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**Aspekte von Macht und Erotik
in der Antike**



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Vorwort

Den vorliegenden Beiträgen liegen Vorträge zugrunde, die anlässlich der 4. Tagung „Gender Studies in den Altertumswissenschaften“ zum Thema „Eros und Aphrodite. Von der Macht der Erotik und der Erotik der Macht“ am 12. und 13. Juli 2007 an der Universität Konstanz gehalten wurden.

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Konstanz, im Herbst 2010

Barbara Feichtinger

Gottfried Kreuz

Male Youths as Objects of Desire in Latin Literature: Some Antinomies in the Priapic Model of Roman Sexuality

Jula Wildberger (Frankfurt)

This paper is intended as a contribution to a better understanding of masculinity within the matrix of sexual relations described in Latin literary texts from the 1st century BCE to the beginning of the 2nd century CE.¹ The methodological lever to be applied consists in focusing on men in the making, the young Roman male as an object of sexual desire of both men and women. My aim is to point out an antinomy inherent in the so-called „Priapic model“ of Roman sexuality, to show a dilemma that arises from this antinomy for male sexual agents and to discuss strategies used to evade it.

The Priapic model is a conceptual grid that allows us to understand Roman sexuality as structured by two parallel binary oppositions – penetrator/penetrated and dominator/dominated – which combine a physiological description of the sexual act with a discourse on hierarchy and power. The term „Priapic model“ was first proposed by Amy Richlin, and the idea has been extensively developed by Craig Williams in his encyclopaedic study of Roman sexuality.² I am drawing heavily on this work, and although my paper is a critical engagement with views proposed in it, I am writing with deep respect for the achievements without which the further reflections propounded here would never have been possible. My aim is not to deconstruct the antitheses of the Priapic model or to question its universal validity, e.g. by splitting it into sub-models of several different masculinities or suggesting interferences with other discourses at the same or a higher level. On the contrary, I wish to discuss the Priapic model as a basic conceptual unit that reaches across the boundaries, e.g., of class or

1 These chronological limits have been chosen for literary rather than historical reasons. The study reaches out to Juvenal, and Juvenal must be studied together with Martial, whom he seems to imitate; Martial in turn refers back to Catullus. Certain changes of dress and hair style can be studied on male portraits (Petra Cain. *Männerbildnisse neronisch-flavischer Zeit*. Munich 1993) and are discussed in contemporary texts (e.g. Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.137-8; 12.10.47). It is not unlikely that such changes in appearance entailed corresponding changes in sexual behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, the Priapic model discussed in this paper seems to be applicable throughout this period.

2 Amy Richlin. *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. 2nd ed. New York, 1992 (1st ed. 1983); Craig A. Williams. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*. New York and Oxford, 1999. – The Priapic model is to be distinguished from very similar concepts, such as Eckhard Meier-Zwiffelhofer's „Virilismus“ (*Im Zeichen des Phallus: Die Ordnung des Geschlechtslebens im antiken Rom*. Frankfurt and New York, 1993) in that it posits not a binary opposition between activity and passivity but between penetration and being penetrated. – A critical review of similar interpretations of Greek sexual conceptions is James Davidson. „Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex,“ *P&P* 170, 3-51.

sexual preference and argue that the contradictions and antinomies it entails are inherent and constitutive for this model.

In the words of Craig Williams, Roman sexual agents are divided into „men, the penetrators“ and the opposite group, *i.e.* „everyone else, the penetrated“. Like Priapus „a Roman man was ideally ready, willing, and able to express his dominion over others, male or female, by means of sexual penetration.“ „Men’s sexual partners were [...] liable *ipso facto* to being disparaged – women for being ‚naturally‘ passive and inferior, *cinaedi* for deliberately seeking to act like women – and a single sexual encounter was capable of two intertwined meanings. With reference to the man on top, it was an act of domination or even aggression in which the masculine penetrative identity triumphed, while with reference to the person on bottom, it was forfeiture, an invasion, a loss.“³

In what follows I will first present evidence that the sexual status and roles of young men seem to paradoxically clash with this Priapic model while at the same time presupposing it. In the second part of the paper I will show that these paradoxes derive from a „Priapic dilemma“. Finally, I will look at some evidence indicating how older, adult males may have dealt with that dilemma and propose a hypothesis why such strategies are not yet applicable for young men so that, in their case, the inherent antinomies of the Priapic model are more apparent and thus more easily observed.

1. Paradoxes of Youth

The first paradox of youth to be discussed is the figure of the *moechocinaedus* (Lucil. 1058 Marx). According to the Priapic model the most basic distinction is that between sexual agents who penetrate and all other agents, or rather sexual objects, that are penetrated⁴. How then is it that adulterers, arguably the most successful penetrators of all, are frequently described as penetrated too, or at least as effeminate, *i.e.* with attributes that usually characterise the penetrated? The most famous *moechocinaedus* is probably „Catullus“ in the Catullan corpus of poems.⁵

3 Quoted from Williams (note 227), 7. 18. 182.

4 See Williams (note 227), 7 (quoted above) and also 160. 163 and chapter 5 *passim*.

5 Both aspects of that persona, the aggressive penetrator and the effeminate *cinaedus*, have been highlighted and analyzed by William Fitzgerald. *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1995. Niklas Holzberg, *Catull: Der Dichter und sein erotisches Werk*. 2nd ed. Munich, 2002 focuses on the *cinaedus* Catullus, while the aggressive penetrator is studied by David Wray. *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*. Cambridge, 2001. An interesting parallel from visual culture are the representations of Priapus in female garb discussed in: Stefanie Oehmke. „Halbmann oder Supermann? Bemerkungen zum effeminierten Priapos.“ In: Elke Hartmann, Udo Hartmann and Katrin Pietzner, eds. *Geschlechterdefinitionen und Geschlechtergrenzen in der Antike*. Stuttgart, 2007. 263-76.

But „Catullus“ is not the only such figure attested in Latin literature.⁶

Williams, who presents a host of sources on the connection between adultery and effeminacy, advises us to „abandon the attempt to describe Roman concepts of effeminacy in terms of sexual roles.“⁷ Anyone who acted contrary to any of the traditional codes of behaviour could be stigmatised as not a real man. However, this does not yet explain the particular connection between *adultery* and effeminacy that our sources often make. A more specific explanation put forward by Williams and others introduces a further distinctive marker of Roman masculinity: moderation and self-control. What women, adulterers, *cinaedi* and other men desiring to be penetrated share, according to this explanation, is strong sexual desire and a corresponding lack of self-control.⁸ As in the case of lovers in Latin love elegy⁹ or Lucretian *amor* (4.1058-144), this lack of self-control can be a deep emotional attachment. But even where no such emotional bonding occurs, the sources criticise an excessive sex life that leads to over-spending, inefficient management of one’s estates and takes time that should be used for ‘proper’ business.¹⁰ Wherever it does not serve procreation, sex appears as a form of excretion that is to be practised moderately and as unobtrusively as possible.¹¹

Plausible as this explanation is, it poses problems for the Priapic model of sexuality, which will be explored in more detail below. It seems to force us to dissociate penetration from sexual desire and pleasure. However, the erection of the male member, the key marker of Priapic manhood and its instrument of control and dominance, is at

