure loving”.

E: Mm.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, which is exactly the same thing. So they love pleasure too much, they're not exercising the control and the self-control that a Roman man is supposed to be exercising, and therefore they're not being a manly man. That might manifest itself as wanted to be penetrated by other men, but it

just as well might manifest itself as losing control of your desire for women, and going out and sleeping with women you're not supposed to sleep with.

I: So it's way more like, about self-control than it is about gay sex.

A: Yeah! Yeah. It's way more about self-control than about wanting to sleep with men.

I: I have no self-discipline. I would make a bad Roman man.

A: It's okay. You're not a Roman man, thank God.

E: There are many reasons why they'd consider you a bad Roman man, I'm sorry.

I: I can think of like, a number. That's probably not even the first.

A: It's true. So in conclusion, you shouldn't translate *cinaedus* as homosexual.

E: Okay.

A: That is like, a symptom of what a *cinaedus* is, that they might enjoy being penetrated by a man, but it's not the point.

E: Is that the term that Eva Cantarella translated as 'nancy-boy'?

A: *Cinaedus*? Yes. Yes.

E: That's so funny.

A: She did translate it as 'nancy-boy'. Yeah.

E: [sighs]

A: She had some interesting, interesting choices in translation.

I: How, like, derogatory am I thinking of *cinaedus* here?

A: Very.

I: So I'm imagining if I picture like, 'poofter' are we there or...?

A: Yeah... Yeah. Yeah, probably that. I've seen it translated as 'poofter'.

I: Yeah, okay, okay.

E: I think that people need to just not translate things...

I: Yeah.

E:sometimes. I'm a big fan of that.

A: Yeah. No I think it's one of those words that's best left untranslated with a footnote.

E: Mm.

I: But sometimes I think for me you do need to get like, the scale of derogatory. Like, is that a formal word like 'homosexual'?

A: Um....

I: Or is that a casual word? Is that a....

E: It's not a slang term though, is it?

A: No. Roman orators will often use it in court to attack their opponents.

I: Okay. Okay.

E: It's not a slang term. It's just that what it is is very bad.

A: Yeah, yeah.

I: Alright, yeah.

E: So I don't know that 'poofter' actually...

I: Is...

E: ...is a good comparison.

A: Yeah.

I: Okay. No, that's fair. That's fair.

E: Like, it is in the level of disdain implied, but....

I: But not in like that tone?

E: Yeah.

I: The...

E: Like, that requires heavy caveating.

A and I: Yeah.

I: No that's fair. That's fair.

A: But yeah, it's very derogatory.

I: Okay, cool.

A: Yeah. And going back to how I used the word 'symptom', from a medical perspective, the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder, writes:

The hairs ... of [a hyena's anus], reduced to ashes, and applied with oil to the body of a man who is living a life full of softness...

- so an effeminate man -

...will render him not only of pudicus...

– which we'll talk about more, but means kind of, sexual morality – having the sex you're supposed to have.

...they assure us, but of scrupulous morals even.

So we can see here that Pliny is talking about curing diseases and he's talking about softness – so effeminacy in men – as being a disease.

I: The hairs of a hyena's anus?

A: Yes.

E: Where the hell do you get that from?

A: [laughs] I don't know, but he's got a whole chapter in his book of like, medical uses of bits of hyenas.

I: Do Roman's conceptualise hyenas as like, particularly masculine, or....?

A: So according to Pliny:

It is the vulgar notion...

- which he means, just you know, the notion among general people.

I: Like, the common notion?

A: Yep. The common notion -

...that the hyæna possesses in itself both sexes, being a male during one year, and a female the next...

So Romans thought that hyenas alternated sex from year to year.

I: So what he's hoping then, when you get the hyena anus hairs and rub them on the effeminate man, that he too will change his sex and be manlier?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

I: Okay.

A: I think that's the idea.

[laughter]

A: Did you want to say something?

E: No.

[laughter]

E: Is there scholarship on where the hell this stuff comes from?

A: So apparently female hyenas have extremely enlarged half-foot long clitorises, that look almost perfectly like penises.

I: Half-foot long clitorises?

E: I've heard this before.

A: Yeah, so that's the story.

E: So that's an awareness of genuine diversity beyond the sex binary that exists in nature, that they're applying to their own...

A: Yes.

E: ...species – to human's own experiences of sex and gender.

A: Yeah, it is!

E: Interesting....

A: It is.

[laughter]

A: They talked about one of the explanations of how these soft, effeminate men came to be.

E and I: Mmhm.

A: They're talking about the creation of the world.

E: Mm.

A: And they're talking about Prometheus creating humans...

E: Mm.

I: That's not how that happened.

A: It happened in this author. I can't remember who it was.

I: Alright, alright.

A: Prometheus created humans, then he created genitals, and he was gonna attach genitals to all the people.

I: Okay.

A: And then he went out and got drunk.

E: [laughs] Oh! What?!

I: Whoops.

A: And he came back, and most of the time he got it right, and he attached the penises to the men...

I: Yep.

A: ...and the vulvas to the women. And sometimes he got it wrong.

E: What?! This is amazing!

A: [laughs]

I: Okay.

[laughter]

A: So that's an explanation for where these effeminate men come from.

E: Okay. Not to say that *cinaedi* are trans people – because that's a whole discussion – but if we suspend that for a moment, trans people are a result of a like, heavenly hold-my-beer moment.

[laughter]

E: I'm so happy.

A: I hope you're proud. [laughs]

E: Like, I know that if that is how that's being imagined, the implications of that are actually quite negative, but....

A and I: Yeah.

E: ...it's funny and I like it.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah, yeah.

E: So...

A: Yep. So now we're gonna come back to our conversation about oral sex.

E: Cool.

I: Okay.

A: And we talked a little bit about this before, and how giving someone oral sex is the worst sex a Roman man can do.

E: Wait, so giving anyone oral sex, not just giving a woman oral sex?

A: Giving a woman oral sex is worst of all.

E: Okay.

A: Giving oral sex is....

E: Worse than being anally penetrated?

A: Worse than being anally penetrated, yeah.

E: Why?

A: I'm not sure exactly what the thinking behind this was, but there are a lot of quotes that talk about people's mouths being unclean and stuff like that....

E: Okay.

A: ...from giving oral sex, so that might be the reason.

E: Okay.

I: I'm weirded out by the fact that they apparently thought mouths were unclean but anuses were fine.

A: Well I think your anus is expected to be unclean. I don't know.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah, I'm not sure what the reasoning on this is, but that's how it is. So Martial, the Roman poet, writes:

Laugh heartily at whoever calls you a cinaedus, Sextillus, and show him your middle finger.

I: Is that a thing in Rome?

E: Yes.

A: Yeah.

I: Really?!

A: That's a thing in Rome, yeah.

E: It's a very old thing.

A: Yeah, it...

I: And that's where... that's where we got it from?

E: One would presume...

A: I assume so.

I: Okay.

A: But yeah, if you travelled back in time and gave an Ancient Roman the finger they would know what you were doing, and they'd be mad.

I: I'm glad to hear that. If someone cuts me off in their chariot I'll know what to do.

A: [laughs]

E: Yeah, for like "You're not a sufficiently Roman man, Irene!" you can like, flip them the bird and then run away.

[laughter]

I: Yep.

A: Yep. Okay, so anyway:

Laugh heartily at whoever calls you a cinaedus...

- and give them the finger -

And yet you are not a pedico...

- so that's from *pedicare* - to anally penetrate - so it's saying you don't anally penetrate -

...nor a fututor...

- which is someone who penetrates a vagina -

...nor do you like the warm mouth of Vesustina. I admit it, Sextillus, you are none of these things. So what are you, then? I don't know, but you know that two things are left.

E: Is that meant to make it clear that those three things are ranked in some way?

A: Yes, I'll explain.

E: Okay, please do, 'coz I'm not seeing it yet.

A: Yeah, yeah. So Martial has mentioned that Sextilus is not a *cinaedus*...

E: Uh-huh.

A: ...so he doesn't like to be anally penetrated.

I: Did we establish that being a *cinaedus* may not be about liking to be anally penetrated?

A: In this context I think we can say it is because he goes through and talks about a bunch of other specific sex acts.

I: Okay.

A: So he says you're not a *cinaedus*, you're not a *pedico* – you don't like to anally penetrate – you're not a *fututor* – you don't like to penetrate a vagina. You don't like warm mouth of Vesustina – you don't like to receive oral sex.

I: Okay.

E: So what's left...

A: So what's left?

I: Alright.

A: And what's left is you like to give oral sex. So when he says to laugh heartily at whoever calls you a *cinaedus* and give them the finger he's saying, you know, "it's fine if they call you a *cinaedus*, just flip them off and you know, laugh. That's fine. Because we know the truth – you like give oral sex, at least they're not saying that."

He has a bunch of other poems on this theme. He writes this a lot.

I: Is he writing them about himself?

A: Maybe. I don't know.

I: I mean I guess it's not super important to us whether Martial himself liked giving oral sex.

A: Yeah, you can decide that. I don't know.

E: I'm not convinced, but I'll accept it.

A: You're not convinced?

E: No.

A: Okay. Okay.

I: Some scholarly dispute arises.

[laughter]

A: Some scholarly dispute. Yeah. Why aren't you convinced?

E: So what you're saying that this says is that Martial assures Sextilus that he's not a *cinaedus* but he does like to give oral sex.

A: Yes.

E: And you're saying this is two separate things.

A: Yes.

E: Okay. Couldn't that be read as like, "brush them off, but like, really, seriously, we know that you are into that kind of thing." Like it's being like, "laugh at whoever calls you that, yet, you don't like this, this and this. What's left?"

A: So what do you like?

E: These acts that we've established *cinaedi* do.

A: Okay, no, no I do see your point. I'd have to look at the other Martial poems...

E: Yeah.

A: ...'coz he does do this several times.

E: Okay.

I: Okay, yeah.

E: And I also don't really see how there's like a strict ranking system of like...

I: ...that's the worst thing there.

E: Yeah. That's the worst thing there – because, like, if you're saying that they view going down on a woman as being worse than being anally penetrated, like, how is that in this text?

A: I would say the sense is “laugh at them if they say you like to be anally penetrated, because at least they're not saying you like to go down on people.”

E: I think that I'd need the wider context or whatever because I just don't see that in that quote.

A: Okay. Fair enough.

I: Yeah, no, I feel like I'm with Eli. What he's saying is “sure, laugh at people who call you a *cinaedus*, but you don't seem to like any of the other things...”

A: Okay. Okay.

E: And I mean, this is one paragraph...

A: Yeah.

E: ...in isolation, and we know that no Roman ever wrote one paragraph down.

[laughter]

A: I'm trying to think, because there are other authors talking about oral sex and anal sex...

E: Mm.

A: ...so for example – I'm just saying this off the top of my head...

E: Okay.

A: So for example, anally raping someone was a possible punishment for adultery.

E: Okay.

A: So if a man committed adultery with your wife...

E: Yes.

I: ...you got to rape him?

A: You got to rape him. Whether people exercised this often I don't know.

I: What?!

E: I've seen the sources where it's claimed that a possible punishment for adultery or some crime like that was to insert some large phallic object into the...

A: Yeah.

E: ...perpetrator's anus, but not like, rape him yourself.

A: No, I don't know exactly. I'd have to check the sources. But the thing I was gonna say is, so anally raping someone is a possible punishment for adultery and there are sources – so for example, there's one where somebody's writing a poem, a hypothetical, to a man who's committed adultery and saying “You shouldn't have done this, because this man isn't gonna anally rape you. This man doesn't like anal sex. This man likes oral sex. This is gonna be so much worse.”

I: Ah, okay.

E: Okay.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah.

I: No that's fairly convincing.

A: Yeah, like, there are several quotes on this theme.

E: Okay.

A: I've probably just chosen one...

E: We're gonna have to see.

A: ...that's not clear enough.

E: Is the understanding that you have this understanding of oral sex is held generally by this stratum of Roman society across these 400 years?

A: I didn't find anything to suggest that that attitude changed.

E: Okay.

A: So I think so.

E: It's just, like, not even because of your evidence or anything like that, but just because I think we don't have, like, a clear ideological reason behind it, it's a weird thing to just accept.

A: Yeah.

E: You know, why they consider oral sex to be so much worse than anal sex...

A: Yeah.

E: ...Regardless of gender of participant.

A: Yeah, the only explanation I could find was that thing about it making your mouth unclean.

Now we're gonna talk about the legal ramifications of being penetrated. In Roman law, a man who had “submitted to womanly things with his body” unless it had been a case of rape, couldn't make an application to a magistrate on someone else's behalf. Representing other people in court was a very important way for Roman men to begin political careers and to advance their social standing,

so not being able to make an application to a magistrate for someone else was quite socially limiting in that way.

I: Is that like just...being a lawyer?

A: Yeah. Kinda?

I: Basically. Except you don't need to have done a law degree, you just need to know how Roman courts work.

A: Roman men and Roman women and I'm not sure who else exactly, could represent themselves in court and make an application to a magistrate saying, you know, this has been done to me, or whatever, but only Roman men could represent other people in court and act as what we might call a lawyer.

I: Okay.

A: So you're being deprived of this right that is a specific thing that Roman men could do.

I: Okay, so it's sort of like, "well, you did unmanly things with your body, so now we're gonna do unmanly things to your law career."

A: [laughs] Yep.

I: Alright.

A: Yep. So it's not entirely clear how they might prove this. Obviously it's very hard to prove, unless you walk in on the act, that somebody is being penetrated.

I: Yes.