6 *E.g.* Plaut. *Truc.* 609-11 *moechum malacum, cincinnatum, l unbraticulum, tympanotribam*; Lucil. 1058 Marx *imberbi androgyni, barbati moechocinaedi*; Cic. *Cat.* 2.23 [...] *omnes adulteri, omnes impuri impudicique* [...]. *hi pueri tam lepidi ac delicati non solum amare et amari* [...] *dicentur*; Curio apud Suet. *Iul.* 52.3 *omnium mulierum uirum et omnium uirorum mulierem*; Liv. 39.15.9 *simillimi feminis mares, stuprati et constupratores*; Verg. *Aen.* 4.215-17; Sen. *Contr.* 1 pr. 9 *expugnatores alienae pudicitiae, negligentes suae*; Vell. Pat. 2.48.3 (on Curio) *suae alienaeque fortunae et pudicitiae prodigus*; Mart. 2.47; Iuv. (?) 6, 365²¹⁻²⁴. See also Catharine Edwards. *The politics of immorality in ancient Rome*. Cambridge, 1993. 70 f. 78 f. and Johanna Fabricius. „Grenzbeziehungen. Zu Strategien somatischer Geschlechterdiskurse in der griechischen und römischen Kultur.“ In: Elke Hartmann, Udo Hartmann and Katrin Pietzner, eds. *Geschlechterdefinitionen und Geschlechtergrenzen in der Antike*. Stuttgart, 2007. 65-86. Fabricius explains Lucil. 1058 Marx as an example for a common literary „figure of thought in Roman literature“, an „oxymoron of two irreconcilable masculinities“ which consists in „the coupling of exaggerated, aggressive virility with problematic effeminacy“ (79, with further references in n. 56).

7 Williams (note 227), 142-53. 206-9. 212-15, quoted: 142.

8 Williams (note 227), 133-5. 138-42. 148-53. 177 f. 212-14; and, *e.g.*, Edwards (note 229), 81-84. – For a similar view on adulterers in Greek sources see Davidson, 29 f.

9 Williams (note 227), 144. 154 f. and, *e.g.*, Richard O. A. M. Lyne. *The Latin Love Poets: From Catullus to Horaz*. Oxford, 1980.

10 See, *e.g.*, the evidence adduced by Williams (note 227), 38. 41. 43 f. 48 (*amator* used as an insult by Plautus and Lucilius). Edwards (note 229), 92: „Real Romans only had sex with their wives and even then not too often.“

11 Lucretius 4.1055. 1063; Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.116-18; Williams (note 227), 38 on toilets and brothels as related features of an urban environment.

the same time also a sign of sexual arousal – or rather its essence if explained in the terms of ancient physiology as a collection of fluids that cause both the swelling and a desire to ejaculate.¹² Priapic manhood would, it seems, *per definitionem* include immoderate and ever-present desire. Of course, this incompatibility of Priapic stance and ideal of moderation has been noticed,¹³ and Williams himself discusses emotional self-control as a component of Roman masculinity, but explicitly *not* as part of the Priapic model. Yet it is doubtful whether such a dissociation can be made of concepts that are as closely connected through the facts of human physiology as these two.

A further explanation for the sexual agent type *moechocinaedus* offered by Williams¹⁴ is based on the practical aspects of adultery: an adulterer has to consort with women, has to take greater care of his appearance or even to disguise himself as a woman in order to penetrate the female sphere, and such behaviour would have been regarded as effeminate in itself. This leads us to a second, related puzzle. Why should women prefer to be penetrated by men who act and dress up in a feminine way? Why should girlish young boys, who are the penetrated objects of male desire, be sexually attractive for women, and more so than grown-up ‘real’ men?¹⁵

One obvious explanation might be that the same extraordinary beauty of such youths that attracts men is also the feature that attracts women to them.¹⁶ But if women are sexually attracted by beauty in general and not by features of the male body in particular, e.g. a sign that the man is a good penetrator, why should they not desire sex with exceptionally beautiful women as well? To explain why women want beautiful men and not beautiful women, we would have to assume that this sexually attractive

12 See, e.g., the forth book of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* with the commentary by Robert D. Brown. *Lucretius on Love and Sex: A Commentary on De Rerum Natura IV, 1030-1287 with Prolegomena, Text, and Translation*. Leiden, 1987 and Sabine Vogt. „Die ‚Widernatürlichkeit‘ des Kinäden: Zur Reflexion über sex und gender.“ In: Therese Fuhrer and Samuel Zinsli, eds. *Gender studies in den Altertumswissenschaften: Rollenkonstrukte in antiken Texten*. Trier, 2003. 43-56.

13 E.g. by Davidson (note 227), 27. Williams (note 227), 153 sees „a certain tension“ between Priapic and a more general model of masculinity: the Priapic model implies that „the male is by definition lustful,“ but masculinity in general implies „that these masculine impulses“ are „kept in check“.

14 Williams (note 227), 144 f.

15 In Petronius’ *Satyrica*, for example, Trimalchio serves both his master and his mistress, apparently at the age of fourteen (75.11; Trimalchio uses the accusative, literally „for fourteen years“), and 16-year old (97.2), effeminate (81.5) Giton is not only a central object of male desire in the novel but also the lover of Tryphaena (104 ff.). In Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.34-5 a slave boy, characterised as *speciosus iuuenis* (34), who was seen in the bedroom of a married woman might have been there for her pleasure or at the order of his master, her husband. In Mart. 2.62 Labiehus depilates himself, as he says, to please his girlfriend with his smoothness. In Iuv. 10.295 ff. the satirist warns parents that a beautiful son will certainly be subject to penetration and become an adulterer as well. Further references are collected in Williams (note 227), 59. 75. 77. 321 f. n: 72. On husbands who rape the adulterer they have surprised in bed with their wives see, e.g., Mart. 2.47 and 49; 2.60; Apul. *Met.* 9.28; Williams (note 227), 27 with notes 65 to 67.

16 Williams (note 227), 59.

beauty, though not gendered in itself, still occurs in greater measure in male than in female youths. At first sight this idea seems to be supported by two passages in Statius’ *Achilleis* in which one individual is singled out from the peer group as possessing the same feature, beauty, to a much higher degree. In the first passage princess Deidameia stands out among the chorus of young women celebrating Athena on the shore of Scyrus. All excel in beauty, all wear the same attire and they all have crossed the threshold of puberty to be now eligible for marriage. Nevertheless, Deidamia shines forth among her sisters like Venus or Diana among the nymphs in their company.¹⁷ In the second passage, Achilles joins a similar chorus of women in honour of Bacchus, and now we have a two-tiered hierarchy of beauties. Just as Deidamia’s beauty exceeds that of her sisters, so Achilles’ beauty exceeds Deidamia’s.¹⁸

It is him, who leads the standards of the virgin band,
him, the performer of difficult moves with his strong arms unbound
(and his sex graces him together with his mother’s deception),
the company admires. No longer the most beautiful of her own crowd is
Deidamia, and brought up close to proud
Aeacides, she is defeated as much as she herself oppresses her sisters.

On closer inspection, however, we see that Achilles’ beauty is clearly gendered – not only through the manly military imagery that pervades the passage.¹⁹ In fact, the narrator explicitly refers to his gender as a factor that joins (*pariter*) his female dress and ornaments (*mendacia matris*) in enhancing his beauty. So, here again, masculine features combine with femininity in dress and gesture – the intricate dance moves of Achilles’ big, i.e. muscular, arms – to create an attractiveness that exclusively belongs to a male youth. That it is this specific male beauty that attracts the desire not only of men but also women is also indicated by a comparison of the two passages. Whereas in the first passage Deidamia simply outshines the other girls in the group but there is no internal interaction between group and leader, Achilles is admired by his companions. Deidamia is only attractive to the male outside observer Achilles and, possibly, the reader; Achilles is attractive to both outside observers (the reader) and the women whose sphere he has penetrated and whose dress and activities he shares.