A: The rhetorician Quintilian writes a passage about this where he talks about circumstantial evidence, and he says:

...blood for instance may lead us to infer that a murder has taken place. But bloodstains on a garment may be the result of the slaying of a victim at a sacrifice or of bleeding at the nose.

I: True...

A: You can guess I didn't do this translation 'cause I would never have written "bleeding at the nose".

Everyone who has a bloodstain on his clothes is not necessarily a murderer. ...Again depilation, a voluptuous gait, or womanish attire may be regarded as indications of softness and unmanliness by anyone who thinks that such symptoms are the result of impudicitia just as blood is the result of a wound

So, *impudicitia* being the opposite of what we mentioned before, *pudicus*, being the sex you're supposed to have. *Impudicitia* - having sex you're not supposed to have.

I: I'm glad we don't have this word anymore.

A: Yes. The existence of this text suggests that such things like having a "voluptuous gait", or "womanish attire" were being used as circumstantial evidence to accuse a man of being penetrated.

I: What does voluptuous mean in this context?

A: [sigh] I dunno. I mean, you're walking like a woman, but I'm not entirely sure what voluptuous means.

I: 'Cause I was going to say, when I use voluptuous in the modern day I mean like, curvy.

E: I was gonna say, it's a fanfic word for big.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah...Basically.

A: [still laughing] Yeah, I dunno. I can't remember what the Latin word there was. But yeah, this passage suggests that these things were being used as evidence in court, possibly, and therefore the man's personal presentation being too effeminate may have been enough to exclude him from exercising his full legal rights if somebody wanted to do that.

E: Yeah, I mean, I was gonna say, despite what that passage may seem in terms of how like, reasonable it was, in terms of like, a logical sequence of thought, Roman court cases, aren't normally that.

A: [laughs]

E: There's a lot of just like, *ad hominem* attacks and things like they, and they don't - they use a lot of like, very cheap rhetorical tricks. It's more like, or at least it can be, about smearing someone who you've decided is politically your enemy for whatever reasons than it is about finding the truth. So I was gonna say, yeah, like if you've decided based on someone's demeanour that they're not manly enough, then you may decide to try and prove this, or if you just don't like them, and you think you can get away with it.

A: Yeah.

I: I mean, I think like, that's what's happening there is that Quintilian is objecting to the fact that this goes on. He's kind of saying "You keep trying to accuse people of doing unmanly sex acts based on their appearance or their other behaviour, but that doesn't make any more sense than accusing everyone who has blood on their clothing of committing a murder."

A: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I think Quintilian's critiquing the very like, personal-attack-based Roman legal system.

I: Yeah.

A: That's enough talking about the passive partner for now, in sex.

E: Oh no.

A: Now we get to talk about the active partner! So, as a Roman man, you were expected to want to have penetrative sex with....everyone.

I: Literally everyone? Like, regardless of gender?

A: Yes. Everyone.

I: Was that like...

E: All categories of people, not literally every single individual.

A: [laughing] All categories of people.

[laughter]

I: I mean, there was no preference there? You weren't more expected to have sex with women but maybe men was fine as well? There was...

A: Sometimes Roman men will have debates where one person goes, "Oh, I like to sleep with women because this, this and this," and the other will go, "Okay, but I think men are better," or, "I think boys are better", often. We'll talk about Roman men wanting to sleep with boys soon. "I like to sleep with boys because of this, this and this." So like, they debate the merits of different groups, but there's no one group that consistently comes out on top as like, this is the group that you should want to have sex with, and other groups are kind of fine.

I: Alright, alright.

A: You should just want to sleep with everyone.

I: Alright.

E: So that's...kind of nice, in a way.

A: Yeah. Gender is not a big factor here. So a lot of Roman graffiti will say things like, *pedicare volo*, which means, 'I want to fuck someone', or like, not even someone: 'I want to fuck'. It doesn't say who you want to fuck, that's really not the point.

E: That's so funny.

A and I: [laughter]

A: Yeah, and we have a lot of graffiti that you know, says similar things like that...

I: So, it's like writing "I'm horny" on the wall.

A: Yeah, exactly.

I: But with a specific penetration vibe.

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

A: I mean, specifically that phrase, *pedicare volo* means 'I want to penetrate someone anally'.

E: Yeah.

I: Alright, alright, alright, yup.

E: So does that indicate - could that be about a women?

A: It could be about a woman, yep.

E: Okay, yeah.

A: Romans do talk about anal sex with women and compare it to anal sex with men, and yeah. They have those conversations.

E: If this is what we have, imagine the like, deep vast amounts of weird Roman sex conversations that are lost to time.

A: [laughs] Do I want to imagine that?

E: Too late, you are. You're doing it right now.

A: I am, I'm doing it right now, right now. So yeah, obviously, some people did have preferences, because people have preferences, that's how people are. But when Romans talk about sexual preferences, they'll often say something like "This person was more inclined towards women," or "This person was less interested in boys", rather than "This person was only interested in women".

E: You do get it occasionally, don't you, and people are like, weird about it.

A: Yeah, there's probably like two examples that I came across, of a Roman man where they'd be like, "He was interested in women, and only women, and not men, he did not sleep with men," and they'll really like, hammer it home, just 'cause it's such a weird idea to them.

I: Okay, okay.

A: Yeah. And somebody who's described as being more interested in women might still be shown having a relationship with a man.

I: Yeah... It's just...not the usual thing?

A: It's not the usual, and it's like, usually they prefer women, but sometimes men.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Latin does have some nouns derived from those various words for sex acts that we talked about before.

I: From the sex table.

A: From the sex table. So for example, if you penetrate someone anally, you can be called a *pedicato* or a *pedico* from *pedicare*. If you penetrate someone vaginally, you might be called a *fututor*, from *fetutare*.

I: It's weird to me that you would have a noun for a person who penetrates someone vaginally. Like, in our society, that's just so default.

A: [laughs] Well, there's a word for it.

I: Yeah!

A: Yeah, yeah. The only time I saw it used in was in the example of Martial, saying to someone, "You're not even fucking my girlfriend, don't try and call yourself a *fututor*." As in like, you're not even manly enough to make my girlfriend cheat on me.

[laughter]

E: "You're not even manly to cuck me, get it together!"

[more laughter]

A: Yeah.

I: Alright, alright.

E: Oh, Romans are weird.

[laughter]

A: Romans are weird.

E: Isn't it hilarious that good unis let you get a degree in this.

I: Yeah, apparently, it's a highly respected degree.

A: I have a piece of paper saying I've read all this!

[laughter]

E: Yeah.

A: I use it to get jobs - maybe that's why I don't have a job.

[laughter]

A: It all makes sense now! But, for example, *pedicato* cannot and should not be translated as 'gay man' or man who is attracted to men. As we mentioned, nothing about *pedicare* or *pedico* or those words, tells you the gender of the person that they're anally penetrating. So a *pedicato* could be anally penetrating a man or a woman. A *fututor* is vaginally penetrating, so a Roman understands that that's someone who sleeps with women, but based on how Romans understand sex, it's even kind of coincidental that it's a women.