17 Stat. *Ach.* 1.290-96 *omnibus eximium formae decus, omnibus idem / cultus et expleto teneri iam fine pudoris / uirginitas matura toris amique tumentes. / sed quantum uirides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas / obruit, aut ueneris quantum Diana relinquit / Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori / Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.*

18 Stat. *Ach.* 1.603-08 *illum uirgineae ducentem signa cateruae / magnaue difficili soluentem brachia motu / (et sexus pariter decet et mendacia matris) / mirantur comites. nec iam pulcherrima turbae / Deidamia suae tantumque admota superbo / uincitur Aeacide, quantum premit ipsa sorores.*

19 The military terms *signa ducere* and *uincitur* activate connotations of the military sphere also in *cateruae, comites, admota, superbo* and *premit*. See also P. J. Heslin, P. J. *The Transvestite Achilles: Gender and Genre in Statius’ Achilleid*. Cambridge, 2005. 139 on *thyrsos* as military standards in *Ach.* 1.950.

Working with Greek as well as Roman evidence, David Konstan²⁰ proposes an explanation for this phenomenon that women seem to have been attracted by very young, girl-like males rather than older men with more unequivocally masculine bodies. His explanation implies a partial suspension of the Priapic model: women might show a propensity for very young lovers because the adolescent offers the sexual services of a penetrator without, on the other hand, imposing the dominance an adult penetrator would assert over the penetrated.²¹ The superiority of women in such relationships – and also the acceptability of the desire – might have been enhanced by assimilating the women to the model of male (penetrating) lovers of penetrated boys: women would thus play the dominant role of penetrators while being penetrated.²² Konstan discusses *pre*-pubescent lovers, but extending his explanation to pubescent and post-pubescent males might be justified if one includes other factors that contribute to the power relation between a woman and her male lover, e.g. the difference in age or social status. However, precisely this pliability of Konstan's explanation, the fact that it refers to the power relation of the agents as determined by factors outside the sexual relationship itself and thus can be transferred to other constellations of unequal power, demonstrates that it is insufficient to account for the fact that there seems to be one particular type of lover preferred by women: the pubescent male.

There is a third set of puzzling texts in which a young man's coming of age is described as becoming a woman, e.g. Mark Antony's crossing the threshold of adulthood by Cicero.²³

You put on the manhood toga, which you immediately turned into a woman's [toga].

Why should taking the manhood toga be identified with the assumption of a female role? If the sexual world is divided into penetrating men and all others that can be

penetrated, why would Mark Antony not simply *keep* the feminine role of a pathic²⁴ and just remain the object of penetration he had been as a boy? Why is he not described as someone who never grew up to become a real man, as someone who, faithful to the sexual role of his childhood, always had been and remained to be an unmanly, penetrated *effeminatus*? Why must he become a man first?

One possible explanation in this case is that we are dealing with invective, which is characteristically phrased in witty, paradoxical antitheses.²⁵ In addition, Cicero could have wished to highlight what Antony *should* have done, namely cease to be a possible object of penetration, by showing how he perversely turned his man's toga into the toga of a female prostitute. Encolpius in his invective against Giton (*Petr.* 81.5) could have intended a similar jibe – or Giton may have seriously been confronted with the question which sexual role he would prefer once he had the option to become a penetrator.²⁶

What shall I say about the other one, who, on the day of his manhood toga, put on the matron's gown, who let himself be persuaded by his mother not to be a man, who performed a woman's services [for the slaves] in a prison farm?

But the case of Statius' Achilles (*Ach.* 1.283-335) seems to be different. Here becoming a man is becoming a woman both in emotional and social terms. The first appearance of a man's sexuality in the boy Achilles is the necessary condition for his accepting the feminine guise. Contrary to other versions of the myth, Statius' Achilles only yields to his mother Thetis' wish that he hide as a girl at the court of Lycomedes after he has fallen in love with princess Deidamia.²⁷ It is the fact that he experiences the sexual arousal of a grown-up penetrator for the first time that turns him into a woman.²⁸

20 David Konstan. „The Pre-Pubescent Lover in Greek Literature.“ In: *Diotima: Materials for the Study of Women and Gender in the Ancient World*. Ed. Allen Ross Scaife. Stoa Consortium. 2001. <http://www.stoa.org/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Stoa:text:2002.01.0003>. Last access 2 May 2009.

21 Williams (note 227), 7 f. points out the issue of dominance and social superiority negotiated in the Priapic model: „adult men of the dominant class“ do not engage in relationships with equals but have intercourse with someone who is different and thus inferior because of his or her age, biological gender or sexual passivity. See also p. 18: „[...] penetration is subjugation (in the sense that the act is held simultaneously to be a figure for, and to effect, subjugation), and masculinity is domination.“

22 For our present purpose it is irrelevant whether women themselves conceived of their desire in such terms or whether male authors conceive of female desire in this manner. The sources used in this paper allow us only a glimpse on the latter, anyway. This whole article is about how *men* think and represent sexuality.

23 Cic. *Phil.* 2.44 *sumpsisti uirilem quam statim muliebrem togam reddidisti*. See on this passage Lewis A. Sussman. „Antony the Meretrix Audax: Cicero's Novel Invective in Philippic 2.44-46.“ *Eranos* 96 (1998), 114-28, who suggests that Cicero intended to create a comic effect by having the audience/reader of the speech imagine sturdy Antony in female dress (120).

24 I use the term „pathic“ in the technical sense of Latin *pathicus* in order to refer to men who want to be penetrated.

25 Compare the jingles quoted in note 229.

26 Petron. 81.5 *quid illè alter? qui die togae uirilis stolam sumpsit, qui ne uir esset a matre persuasus est, qui opus muliebrem in ergastulo fecit*. For the meaning of the last phrase see Peter Habermehl. *Petronius, Satyricon 79-141: Ein philologisch-literarischer Kommentar. Bd. 1: Sat. 79-110*. Berlin and New York, 2006. 43.

27 In Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, for example, Achilles gives in to his mother's entreaties and then later, during his stay at Scyrus, develops feelings for the princess (1.681-704). Monica Silveira Cyrino („Heroes in D(u)ress: Transvestism and Power in the Myths of Heracles and Achilles.“ *Arethusa* 31 [1998], 207-41) gives an overview of the different versions. See also Heslin (note 231), 124 f.

28 Stat. *Ach.* 1.301-17 *hanc ubi ducentem longe socia agmina uidit / trux puer et nullo temeratus pectora motu / deriguit totisque nouum bibit ossibus ignem. / nec late haustus amor, sed fax uibrata medullis / 305 in uultus atque ora redit lucemque genarum / tinguit et impulsam tenui sudore pererrat. / lactea Massagetae ueluti cum pocula fuscanti / sanguine puniceo uel ebur corrumpitur ostro, / sic uariis manifesta notis palletque rubetque / 310 flamma repens. eat atque ultro ferus hospita sacra / disciat turbae securus et innemor aevi, / ni pudor et iunctae teneat reuerentia matris. / ut pater armenti quondam ductorque futurus, / cui nondum toto peraguntur cornua gyro, / 315 cum sociam pastus nitueo candore iuuenam / aspicit, ardescunt animi pri-*

This girl he saw from afar leading the train of companions and immediately the fierce boy, never before violated in his breast by any stirring, became rigid and drank the new fire with all his bones. Nor does the love he has drawn remain hidden. No, the torch brandished in his marrow returns to his mien and face and colours the light of his cheeks, striking it up and roaming through it with a thin layer of sweat. Just as when Massagetan Scyths darken milky cups with deep-red blood or as ivory is corrupted with purple die, so – manifest in many signs – pales and blushes the sudden flame. Forward he would go and on his own drive apart the friendly rites of his host, not caring about the crowd, forgetting his age, did not shame and respect for the mother at his side hold him back. Like the father of the herd he is, the one that some time will lead it, whose horns are not yet bent enough to complete the circle, when he sees a snowy cow, the companion of his pasture: his spirits flare up and for the first time on his mouth appears the froth of love. Happily the guardians watch and stop him.

Achilles' first experience of love for a woman – a manly emotion one would think – breaks his manly resistance. It is a change of mind that removes the steadfast, „recalcitrant Achilles“ from the youth.²⁹ The new emotion „violates“ him (302 *temeratus*; 308 *corrumpunt*) and aggressively burns him from inside as if a torch were moved to and fro in his innermost marrow (304 *fax uibrata medullis*).³⁰ Achilles opens up to this intrusion like a woman to her penetrator and imbibes the fire of love into his bones (303 *bibit ossibus ignem*, 304 *haustus amor*). As a result, he shows the emblematic blush on a snowy white skin that characterises beauty made to be taken.

At the same time, this love is also a masculine emotion of a „fierce boy“ (302 *trux puer*) who becomes rigid (303 *deriguit*). His blush is a sweaty and pulsating return of the injected desire to the outside, not the reaction of a bashfully recoiling virgin. He is emboldened to break into the holy festival and only retained by a sense of shame and respect for his mother. That this reaction is a moment in the transition process from child to man is underlined by the simile in which Achilles is likened to a young bull promising with his first sexual arousal his future as successful father and leader of the herd (313-17).

The particular attractiveness of adolescent youths is presupposed in all these texts and must, therefore, be a commonplace for the authors and their audience.³¹ And this is

musque per ora / spumat amor, spectant hilares obstantque magistri. Heslin (note 231), 128 points out parallels to the assumption of the *toga uirilis*.

29 Stat. *Ach.* 1.284 *indocilem quae mens detraxit Achillem?*

30 As befits an epic poet, Statius moderates the double entendre by talking of bones in the line before. One famous model of this kind of erotic subjugation is, of course, Propertius 1.1.1-4. It is noteworthy that Statius changes the less explicit *contactum* (Prop. 1.1.2 *contactum nullis ante cupidinibus*) to a much stronger word in his version (302 *temeratus*).

31 Williams (note 227), 11; Konstan (note 232). On Novius *Atell.* 20 f. and other references see Williams (note 227), 26; on 15-year old Narcissus, desired by many girls and by many youths (Ov. *Met.* 3.353), 262 n. 29. Williams states that „the ideal male partner, the youth or boy of our

another – the fourth – riddle I wish to present: if the most basic sexual distinction is between penetrators and penetrated, why then are precisely those males most attractive to penetrators who are on the threshold of manhood so that, in them, the distinction between penetrator and penetrated is blurred? Concern for the well-being of the penetrated was not an issue that would have influenced a Roman pederast to choose a more mature boy. What counted was the pleasure of the man. So why would a Roman man prefer to penetrate a youth that is more like a man than a boy?³² Why should it be important for the penetrator that the penetrated has a developed penis and so is able to penetrate others as well?³³

Everyone (?) knows that a boy is better than a woman and how much better [the boy] is whose voice is a cockcrow, whose branch just turns into hardwood.

One reason might be the particular tickle of a dangerous affair.³⁴ According to the well-known conceit that we desire more what is forbidden and pursue those who flee us, the penetrator may enjoy the achievement of seducing a recalcitrant young man rather than a compliant boy.³⁵ It is the delight of playing with fire, of touching the un-touchable and dominating the potentially dominant. This works best, of course, as long as things are left in suspense and the role of the young man is not yet definitely decided.

This is the source from which one of the most sensual scenes in Roman poetry, Achilles' return from the hunt (Stat. *Ach.* 1.158-97), derives its seductive power. Achilles makes his first appearance as a thoroughly ambivalent beauty. Oblivious to the effect he has on his mother – a freezing shock that drives the blood from her skin (158) – he is characterised by manly features such as martial arts and exertion (160) as well as sweat and dirt that make him look older and bigger than he is (159); but he is also „still sweet to look at“ (161 *dulcis adhuc uisu*): a snowy complexion highlighted with redness of (manly) fire and shiny golden hair. His gaze is still mild and more like his mother's than a man's. His virile heroism is not yet directed at an enemy in war but used to catch lion cubs to play with, and his childish joy makes him even more irre-

sources, belonged to the age-group roughly equivalent to what is now called adolescence“, when „boys were no longer prepubescent children, but not yet men“ (19). Legally the youths of that age-group (14 to 20 years; further references Williams [note 227], 73-5) were regarded as men.

32 Williams (note 227), 81 suspects, on the basis of Suet. *Tib.* 44, that sexual contact with very young boys might have been regarded as unacceptable. It is, however, quite unclear whether it is the age of the boys that Suetonius disapproves of or the oral practices the children have to perform.

33 Novius *Atell.* 20 f. *puerum mulieri praestare nemo <ne>scit, quanto siet / melior cuius uox gallulascit, cuius ian ramus roborascit.*

34 Dio Chrysostomus suggests this in a Greek context (Or. 7.149-52), but similar thoughts with regard to adultery are expressed in Hor. *Sat.* 1.2 and Mart. 3.33. See also Williams (note 227), 103 f.

35 Call. *Epigr.* 1 Gow/Page (*A.P.* 12.102), imitated Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.105-8; compare e.g. Ov. *Am.* 2.9.9-10; 2.19.36; 3.14.

sistible so that the narrator breaks the distance with an enraptured exclamation (168 f.), thus venting the emotion that is building up in the reader too.³⁶

The reader is aroused by the teasingly attractive image of this manly boy, while at the same time Achilles' innocence and physical power add the thrill of secretly enjoying a forbidden fruit. In a similar way the boy's interactions with those around him are heavily eroticised. Not only is Patroclus already pining after him (174 f.); when he rushes to his mother, „entwining her with avid forearms / already weighing heavy in her embrace“ (172 f.), a trace of something more than motherly love is perceptible. The reader is then treated to a full-blown bathing scene, in which Achilles' tutor Chiron fondly marvels at his pupil's body and even joins him in the water, „now caressing his breast, / now his powerful shoulders“ (183 f.), while his mother perceives a choking mixture of elation and fear (184 *angunt sua gaudia matrem*), an emotion that seems to be motivated by more than just the concern about her son's safety during the Trojan war and that returns when, at dinner, Achilles sings of her marriage (194 f.).³⁷ When, finally, Achilles curls up in the Centaur's arms for the night, preferring the accustomed embrace to that of his faithful mother (196 f.),³⁸ the reader is likely to be haunted by naughty ideas that may be all the more pleasurable for their outrageousness.

That such fantasies are not completely unjustified is confirmed when Thetis carries Achilles off to Scyros: like another Ariadna or Laodamia, Chiron pines at the sea shore, all nature weeping with him as if he were a new Acontius or Propertius (*Stat. Ach.* 1.232-41). Now it becomes clear that the teasingly innocent boy had, in fact, been encircled by just the kind of lewdly goggling desire Statius' reader might have felt: Fauns already miss „the boy's singing“ (240) – we know what bucolic singing might lead to – and nymphs bewail the erotic encounters they had been hoping for all the time and of which they are now deprived (241).

If penetration is an assertion of superiority in the Priapic model, such an assertion ought in principle be particularly effective when a man penetrates a potential penetrator, who obtains a higher rank within the hierarchy of sexual dominance than a woman or a younger boy. I am not aware of a statement to this effect by a Latin author, but a similar idea emerges from that famous epigram in which Straton (2nd BCE) classifies the desirability of boys according to their age.³⁹ In that poem, the sexual attractiveness of boys rises from the twelfth to the fifteenth year. A boy at the age of sixteen is regarded as something for gods. The poet leaves it open whether mortals may aspire to

36 Heslin (note 231), 182 shows how the scene is set for Achilles' arrival.

37 A different explanation is suggested by Heslin (note 231), 88: the song reminds her of the prophecy about Achilles' death. However, this is the moment when Thetis' anxiety is for the first time *relieved* to such an extent that she finally breaks into a smile.