I: It's the action is more important than the gender of the recipient.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah, okay.

A: Yeah. If Roman men were expected to want to sleep with everyone, now we get to talk about who they actually could appropriately have sex with.

I: Okay. So they're expected to want to sleep with some people but retrain themselves because that wouldn't be cool.

A: Yes! Because self-control is manly.

I: All right, okay. No, that makes sense, that makes sense.

A: But lust is also manly.

E: It's very funny though to picture like, a group of Roman men being like, "Hey just so you know, I expect that every single one of you wants to fuck me in this room, but like, don't."

[laughter]

A: So the Roman playwright Plautus sums up who you're supposed to sleep with in one of his plays in a slave's advice to his young master. And the slave says:

...as long as you keep yourself from a married woman, a woman who has lost her husband, a maiden, young men and free boys...

- those young men are implied to be young Roman men -

...love whatever you like.

I: So...a maiden is ruled out.

A: Yes.

I: Presumably that's an unmarried woman.

A: So an unmarried woman is ruled out, a married woman is ruled out, and a woman who has lost her husband is ruled out.

I: So you're only allowed have sex with your wife, as far as women go?

A: As far as Roman citizen women go.

E: Yeah, I was gonna say, it's not just the...

I: Ah, okay.

E: ...boys that are implied to be Romans.

A: Yeah, so the married women, a woman who has lost her husband, a maiden, young men, and free boys, they're all implied to be Roman citizens.

I: Okay.

A: And then otherwise, "love whatever you like".

E: Which is...quite euphemistic.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah. So basically, unless you're married to her, don't sleep with another Roman, because Roman men shouldn't be penetrated, and Roman women belong to Roman men. Yeah, that's how that is.

I: Alright, I mean look, that change in society's been fairly recent.

A: So the most acceptable way to have sex for a Roman man was for him to have sex with a slave, or with a prostitute who may also be a slave.

I: Okay.

A: It was entirely expected and normal that both male and female slaves would cater to their master's sexual desires. The poet Horace, in his satires, writes - I'm sorry for this quote, it's very....about rape.

When your crotch is throbbing and there is a slave-girl or home-grown slave-boy ready at hand, whom you could jump right away, you don't prefer to burst with your hard-on, do you? I certainly don't. I like sex that is easy and obtainable.

I: [scandalised] Who translated that??

E: Yeah...

A: Not me.

I: Wow... that was....direct. That was much more like, blunt, than I'm used to Latin translations looking.

A: Yeah.

E: I more found it funny because of the like, kind of contemporaryish like, 'to jump them' and things...

I: I mean, yeah, I mean, I guess that's possibly what I'm saying. It sounds very...

A: I'm trying to think what word they used. Um... That 'jump' was a pretty appropriate translation though. It was something... it wasn't... it didn't mean attack, but it was something similar. And we see in this quote again that the gender of the slave is not important. Horace mentions slave boys and slave girls.

So as we talked about a bit when we talked about *cinaedi*, and we talked about generally, having sex with slaves and prostitutes, as with a lot of sex, was only seen as a problem if you didn't do it in moderation, and if you didn't control your lusts.

I: Okay, okay.

E: And I guess a certain amount of that would be about like, how you portrayed yourself publicly, because within the walls of your own home, with your own slaves, who's gonna say if you're being moderate or not.

A: Yeah, yeah, no that's very true.

E: The slaves? [disappointed laugh]

A: Yeah, no-one is going to mind. Yeah, so Horace also writes about the notoriously conservative Cato seeing a young man leaving a brothel, and saying to him,

Well done; for as soon as foul lust swells the veins, it is right for young men to come here, and not to grind away at other men's wives.

I: All right, I mean, the position, "Go to a prostitute, don't cheat with someone's wife" is fairly...solid, I guess?

A: You can see how they got here.

I: Yeah.

A: A commentator on Horace has Cato add when he sees the man leaving the brothel again:

Young man, I commended you on the understanding that you were coming here occasionally, not living here!

E: [snickers]

I: [laughs]

A: In his defence, Cato did not actually say any of these words.

I: I like to imagine though that Cato just like, had his like, regular coffeeshop near this brothel, and one day he saw a man leaving and it was like, "Good job not cheating on someone's wife," and then like he saw him leaving like five days in a row and he's like, "Come on, mate."

A: Yeah, I think that's exactly what happened.

I: Yeah.

E: Cato the P.I.

[laughter]

E: Sitting across from the brothel with one of those like big cameras.

A: Yep.

I: Behind his newspaper.

A: With eye holes cut in...

Yep, so it was pretty fine for Roman men to sleep with slaves and prostitutes, as long as it's in moderation.

I: Is a prostitute a Roman citizen?

A: Some possibly were, but as we kind of mentioned when we talked about how if as a man you let yourself be penetrated, you lost your right to represent other people in court, it was kind of understood that if you went into sex work, you lost those... you lost those privileges as a Roman citizen.

I: Okay, so a prostitute doesn't fall into that list of people that you listed before, even though they might be a maiden or a Roman boy or whatever.

A: Yeah, because they've chosen to prostitute themselves.

E: I mean I guess implicitly, a lot of that is going to apply mostly to the upper classes that the people who write this are living within.

A: Yeah. And we are generally in this episode talking about like, the very elite of Rome.

I: Okay, okay.

A: Yeah. If a Roman man penetrated another Roman man, however, things are different. The scholar Halperin describes Roman sex as being a zero sum competition: basically, only one person can walk away from sex with his masculinity. The passive partner will often be said by Romans to have been womanised.

I: Is this like your virginity? Once somebody has anally penetrated you once, is your masculinity gone forever?

A: Um....I mean I don't think it's as concrete an idea as virginity has been in recent Western society, but like, yeah? Yeah, I think that idea of *pudicitia* that I've mentioned a couple of times...is kind of similar to that idea of virginity. *Pudicitia* is among other things that idea that you haven't been penetrated.

I: Alright, alright.

A: So it's a similar concept. Time for Catullus! Okay, so, the reason we're going to talk about Catullus is, this is an example of how penetrating other men is used to increase perceived masculinity.

I: So I should literally be imagining this like, two people go and have sex, and one person wins like, one *virtus* point and the other person loses one *virtus* point?

A: [laughs] Yep.

I: Alright.

A: It's like a bad video game.

I: [startled laugh] That would be the worst video game!

A: It would, it would be terrible. So yeah, Catullus gives us a very famous example of this understanding in Catullus 16, which has been called one of the filthiest lines ever written.

E: [sniggers]

A: And it's very rapey, and I'm sorry.

I: Alright.

A: He writes--

E: I'm so curious to see the translation you've used.

A: [laughs]

I: Did you do it yourself?

A: Ah, I took someone else's and then I changed it a bit when I was like "Er, I don't like that word." So he says:

I will fuck you in the arse...

- which is the word *pedicare*, we've talked about -

...and in the mouth,

- which is *irrumare*.

I: Mm-hm.

A:

Submissive Aurelius and cinaedus Furius,

So those are two names, Aurelius and Furius.

*You who think, from my verses
Because they are soft, that I have no pudicum.*

...

*You, because you have read my many thousands of kisses,
You think me less of a man?
I will fuck you in the arse and in the mouth.*

I: Alright, so basically what he's saying is, "You think that I'm effeminate? I'll show you by fucking you!"

A: Yep.

I: Alright.

E: Um, the translation I've seen of it is something along the lines of "I will sodomise and face-fuck you".

I: That's the one that I've seen! I know the face-fuck one. Yes.

A: That's the one on Wikipedia, yeah.

E: Yeah, and I definitely had conversations in Latin classes where we're like, "Yeah, I mean, I guess *face-fuck*, with a hyphen, is really like, pretty much good here."

A: [laughing] Yeah, yeah.

I: Yeah no, that seems fine.

A: Yeah no that's true.

I: Look, that poem is definitely not a love poem, and makes a lot of sense from what you've just told us.

A: Yeah. It is just a rape threat, saying "You said I wasn't masculine? I'll show you masculine." Basically. So, we see this same understanding of one man walking away with his masculinity and the other man taking his masculinity from him...

E: So he *takes* the other one's masculinity.

A: Yeah, yeah, that's what happens.

E: He gets like a KO on the masculinity bar, and then he takes one masculinity, and like, puts it in their weird little twisty bit of their toga because they don't have pockets yet.

A: [laughs] Yep, that's exactly what happens.

E: Cool, I can visualise this now.

A: We see this same understanding of one man walking away with his masculinity and the other man being emasculated in the surprisingly frequent number of cases where Romans talk about male-male marriage.

I: Really?

A: Yes.

I: Okay.

A: So, we'll discuss this when we do the episodes on specific emperors, but several emperors are said to have married men.

I: Okay. Do they just - is that like a legal process for Romans?

A: No...

E: I think it's a "I am in charge of this empire and I'll do what I want" kind of thing.

A: Yeah, it...

I: Alright, fair.

E: That's just my impression, though.

A: I might just read you a quote from Juvenal, who is a Roman poet, where he talks about male-male marriage, and I've cut a bit off the end of this quote where he goes on to say, "Next thing these men will want their marriages publicly registered," or something like that. He's sort of saying, "Well, right now, men are getting married and society's degrading. Next men will be registering their marriages just like men and women do."

I: Well that's some uncomfortably modern....

E: I mean, I guess he wasn't wrong in the long term.

[laughter]

A: Yeah.

I: Like, I feel like I have this conversation with a real alive human, like mid-November?

A: Well, you could've had that conversation with Juvenal 2000 years ago, and it would've been the same conversation. Okay, so, Juvenal writes,

Gracchus...

- which is just a male Roman name, so he's referring to a Roman man here, no-one in particular I don't think -

has presented to a cornet player ... a dowry of 400,000 sesterces.

- the bride presents the dowry, so Gracchus is the bride here.

The contract has been signed; the benedictions have been pronounced; the banqueters are seated, the new made bride is reclining on the bosom of her husband....

I: So they legit just had a same-sex marriage?

A: They did just have a same-sex marriage.

I: Cool!

A: And Juvenal goes on to say, addressing Mars, the god:

O Father of our city, whence came such wickedness among thy Latin shepherds? How did such a lust possess thy grandchildren, O Mars?

And on and on about how this represents the degradation of Rome, and how this was ever allowed to happen.

I: Does he mention the slippery slope to bestiality, 'cause that's the only modern argument that we're missing.

E: [laughs]

A: He mentions the slippery slope to becoming a gladiator.

I: [laughs] Alright, alright, I'll take it.

A: Also a surprisingly unmanly pastime that reveals your effeminacy.

I: [shocked] Really?!

A: True facts. [laughs]

E: Well, you've opened that can of worms now, I think you have to explain yourself.

A: It's more about, I think, using your body for someone else's enjoyment?

I: Ah, okay.

A: So, gladiators and actors and dancers...

I: And prostitutes.

A: And prostitutes.

I: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, yeah. So like, the very next sentence after he says everything's going to ruin, and then he says next these men will want to get married, officially, is, "And then, even worse, Gracchus became a gladiator!" So it's all in the kind of one passage.

I: Alright, alright. That's interesting.

A: Yeah. As you'll notice with Gracchus' marriage, this partnership isn't depicted as being a marriage between two equals, even though they're both Roman male citizens, one of them has to play the role of the bride.

I: Yeah no, Gracchus is just the wife in this context.

A: Yeah Gracchus is the wife, and it is the wife who is the subject of Juvenal's horror. So Juvenal doesn't even name who the husband is, he doesn't care. He's not worried about the husband, he's worried about the fact that a Roman man is degrading himself to the position of a woman.

Okay, so that covers Roman men having sex with people who aren't Roman men, and also with people who are Roman men. Now, it's time to talk about the in-between case of the sex with people who will be Roman men, that is teenage boys and pederasty.

So pederasty is the ancient Athenian model of relationships between an adult male citizen and a younger man or boy who is also a citizen or you know, will grow up to be an adult male citizen. Usually a boy who has hit puberty but not yet reached adulthood.

I: Okay, okay.

A: So from about the 2nd century BCE, Rome started conquering Greek lands, and in doing so they were influenced by a lot of aspects of Greek culture. Scholars in the past, and thankfully less so now have argued that it was this Greek influence that brought homosexuality to Rome. So in 1978 the scholar Wilkinson wrote, "In the early Republic, the Romans attitude to homosexuality was that of most non-Greeks, it was a Greek idiosyncrasy which they despised".

E: Lol.

[laughter]

A: And yeah, he goes on to say that after this Greek cultural influence, most Roman men still opposed homosexuality and they still saw it as this Greek vice that was infiltrating their culture.

E: Source.

[laughter]

I: Citation needed.

A: Yeah. So firstly there are no Roman sources suggesting that Roman men were ever expected to only be attracted to women. Romans, as I think we've mentioned a few times, Romans really like to talk about the degradation of their society, they really like to talk about how things were great in the past but now their morals are just falling apart and no-one's doing what they're supposed to.

E: This is one of my least favourite recurrent...

I: Themes in humanity?

E: Yeah human talking points.

A: Yeah.

E: It's dumb.

A: It is dumb.

E: It's almost always false.

I: Yeah.

A: It's never as straightforward as they would like it to be anyway. But Romans really liked it. Which makes me think that if there was any idea that heterosexuality was once the norm but the Greeks brought homosexuality to Rome, Romans would have let us know about it.