38 196 f. [...] *blandusque umeris se innectit Achilles / quamquam ibi fida parens, adsuetaque pectora maull.*

39 *A.P.* 12.4 = no. 4 in Lucida Floridi, *Stratone di Sardi, Epigrammi: testo critico, traduzione e commento*. Alessandria, 2007.

such an object of desire as well; the phrase „year of gods“ (12.4.5 *θεῶν ἔτος*) could also mean that 16-year olds are of godlike beauty and afford their lovers a joy worthy of gods. As concerns older boys, however, the speaker makes the power hierarchy of penetrators explicit by declaring that such youths are out of limit for him and only something Zeus, the most powerful of all gods, may seek.

This declaration also points to another danger for the lover of young men, the always impending role switch that the speaker of Straton's poem expects as a certainty once the youth has reached the 18th year.⁴⁰ The predilection for well developed boys is a frequent theme in Martial's epigrams and, as Hans Obermayer has shown,⁴¹ there is always a hint of suspicion that the master of these boys might be interested in playing the receptive role himself – curiously enough even where Martial presents his own persona as the master of such a boy.⁴²

You watch us, Philomusus, while we're bathing,
and why I have such big-pricked
smooth boys you ask again and again.
I'll answer your question frankly:
they ass-fuck oglers, Philomusus.

Like Philomusus, the Muse-loving reader might have been asking himself what Martial needs these well-endowed slaves for, and the reader's answer will have turned out to be something in the lines of what Martial promises to his addressee.⁴³ Martial's answer thus suggests that everyone, not only the epigrammatist and his addressee but even the reader, does in private what he is snubbing at in public. Why else would he be so interested in the abdominal regions of a stranger's slave boys?⁴⁴

The public scorn heaped on men who enjoyed being penetrated may explain why a man might wish to have a boy penetrator rather than an adult one. The youth of the other functions as a camouflage: he can be sold to the public as the receptive one so

40 Straton *A.P.* 12.4.7 f. *εἰ δ' ἔτι περοβυτέρου τις ἔχει πόθον, οὐκέτι παίζει, / ἀλλ' ἤδη ζητεῖ τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος.*

41 Hans Peter Obermayer, *Martial und der Diskurs über männliche „Heterosexualität“ in der Literatur der frühen Kaiserzeit*. Tübingen, 1999. 90 f. On the question of penis size see also Williams (note 227), 86-95 with a host of references.

42 Mart. 11.63 *Spectas nos, Philomuse, cum lauamur, / et quare mihi tam mutumati / sint leues pueri, subinde quaeris. / dicam simpliciter tibi roganti: / pedicant, Philomuse, curiosos.* N. M. Kay, *Martial, Book XI: A Commentary*. London, 1985. 209 points out that *curiosus* is also a term for the voyeur.

43 The epigrammatic revealing game can be enhanced by suggesting that the pathic prefers the particularly shameful oral intercourse (Mart. 3.73).

44 A different play is pointed out by Kay (note 237), 209: the phallus is an „apotropaic emblem against the evil eye“ and thus an appropriate means to punish *curiosi*. Note, however, that the evil eye is linked to the emotion of envy: the Muse-lover (Philomusus or the reader) would thus be gratified because he is served to just the thing he had been staring at with envy.

that his pathic master can keep up pretences.⁴⁵ However, a pathic master's wish to hide his true desire is not the only reason why adolescent penetrators are sought out. In the relationship between grown-up pathic and adolescent penetrator the role and the attractiveness of the young man seems to be similar to the function an adolescent lover can have for a woman: the youth of the penetrator affords the penetrated a position of superiority he or she would not have as the receptive partner of a man of equal age.

It is also noteworthy that the fragment from Nonius quoted above and Straton's (in particular *A.P.* 12.3) as well as Martial's epigrams bear witness to a genuine interest in the evolving penis of male adolescents. It is not necessarily the big organ only that is of interest but rather the penis as something that grows and simply comes into being.⁴⁶

If, in the course of such [diatribes], a strong-man crosses your path,
one just released from his pedagogue's supervision and from whose
swelling penis the smith has just removed the pin,
you summon him with a nod, lead him away and – it's too shameful to say
what you do, Chrestus, with your Catonian tongue.

2. The Priapic Dilemma

Such observations, finally, lead us to a new explanation for the paradoxes and puzzles I have pointed out so far, an explanation that takes as its basis the intrinsic vulnerability of the Priapic stance. Boyish adulterers and adolescent penetrators of pathics appear as inferior to those they penetrate not only because they are younger or because they are slaves that have to obey their masters but also, I wish to suggest, because they are playing a non-dominant role in the sexual act itself. And this, paradoxically, comes about because of the potency and thus availability of their penetrative organ. Their erect penis is taken possession of, incorporated, devoured by a hungry, lusty pathic or female; it is performing a service in an aggressively demanding orifice. Different classes of evidence indicate that there is, indeed, this other side of the Priapic medal.

First of all, it is remarkable that within the precise Latin vocabulary expressing various penetrative acts there exist two sets of verbs to describe the experience of the receptive partner: three passive forms (*futui*, *pedicari* and *irrumari*) and three active forms

45 See, e.g. Mart. 7.62 and Sen. *Epist.* 47.7, where the one who is supposed to be the penetrator is revealed as receptive of the youth's penetration (Williams [note 227], 3 and 188-93 with further references).

46 Mart. 9.27.10-15 *occurrit aliquis inter ista si draucus, / iam paedagogo liberatus et cuius / refibulavit turgidum faber penem, / nutu uocatum ducis, et pudet fari / Catoniana, Chreste, quod facis lingua.* On the meaning of *draucus* see Richlin 1992 (note 227), 276; Kay (note 237), 224; Peter Howell. *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial.* London, 1980. 308. Christer Henriksén. *Martial, Book IX: A Commentary.* Vol. 1. Uppsala, 1998. 148 f. explains that the *fibula* was a ring drawn through the prepuce to prevent the slave from having intercourse (Schol. Iuv. 6.379).

(*crisare*, *ceure* and *fellare*).⁴⁷ This indicates that the experience of being penetrated could also be conceived as an activity, for which I will use the technical term „insertion“. Moreover, *fellare*, the active verb that describes oral reception of a penis is also transitive, i.e. *fellatio* is not conceived as something that happens to the orally penetrated person but as an activity that is done to someone or something. This fits well with the many expressions we find in our sources according to which the receptive partner eats or devours the penis like, e.g., the anonymous hypocrite whom Martial unmasks as a *fellator*, who „watches strong-men with devouring eyes / and cannot look at cocks with lips inactive.“⁴⁸

Another set of sources in which penetration appears as something suffered at the hands of the penetrated are descriptions that enhance the repulsiveness of the act: the penis faces the horrible prospect of being inserted into disgusting, gaping vaginas or anuses. One example will suffice.⁴⁹

A two-toothed hag of a girlfriend, one who still remembers ancient Romulus,
is being procured for you, within whose pitch-black groin⁵⁰
lies a hidden cavity concealed beneath a flabby paunch.
Covered with quivering hide, cobwebbed
mould of yearlong frost obstructs the entrance.
For you she is procured, in order that three or four times
this bottomless trench may devour your slippery head.
Lie there as you wish now, sick and slacker than a snake:
you will be rubbed on and on until – ah, wretched, wretched one! –
three or four times your size you'll fill up the cavity.
This haughtiness of yours will serve you nothing when
with your quivering head you'll be dipped into the resounding ooze.