I: Yeah that's convincing.

A: They'd be pretty hung up on it, and they're not. Romans do acknowledge a Greek influence on how they conduct male-male relationships. Cicero for example refers to a man taking younger male lovers as being "according to the custom of Greece."

I: Okay.

A: And there's a few other authors that use similar phrases when talking about this kind of thing.

E: I see how you would twist these sources.

[laughter]

A: Yeah. But the major difference between Rome and Greece is not that in Greece a man could sleep with a man and in Rome he couldn't. It's that in Greece a man could sleep with a freeborn boy and in Rome he couldn't, and that's because a male Roman citizen should never be penetrated, as we've discussed many times. Since Roman men are expected as we've mentioned to want to sleep with everything.

[laughter]

E: *Everything*? You've moved on from people now.

[laughter]

A: *Everyone*. I'm sure I could find a source about Roman men wanting to sleep with things that aren't people. Yeah, Roman men are expected to be attracted to everyone, so they are expected to be attracted to adolescent boys. And when Roman men talk about the ideal lover, they'll often talk about someone who is young, they often talk about how they're hairless, and they'll often talk about adolescent boys. And when they talk about anal penetration, if they talk about anally penetrating a woman they might use the adjective *puerile* from the word *puer* meaning 'boy'.

I: Okay.

A: So they're describing that act with that adjective. Penetrating a woman is doing a boyish thing with a woman, to a woman.

I: Ok yeah that makes sense.

A: Yeah. So the idea that anal penetration was something that you did with boys was obviously very prevalent in the Roman mind, but the appropriate way to act on that desire as we've mentioned was with slaves and prostitutes, not with freeborn Roman boys.

I: Yeah.

A: But however Romans did talk about how adolescent Roman boys were at risk of being led astray and being seduced and then being penetrated. The medical writer Caelius Aurelianus tells us that:

...boys masculine function has not taken hold and thus freeborn boys may enjoy being and want to be penetrated.

I: So they won't have the, they haven't grown into their manliness yet.

A: That's right. So they might still want to be penetrated. Pliny, when helping a friend choose a tutor for her son, writes:

...among the gifts of nature and fortune with which our young man is endowed is his outstanding physical beauty, and at this slippery point in his life we need to find him not only an instructor but a guardian and guide

I: So they're looking for a tutor who isn't going to want to have sex with him.

A: Yeah. They talk about finding a tutor who is modest and has good morals and will protect him from all the people who'll want to seduce him right now because he's an attractive young man at a slippery point in his life.

I: Okay.

A: So with these ideas in mind - that pederasty was a Greek concept which we've said the Romans did think, and that Romans boys were susceptible to be, but never should be penetrated - you might expect Romans to be particularly horrified by this important Greek idea of pederasty, even if they weren't horrified by imported Greek homosexuality.

I: Yeah.

A: Which we've established they're not. However, pederasty wasn't as major a concern as 20th-century Western scholars might make you think it would be. It's genuinely viewed with a broader spectrum of other inappropriate things that have also been imported from Greece.

I: Okay.

A: Romans are just as likely to say they've imported adultery from Greece, or lust for unmarried girls from Greece.

[laughter]

A: The Graeco-Roman Polybius writes in the 2nd century BCE about Roman morality, and he says:

For some young men had given themselves over to boyfriends, others to female prostitutes, and many to musical entertainments and drinking parties and the extravagance that goes along with them, having swiftly adopted the permissiveness of the Greeks...

E: Cool.

A: So once more we're talking not just about having sex, but about not having control over all kinds of things like your desire for drinking, generally losing your Roman manly self-control.

I: Okay.

A: And doing feminine things.

I: So pederasty is not the huge deal here.

A: Pederasty isn't a huge deal, but it is a Greek thing that Romans...

I: ...disapprove of?

A: ...disapprove of. Because it means Roman citizens are being penetrated. Yeah, so it's seen as a Greek custom, but it's not more prominent to Romans in their minds when they think about effeminate Greek customs than music is or than dancing is or all kinds of things.

I: Did Romans honestly not have music and dancing before this, or are they just pretending?

[laughter]

A: I think they're just pretending. I don't know the answer to that question.

I: Ok.

A: I don't think any culture doesn't have music and dancing.

I: That was my thought. It would've been weird if music hadn't been a big part of their culture before Greece arrived.

A: I think Romans generally liked to think that music and dancing only happened in formalised religious contexts.

E: Rome was what classical scholars refer to as a 'Footloose' culture.

[laughter]

A: There's quote, I think it's from Cicero, where he says "Only drunkards and madmen dance" or something?

E: Sounds like someone who can't dance.

[laughter]

I: Yeah it does.

A: Just picture Cicero dancing for a moment.

E: His toga would fall off. What kind of dancing?

I: The Macarena.

E: Oh god.

I: I'm sorry.

[laughter]

E: Cato challenged him with *Nutbush City Limits*.

[laughter]

I: Apparently they don't have that overseas, or at least less.

A: No I taught it to a bunch of Americans recently.

E: That's so funny.

A: It was a fun time. So, time to talk about the legal aspect of being the active partner in male-male sex.

I: Okay.

A: We know that a Roman man could be prosecuted for *stuprum*, which I've mentioned before.

I: What was *stuprum*?

A: So in this context it's basically any sex with a freeborn Roman who is not your spouse.

I: Okay.

A: So it's penetrating a Roman citizen who isn't your wife.

I: Alright.

A: Generally in legal cases *stuprum* comes up with regard to women or with regard to pederasty. It's less often talked about with adult men sleeping adult men but it does come up. Usually it's in cases of rape, and in these cases the legal concerns and the laws applied are often the same regardless of whether the victim is a man or woman.

I: So is the reason it comes up less with adult men penetrating adult men that when an adult man penetrates an adult man the blame tends to fall on the penetrated partner for being less manly as opposed to when someone's penetrating a woman out of marriage or whatever.

A: I think another factor is that if you sleep with a woman she can get pregnant, and Romans are quite concerned about paternity.

I: Yeah.

A: Making sure the kids are really theirs, you know.

I: But you did also say it comes up in pederasty.

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, and I think that's an idea of y'know, protecting...

I: ...someone vulnerable.

A: ...someone vulnerable, yeah.

I: Okay.

A: Yep.

I: It's just that with the adult Roman man it's like, "get it together and stop having anal sex."

A: Yeah, also, um, so Quintilian's back and Quintilian talks about how being the male victim of *stuprum* is very humiliating and how people are very unwilling to come forward.

I: Ah okay, no, yeah, fair enough.

A: And he says:

I do not even mention the possibility that the victim himself should speak, for what else suits him but groaning or weeping or cursing his existence, so that the juror may understand rather than hear of that grief? But his advocate will have to go through similar emotions, for with regard to this type of wrongdoing it is more embarrassing for those who have suffered it to acknowledge it than it is for those who have perpetrated it.

So it's also that somebody who has been potentially raped might not come forward 'cause they'll

be called effeminate and...

I: Yep.

A: Yep. Kind of the situation we have now with sexual assault. So yeah, while the perpetrator has legally done wrong, their masculinity is still intact, whereas the victim has been deprived of their masculinity.

I: And as a society they'd prefer to be a masculine criminal than an effeminate not.

A: Yeah, yeah. And we do see several cases, speaking of what Romans prefer, we do see several cases of someone accusing a Roman man and saying "Oh, y'know, you accepted bribes and you slept with my wife and you did this and this and this," and then they say, "and you let a man penetrate you," and that's often the point where a Roman male will be like, "Hold up, I didn't do *that*."

E: [laughter]

I: Okay, yeah.

A: Yeah. So they'll... Roman men will accept a lot of things being said about them before they'll accept that they let someone penetrate them. There was also a specific law called the *lex Scantinia*. The *lex Scantinia* is attested in cases talking about effeminate men, so various scholars have claimed that it was a law against male homosexuality. The text of the actual law is lost, so we have to try and reconstruct it. But given what we know about male-male sex, it seems pretty unlikely that this was a blanket law against male homosexuality, because we know that Romans conceptualised the person doing the penetrating as doing a completely different thing to the person being penetrated. It wasn't the same thing.

I: Yeah.

A: You wouldn't charge both of these people under the one law probably.

I: Yeah no and so far as you've said, the man doing the penetrating is doing a completely acceptable thing.

A: Well it depends who he's penetrating.

I: Yeah.

A: We also have a lot of examples where Roman men penetrating other men comes up and the *lex Scantinia* isn't mentioned where if it was a law against male homosexuality, that would be an opportunity to prosecute them under that law.

I: Okay.

A: So that doesn't seem to be what it is. It seems more likely that it was one of these laws dealing with *stuprum*, so dealing with protecting Roman citizens from being penetrated. We do know there was another law called the *lex Iulia de adulteris coercendis* which dealt with *stuprum* against both sexes but mostly focussed on adultery and focussed on protecting women. So it seems likely that the *lex Scantinia*, which was older than the *lex Iulia*, ended up being used specifically to prosecute men because this other law had come in -

I: Which focussed more on women?

A: Yeah, yeah. And so that might be what leads to this understanding that the *lex Scantinia* is a law

against male homosexuality.

I: Okay.

A: Even though that's unlikely given how Romans think about sex.

I: If the *lex Scantinia* also covered women...

A: Yeah.

I: ...why would that extra law have come in?

A: I think the *lex Iulia* is... I can't remember exactly what's in the *lex Iulia*, but it's specifically surrounding adultery and it was at a time when Romans were very concerned that elite Romans weren't having enough children with elite Romans...

I: Okay.

A: ...to perpetuate the... that class of society.

I: Yep, okay.

A: Yep.

I: Yeah

A: It's not entirely clear with the *lex Scantinia* whether it may have also punished passive partners, if they had chosen to be penetrated and that was considered inappropriate.

I: Okay, yeah.

A: Um, some scholars have said that it did, but I couldn't find any conclusive evidence on that. They often pointed out that men convicted under the law were described as being effeminate, but as we've discussed that could include losing control of yourself and your desires in other ways than allowing yourself to be penetrated, so I don't think that's clear, really.

E: Mm.

I: Okay, yep, yeah.

A: Yep. Lastly, I want to talk a little bit about the places that men who didn't fit with this Roman masculine ideal could find within Roman society.

I: Okay.

A: This is a bit of a hard thing to talk about because generally we don't have sources from these men but we're going to talk about it a little bit. We do have one example of an elite Roman man actively rejecting the ideals of masculinity which are imposed on him and it's not an example specifically about sexuality, but I think because Romans conflate all these things it's...

I: ...worth talking about it that context.

A: Yeah.

I: Okay, yep.

A: So this is the story of Quintus Hortensius. Aulus Gellius writes about Quintus Hortensius:

...Quintus Hortensius, who was more renowned than nearly any other

orator in his day except for Cicero, was bombarded with insults, reproofs, and reproaches, and many things were said against him – even in the courtroom – as if he were an actor, because he dressed himself and arranged his toga with a good deal of refinement, thoughts, and care, and because in pleading his cases his hands were quite eloquent and expressive in their gestures.

I: It's weird how many of the like, same gay man stereotypes are here.

A: Yeah, that's really weird.

I: Like the gestures.

E: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I wonder what's up with that.

I: Yeah, that's weird.

A: Yeah, I don't know:

Once, when Sulla's case was being tried, Lucius Torquatus, a man of a rather boorish and inelegant nature, said in the presence of the jury that Hortensius was not an actor but rather a mime-actress, and he called him Dionysia, using the name of a celebrated female dancer. At that point Hortensius replied in a soft, subdued voice: "Let me tell you, I would rather be Dionysia – yes, Dionysia – than what you are Torquatus: artless, loveless, pointless."

[laughter]

I: Sick burn.

A: This is way better in Latin because the word for pointless is a word that literally translates as 'without reference to Dionysus' which is the masculine form of Dionysia.

I: Okay.

A: So it's a better sick burn in Latin.

I: So it's a pun in Latin.

A: It's a pun, yep.

I: Yeah. So catchy though, I love it.

A: Yeah.

I: It was just vicious.

A: It was vicious, it was good. It was also a pun that relies on some Greek, which is interesting because part of, one of the stereotypes about being effeminate is Greek things.

I: Okay. So it's a highly educated gay sick burn.

A: Yeah, yeah.

I: Alright.

A: Yeah. So Hortensius is not just attacking Torquatus in return, but he's using the foreign, un-Roman, effeminate refinement that Torquatus attacked in him, and it's specifically said that he did it in a soft and subdued voice, which is also feminine.

I: So he's kind of being like, "yeah, I am effeminate, but that's better than being *you*."

A: Yeah, yeah. And the way this story is told and the way Hortensius is generally talked about, he is considered, y'know, a good upstanding Roman and he is the hero of this story.

I: Okay. I mean, I don't know, I guess they appreciate like, strength of commitment. I'm fond of this Quintus now.

A: [laughter] That's good. I don't know much about him but that's good. So yeah, that does show us that Romans were aware of and could subvert and y'know, critique in some ways their understanding of masculinity.

I: Okay, yeah.

A: Which is nice given how bad they were.

[laughter]

A: I'm sorry. Romans are no good. A common question that people also often ask and that we don't really have a satisfactory answer to is whether there was any sort of homosexual subculture in Ancient Rome.

E: Ah yes, this.

A: So in terms of a homosexual subculture, I'd say the answer is no, because that requires a concept of homosexual and since all Roman were expected to be attracted to men there's no one to form a culture because...

E: ...it's the culture.

A: Men attracted to men is the culture.

I: Yeah.