47 Williams (note 227), 161 f. 182 f., concentrating, however, on the *cinaedus* as actively rejecting and thus questioning or endangering traditional masculine identity. See also p. 94 on intercourse in which the recipient partner carries out the stimulating movement and Holt N. Parker. „The Teratogenic Grid.“ In: Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, eds. *Roman Sexualities.* Princeton, 1997. 47-65.

48 Mart. 1.96.12-13 [...] *spectat oculis deuorantibus draucos / nec otiosis mentulas uidet labris.* Compare also, e.g., Catull. 88.8 [...] *demisso se ipse uoret capite*; Mart. 7.67.15 *medias uorat puellas*; Apul. *Met.* 8.26 *exedas tam bellum [...] pullulum*; CIL 4.2360 *comedere uerpam*; CIL 11.6721.34 *esureis et me felas*. In some contexts the eating imagery may have been suggested by a particular context, e.g. Cat. 33.3 f. *nam dextra pater inquinatioe, / culo filius est uoracior*; Mart. 2.51.5 f. *infelix uenter spectat conuiuia culi / et semper miser hic esurit, ille uorat*; see Williams (note 227), 336 n. 87.

49 Priapeum *Quid hoc noui est* (App. Verg.) = 83.26-37 Bücheler *bidens amica Romuli sentis memor / paratur, inter atra cuius inguina / latet iacente pantice abditus specus / uagaque pelle lectus amno gelu / 30 araneosis obsidet forem situs. / tibi haec paratur, ut tuum ter aut quater / uoret profunda fossa lubricum caput. / licebit aeger angue lentior cubes, / tereris usque donec, a miser, miser, / 35 triplexque quadruplexque compleas specum. / superbia ista proderit nihil, simul / uagum sonante merseris luto caput.* See the discussion by Richlin (note 227), 114-16 and compare also *Priap.* 12 and 46. A gaping anus is described Mart. 6.37.

50 Or „between whose pitch-black thighs“. See Alessandro Franzoi. *Quieta, Venus. Il Priapeo* 83 *Büch.* Naples, 1998. 102.

In this *Priapeum* penetrating an ugly old vagina is envisaged as a punishment for impotence. It follows that the erection and the performance of the sexual act is here regarded as something independent of the penetrator's pleasure – quite in agreement, paradoxically, with the masculine ideal of self-control and hardship adduced to explain the first of the four paradoxes of youth discussed above. Still, the ultimate purpose of all this is supposed to be the man's pleasure: the speaker chastises his penis because its malfunction deprives him of the pleasure he could have had (23 *iuuante arte*; 45 *Venus iocosa*). In other cases, however, sexual malfunction is regretted because it has rendered the man in question unable to give the service he is supposed to supply. In Petronius' *Satyrice* (132 ff.), Encolpius' failure to perform actually causes extensive and cruel punishment by the disappointed woman, and the treatment itself has the character of just another such punishment. Here, intercourse is no longer an enjoyable experience for the man. Instead, he has to function and perform, if necessary even under pain. Erections are brought about by aphrodisiacs⁵¹ or some other stimulation that is in no way enjoyable for the stimulated (*Priap.* 83.33-35), and that this can happen is the precondition for cases of male prostitution in which the prostitute penetrates his customers while perceiving what he does as extremely disagreeable or even disgusting.⁵²

Probably the most drastic form such subjugation can take is rape. There is the theoretical possibility that the speaker of the quoted *Priapeum* actually means that he himself will cruelly rub his penis⁵³ until it can penetrate the old woman. In this case, then, the impotent man would perform the act out of his own accord in order to punish his disobedient member. But a clear case of rape is described in Petronius, where a *cinaedus* uses force and inserts Encolpius' and Ascyltus' penises into his mouth and anus.⁵⁴

The *cinaedus* spat on me a most unclean kiss. Then he even came on top of the bed and with all might uncovered me while I was protesting. For a long time and intensely, but in vain, he did his grinding on top of my groin. [...]

24 I could no longer hold my tears, but brought to the utmost point of misery [...].

51 E.g. *Priap.* 46.7; Petron. 20.6-7; 21.1.

52 Williams (note 227), 83 on Pomponius' lost Attelan farce *Prostibulum*; Naeuolus in Iuv. 9 sells his sexual services to a rich patron. The beautiful son in Iuv. 10 is also in danger of becoming an *adulter* / *publicus* (310 f.); after he has conquered his first matron, soon others will buy him and wear him out so that he will become ugly (319-21): *mox cum dederit Seruilia nummos, / fiet et illius quam non amat, exuet omnem / corporis ornatum*. On Naeuolus and the repulsiveness of what he has to put up with see also Thorsten Fögen. „Zwei Satiren Juvenals: Anmerkungen zur Homosexualität in der römischen Antike.“ *Forum Homosexualität und Literatur* 36 (2000), 63-74.

53 Compare *distriuit* in Petron. 24.4.

54 Petron. 23.4-24.4 [...] *immundissimo me basio conspuit* [sc. *cinaedus*]. *mox et super lectum uenit atque omni ui retexit recusantem. super inguina mea diu multumque frustra moluit*. [...] 24 *non tenui ego diutius lacrimas, sed ad ultimam perductus tristitiam* [...] *ab hac uoce equum cinaedus mutauit transituque ad comitem meum facto clunibus eum basiisqueistriuit*. Another such rape seems to have occurred in the fragmentary part 21.2 [sc. *cinaedus*] *modo extortis nos clunibus cecidit, modo basiis olidissimis inquinauit*.

[...], the *cinaedus* changed his horse and, having made a transition to my companion, rubbed him to pieces with his buttocks and kisses.

Even Priapus himself, his genital always ready for action, can be the victim of such insertive assaults. He is worn out to death by insatiable women from the neighbourhood that want to be penetrated again and again.⁵⁵

Help, citizens! – for when will there be an end? –
or cut it off, my seed-giving member,
which every whole night is tired out
by the randy women of the neighbourhood,
who are more horny than sparrows in spring
– or I'll burst and you won't have your Priapus any longer.

In other passages the limits between rape and consent are blurred, in particular if the penetrator is a slave or dependant that is denied the right to refuse the sexual act. The young slave, for example, that has to serve effeminate priests as a *concupimus* in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* greets Lucius, the donkey, on his arrival with words that indicate his discomfort at what he has to do.⁵⁶

„At last you have arrived, a successor to my most wretched toil! May you live long and please our masters and do something for my now exhausted loins.“

There seems to be a certain reluctance to see penetrating males as victims, not only in modern commentaries but, as the ambiguity of *Priap.* 83 shows, already in the ancient texts themselves. Even if women and pathics take the initiative, this is supposed to be a form of self-denigration of the insertor and not something that humiliates the penetrator. Thus, for Williams, the disgusting and reviling descriptions of women and

55 *Priap.* 26.1-6 *Porro – nam quis erit modus? – Quirites / aut praecidite seminale membrum, / quod totis mihi noctibus fatigant / uicinae sine fine prurientes / 5 uernis passeribus salaciores, / aut rumpar nec habebitis Priapum*. For the meaning of *porro* see Christiane Goldberg, *Carmina Priapea: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Interpretation und Kommentar*. Heidelberg, 1992. 153. – See also Davidson 2001, 25 f. In Greek sources, women and *cinaedi* are regarded as insatiable, the physiological reason being that they cannot get rid of the fluids that arouse them. „Whereas men ejaculated, so finding a release and an end for desire, women's desire for sex was never ending“ (25). This is reminiscent of Juvenal's description of Messalina after a busy night in the brothel (6.128-30): *tristis abit et quod potuit tamen ultima cellam / clausit adhuc ardens rigidae tentigine uoluae, / et lassata uiris necdum satiata recessit*, [...]. However, in Juvenal women emit a considerable amount of fluid (e.g. 6.309 f.; 319). This is also because Juvenal does not distinguish between the excretion of urine and of genital fluids (e.g. also in Iuv. 1.39 *uetulae uesica beatae*).

56 Apul. *Met.* 8.26 *erat quidam iuuenis satis corpulentus, choraula doctissimus, conlatiua stipe de mensa paratus, qui foris quidem circumgestantibus deam cornu canens adambulabat, domi uero promiscuis operis partarius agebat concupimus. hic me simul domi conspexit, libenter adpositis largiter cibariis gaudens alloquitur: „uenisti tandem miserissimi laboris uicarius. sed diu uiuas et dominis placeas et meis defectis iam lateribus consulas.“* See also Apul. *Met.* 8.29, where the priests find a well-endowed slave boy and greedily snap at his groin with their mouths like a pack of predators: [...] *quendam fortissimum rusticatum industria laterum atque inis uentris bene praeparatum comitem cenae secum adducunt paucisque admodum praegustatis olusculis ante ipsam mensam spurcissima illa propudia ad illicitae libidinis extrema flagitia infandis uriginibus efferantur, passimque circumfusi nudatum supinatumque iuuenem execrandis oribus flagitabant*.

pathics in the poems quoted above are to be explained as a product of the Priapic double standards according to which the penetrator is elevated, while the penetrated suffers humiliation.⁵⁷ While I do not wish to contest Williams's statement as far as he is describing the Priapic ideal, the sources seem to me also to yield a different picture, in which the penetrated is „on top“⁵⁸ and the penetrating – or rather „inserted“ – male the one that suffers, if not an invasion, still an experience of draining, „forfeiture“ and „loss“ (see above p. 228). The aggressive scorn of our texts is directed at a particular group of penetrated agents – not, for example, boys and women who are unwilling or, at least, coyly pretend to be unwilling;⁵⁹ it is the expression of an attitude towards a particular class of sexual agents who do not simply submit to penetration but aggressively *demand* to be penetrated and thus turn the Priapic man into *their* object of desire.

But how can such dominant inserting sexual agents be part of the Priapic model? Must we not revise the model or even reject it? I do not think so. On the contrary, I believe that the model necessarily implies the occurrence of aggressive insertors as a consequence of the Priapic model's narrow focus on the male genital and its penetrative function.

The erect penis is the means by which masculine dominance and identity is asserted, but it is also the means to gratify the penetrated agent. In both cases it becomes a detached entity of its own, often taking the place of a person. The penis on its own has two gods, Fascinus and Mutunus Titinus,⁶⁰ and it occurs everywhere in the form of so-called „apotropaic phalli“ or symbolically penetrating and thus humiliating *sopiones*.⁶¹ This is the dominant penis, the phallus, as a sign of power. Yet, in a similar manner, the penetrators of aggressive insertors seem to be reduced to their penetrative organ, the inserted penis.

It makes a certain sense in the Priapic system that the value of a man is measured by the length of his penis⁶² and that penis and man are identified.⁶³ A particularly striking

57 Williams (note 227), 181 f. explicitly includes cases like that of Juvenal's Naeuolus (*Sat.* 9) and the *concupinus* in Apul. *Met.* 8.26. According to Williams, the only complaint of the *concupinus* is the physical strain of his services, while Naeuolus' misgivings about what he is doing start when he sees that the reward is insufficient. Naeuolus' description of his toils is then read by Williams as an attack „behind“ the patron's „back“ and as part of his „aggressive stance“ towards his patron. However, the beautiful son in Iuv. 10.319-21 gets his rewards and wastes away all the same. And even the simple fact that a man has no choice but to wear himself out because he is either a slave or needs the money could certainly be seen as an instance of „forfeiture“ and „loss“.

58 Quite literally „on top“ is the *cinaedus* who rapes Encolpius and Ascyltus (Petron. 23 f.), whom Williams does not discuss in this context.

59 Williams (note 227), 185 f.

60 Williams (note 227), 92.

61 *E.g.* Cat. 37; Petron. 22.1.

62 Mart. 1.23; 1.58; Iuv. 1.41 *partes quisque suas ad mensuram inguinis heres*; 9.34.

63 Catull. 88.8 *non si demisso se ipse uoret capite* (se = his own penis); Mart. 11.72 *Drauci Natta sui uocat pipinam, / conlatus cui Gallus est Priapus*. The word order suggests that *cui* refers to

example of this is how the insertor Lichas recognises and greets – not his former penetrator Encolpius but Encolpius' penis, even shaking hands with it.⁶⁴

Lichas, who knew me very well, also came running as if he had heard my voice too. He didn't look at my hands or face, but turned his eyes directly down to my groin, extended his officious hand towards it, and said: „Hi, Encolpius!“

This is only an extreme case of a general tendency to gaze not at the man or his body, but only at his penis, *e.g.* in the bath scenes described in various satirical texts.⁶⁵ A particularly interesting example is, again, provided by Petronius. Eumolpus witnesses how the youth Ascyltus finds himself without clothes in the bath because Giton has run away with them.⁶⁶

A huge crowd stood around him, applauding with most timid admiration. For his groin's burden was so massive that you'd have thought the man to be an outgrowth of the phallus. What a hard-working young man! I bet he has to begin today to finish tomorrow. So he immediately found help. Some Roman knight or other – with a dubious reputation, they say – covered the lost soul up with his own garment and bore him off to his place, I think, in order to exploit his good fortune alone.

Ascyltus is greeted with a mixture of fear and respect,⁶⁷ just as befits agents within the Priapic model. Yet already in the next sentence, the penis is detached from the person as the focus of attention; not the penis hangs from the man, but the man is an outgrowth, an appendage to the penis. And as soon as the penis has become an entity of its own, Eumolpus imagines it to be a source of toil for the man. Eumolpus is joking and exaggerating, of course: a penetration is hard work because the penis is so long that it takes days to get it in and out again. All the same, the joke works by exaggerat-

pipinam; the comparison with Priapus, on the other hand, suggests that *cui* refers to *draucus*. In any case, the only thing we learn about the youth in question is that he has an enormous penis, belongs to a certain Natta, and that Natta jokingly plays down the size of the penis, thus showing how much he controls not only the youth but also his penis.

64 Petron. 105.9 *Lichas, qui me optime nouerat, tanquam et ipse uocem audisset, accurrat et nec manus nec faciem meam considerauit, sed continuo ad inguina mea luninibus deflexis mouit officiosam manum et „salue“ inquit „Encolpi“*. For the sexual connotations of *officiosam* see Habermehl (note 233), 412.

65 Sen. *Nat.* 1.16.3 *in omnibus quidem balneis agebat ille dilectum et aperta mensura legebat uiros, [...]*; Mart. 1.23; 1.96.11-13; 9.33; Iuv. 6.374 f. (quoted below); Iuv. 9.34-6 [...]. *nil faciet longi mensura incognita nerui, / quamuis te nudum spumanti Virro labello / uiderit [...]* (no explicit reference to the bath is made, but that is the place where such an encounter was likely to happen).