A: Yep. But there wasn't a place in Roman culture for men who wanted to be penetrated by other men and there are some references we see, kind of in passing, to groups of *cinaedi*. So this is a possibility for what we might think of as a queer male subculture.

I: Okay.

A: But unfortunately these references are usually in the context of talking about the growing number of *cinaedi* as a symptom of the moral decline of Rome and they're very negative and I don't know that we can get much of a useful understanding out of them.

I: I mean, we can probably like, still say that those people were there and they are a group.

E: I mean I guess that, y'know, the whole like, there's more of them, we have to kind of assume they're making up.

A: Yeah so Eva Cantarella who wrote the Bisexuality in the Ancient World book definitely takes this at face value and is like, look, there were becoming more of them!

E: Eva... Eva Cantarella takes a lot of things at face value that she shouldn't.

A: But given that Romans, yeah, given that Romans liked to talk about how their society is declining, I would definitely take that with a grain of salt. I don't think we can believe that there were more of them.

E: But I guess like, you don't really need a source for like, there were some and sometimes they hung out.

A: Yeah, yeah.

I: Yeah, that was...

E: Like that's not, that doesn't seem like...

A: My point was more we can't know much about what they thought...

E: Mhm.

A: Or how they conceptualised the groups they were hanging out in.

E: Yes.

A: Because we don't have any writings from the perspective of men who were in those groups.

E: Which is so frustrating.

I: When you were talking before you sort of said, like, a subculture of men who liked to be penetrated.

A: Yeah.

I: Did you also mean then a subculture of men who were seen as effeminate in other ways?

A: I mean, I think if we were to find a subculture of men who liked to be penetrated in Rome that is the subculture we would be more likely to find, but the reason why I said a subculture of men who liked to be penetrated was because I was talking about the kind of modern question of "was there gay subculture in ancient Rome?"

I: Alright, yeah.

A: Yeah.

I: But if it came to it, there was probably a subculture and some of them were men who liked to be penetrated and some of them were just men who were very invested in their appearance and some just liked to have a lot of sex in general.

A: Yeah, and we don't know if those men would have really felt the need to gather in a group and felt that they had that in common, because *cinaedus* is a negative word.

I: Because *cinaedus* is a negative word, I would almost feel like yeah, you would need that.

A: Yeah, but then...

I: Like, we can't say.

A: We can't say. You have to claim the word in order to do that.

I: Yeah.

A: Y'know, you have to claim, "I am an effeminate man" in order to then go and form that group

with other men like that.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I don't really know.

I: I mean somebody did, like that's what Quintus Hortensius did.

A: That is what Quintus Hortensius did, yeah, I don't know if Quintus Hortensius had pals.

I: Presumably he's not a one-off completely.

A: Yeah, yeah.

I: There are other men in Rome who are willing to be like, "yes I don't fit the ideal of a Roman man but I don't think that's necessarily the worst thing I could be."

A: Yeah, yeah, no, that's true. That's true.

E: There's definitely concepts that were in this one that we saw in the China episode and that we're going to see in the Egypt episode.

A: So that brings us to the end of our conversation about Roman male sexuality. In conclusion, the main thing for you to take away is that Roman men always have to be penetrating something.

I: [laughter]

A: That's the number one fact, if you took nothing away.

E: Like literally every moment.

A: That's not how I meant it. Thank you for listening. This has been Queer as Fact. I'm Alice.

E: I'm Eli.

I: I'm Irene.

A: If you enjoyed our episode, you can find us on social media. We're Queer as Fact on Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter, and you can listen to all of our other episodes on Podbean or on iTunes or wherever you find your podcasts. If you listen to us on iTunes, we would love it if you would rate us and leave us a review, 'cause it really helps us to reach a wider audience. And I think Eli has some reviews right now that he's going to read out to us from iTunes.

E: Yes, so our most recent one has the title "i'm gay and love podcasts".

A: Same.

[laughter]

E: And it's from Inpinson. I think that's how you say that. Who writes:

I've been listening for months but only recently figured out how to review podcasts cause apple is too complicated...

- ohhh, I'm so sorry, thank you so much.

A: [laughter]

I: We feel you.

E:

but I love everything about qaf!!! I've shared it on twitter and with my gc, and I really want everyone to appreciate yalls work as much as I do.

A: Thank you for sharing us!

E: Yeah, thank you so much! If you don't want to deal with iTunes, um, in any way, but you still want to help us out, if you share us on any social media...

I: We will be full of joy.

E: Yes. Or like, verbally with your mouth to friends etc. That would also be great.

The way the info is presented is 100/10...

[laughter]

E:

...the topics are taken seriously, but the episodes are also so much fun to listen to, and that's all I can ask for in a podcast.

A and I: Aww.

E: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

E: We have another one that is "Amazing & Informative" and then six stars which I'm going to assume is they give us a six out of five?

A: I guess it does.

I: I guess so.

E: By Neeblette.

I: Thank you, Neeblette.

E: They say,

My name is Ali, and my girlfriend introduced me to this podcast about a month ago (we're gay, I'm a girl)...

[laughter]

I: Thank you for clarifying.

E:

...and we both listen to it while working. We LOVE sharing our thoughts and feelings about this podcast with one another after each episode comes out.

I love this image so much.

I: Aww.

A: Yes.

E: That is amazing, I am glad to be a part of this.

I: Yes.

E:

The hosts are not only brilliant researchers, but also thoughtful and empathetic in their storytelling. Queer as Fact makes me feel not only more connected to queer history, but also to my lovely girlfriend.

[collective awww]

E: That is one of the nicest reviews we've ever gotten, I'm very happy.

A: That's so good.

E: Yes.

I: I like to imagine them talking about us over dinner.

E: Yeah, that's so nice. And then this is the one where I'm not sure if we read it or not, but I don't think so. The heading is "Very good, very gentle, very queer".

[laughter]

E: By vexxlass.

I have been listening to this podcast on another app and I logged in to itunes just to say I absolutely love it.

A: Aw, thank you.

I: Aw.

E: That's the theme of the day apparently, thank you so much.

I've taken some small dives into queer history before, but what I like about this show is that they don't always focus on well known icons of queer history, they talk about queer people I otherwise would have never known about. Also the stories of real queer people who had a simple, happy endings make me think I might have one too :)

I: Aww.

A: We hope so.

E: Yeah. Uh, and also thank you very much for giving us some like, concrete feedback on a part of this that works for you. So that brings us up-to-date with our iTunes reviews, we've read them all out on the air. So if you would liked to review us...

A: Please do and we'll read it out in the very next episode.

E: Yeah.

A: We'll be back on the 22nd of May when Eli and Jason will be talking about the film *The Birdcage* and we'll be back with our next full-length history episode on the 1st of June, when I'll be talking to you about Osh-Tisch, a warrior, renowned craftsperson and two-spirit *batée* from the indigenous American Crow nation. Thanks for listening and we'll see you then.

[outro music plays]