66 Petron. 92.7-10 *ex altera parte inuenis nudus, qui uestimenta perdiderat, non minore clamoris indignatione Gitona flagitabat. 8 [...], illum autem frequentia ingens circumuenit cum plausu et admiratione timidissima. 9 habebat enim inguinum pondus tam grande, ut ipsum hominem laciniam fascini crederes. o inuenem laboriosum: puto illum pridie incipere, postero die finire. 10 itaque statim inuenit auxilium; nescio quis enim, eques Romanus ut atebant infamis, sua ueste errantem circumdedit ac domum abduxit, credo, ut tam magna fortuna solus uteretur*. Transl. on the basis of that by Patrick G. Walsh (Petronius. *The Satyricon*. Oxford, 1999). For the meaning of *lacinia* („Auswuchs“) see Habermehl (note 233), 233.

67 Compare also Petron. 140.13; Williams (note 227), 90.

ing a connection that is presupposed as something self-evident, namely the connection between penis size, penetration and physical effort.

That a big penis does not exist for the enjoyment of its owner but for the purpose of penetrating others is another such apparently self-evident connection that propels the action. As was to be expected (*itaque statim*), an insertor of some social standing as *equus Romanus* appears and takes possession of his big lucky find (*magna fortuna*). The attribute *magna* indicates that the lucky find is not Ascylltus but rather his penis, while the grammatical gender of *errantem* points to Ascylltus.⁶⁸ Ascylltus is now wandering aimlessly about and seems to have lost any will of his own. Just before, he was angrily seeking Giton, his own 'possession', who had run away. The reader knows that Ascylltus' interest in Giton is a sexual one, Giton being the penetrated in that relationship. Now Ascylltus is described as lost and in need of help and allows himself to be led away by the insertor as if it did not matter that his sexual activity is to be directed at someone else.

The sexually active male encounters a Priapic dilemma. Men are turned into victims and used because of their prodigious equipment. Even if, in some sense, the „supremacy of the phallus“ is „reconfirmed“ by the attention that desiring insertors give to the penis (Williams [note 227], 91), the very same phallus is contested in another sense: the phallus is the most desirable thing to have, but by being presented to the public, it becomes an entity of its own, is removed from the man it belongs to and made available to those who desire it.

The more he corresponds to the Priapic ideal, the more a man is in danger to lose his manliness and to become a more or less replaceable „donkey on two legs“ (Iuv. 9.92 *bipes asellus*).⁶⁹ After the women in Juvenal's 6th *Satire* have worked themselves into a state of sexual arousal by performing the active moves of intercourse (*crisare*, see p. 239), they demand „men“ (*uir*) to be admitted to the Bona Dea orgy. There are, however, no Priapic penetrators who would wait eagerly for such an opportunity to assert their dominance. The women have to summon their peacefully sleeping adulterers (330). Several ways to replace these sluggish, badly performing males are discussed – slaves or the water bearer – and it soon transpires that what the women really want can just as well be supplied by an animal.⁷⁰

But it is not even male animal sexuality, not even a „stud“⁷¹ they need. It is just a sizable penis. And so the victimisation of the male penetrator can actually lead to the loss

68 The terms for Ascylltus' genital (*pondus* and *fascinum*) are neuter.

69 See also, e.g., Apul. *Met.* 8.26; SHA *Comm.* 10.9.

70 Iuv. 6.329-34 „iam fas est, admitte uiros!“ *dormitat adulter, / illa iubet sumpto iuuenem properare cucullo; / si nihil est, seruis incurritur; abstuleris spem / seruorum, uenit et conductus aquarius; hic si / quaeritur et desunt homines, mora nulla per ipsam / quominus imposito clunem summittat asello.*

71 This is the term used by Williams for the young penetrators whom insertors use to satisfy their desires.

of his physiological masculinity. The paradox of the phallic dilemma is emblematically shown in the same *Satire* when Juvenal describes the castration of a nameless slave by one of these female monsters.⁷²

Some enjoy unwarlike eunuchs and forever soft
kisses and that there is no beard to be expected
and no need for abortion. That is the greatest
pleasure, however, when in hot adolescence already mature
parts are committed to the doctors, when the pubes is black already.
And so the expected testicles, having grown first, as ordered,
and now reached the desired weight of two pounds,
are taken away by Heliodorus – a loss only to the barber.⁷³
Drawing attention from afar and remarkable to everyone, does he enter
the baths and without doubt invites the keeper of vine and garden
to a contest: he, whom his mistress has turned into a castrate.

The virility and sexual heat of the budding youth is shown in a detailed close-up on the genitals; in time-lapse manner we watch his testicles grow to an incredible weight. After they have been removed, the youth re-enters the stage as one of the prodigious members that fascinate the baths – with the focus again on the penis that by its size is „drawing attention from afar“ (374). But then the view becomes more distant, first comparing the youth as a whole to Priapus and, finally, seeing him as what he is: a eunuch, subject to the will and whims of his female owner.

But even if there is no insertor to take control, a man can be dominated, in this case by his own member itself. In a number of texts the penis detaches itself from the man it belongs to and turns against him. I do not only mean the cases in which an impotent man describes himself as deserted or betrayed by his penis⁷⁴ but rather those cases in which the penis seems to perform exactly the job it is supposed to do.

On the one hand, the erect phallus is the means and symbol of masculine dominion over all those it penetrates. As Williams puts it ([note 227], 86): „Priapus constitutes the most salient Roman icon: the mature male, amply capable of asserting his masculinity by penetrating others with his impressive member.“ On the other hand, „a man must“ also „exercise dominion over his own body and his own desires [...]“ (140). Now, an erection is something that happens to a man: „monstrous lust blows up

72 Iuv. 6.366-76 *sumt quas eunuchi imbelles ac mollia semper / oscula delectent et desperatio barbae / et quod abortiuo non est opus. illa uoluptas / summa tamen, cum iam calida matura iuuenta / 370 inguina traduntur medicis, iam pectine nigro. / ergo expectatos ac iussos crescere primum / testiculos, postquam coeperunt esse bilibres, / tonsoris tantum damno rapit Heliodorus. / conspicuus longe cunctisque notabilis intrat / 375 balnea nec dubie custodem uitis et horti / prouocat a domina factus spado.* Lines 373a-b have been omitted as spurious.

73 Because the castrate will not grow a beard.

74 Hans-Peter Obermayer. „Impotenz des Helden – Potenz des Erzählers: Die Intertextualität sexuellen Versagens in Petrons *Satyrica*.“ In: Therese Fuhrer and Samuel Zinsli, eds. *Gender studies in den Altertumswissenschaften: Rollenkonstrukte in antiken Texten*. Trier, 2003. 81-86.

his veins“,⁷⁵ desire takes control of his body and changes it, for all to see. Priapus is not only the god that controls and intimidates, he is also the frozen image of uncontrollable, male desire, of a man who is „bursting with tumescence“ (Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.118 *tentigine rumpi*), who needs to ejaculate, to relieve himself, in order to regain control over the aggressive member that is so obsessively thrusting against his shirt⁷⁶ or navel, as in Priapus' surprisingly self-revealing curse.⁷⁷

Whoever plucks a rose here or a lily
or stolen cabbage or unbought apples:
destitute of boy and woman,
by that very tumescence that you see on me
may he burst – thus I pray – and endlessly with his cock
in vain thrust at his navel.

3. Avoidance Strategies

The embodiment of Priapic masculinity, the erect penis, is thus a very ambivalent thing and embroils its owner in an intricate web of conflicts. Because of its rigid availability, the erect penis can be used, controlled and dominated by an insertor. Its owner is no longer a man but a *mentula*, a toy for lewd women and pathics, to be devoured and sucked up into disgustingly gaping orifices. On the other hand, as long as the erect penis is not inserted, it manifests raging, uncontrollable desire – a desire that cannot be fulfilled since the Priapic man cannot be a penetrator without it. As soon as he perceives the pleasures he seems to be seeking so obviously, he is worn out, slackens and thus becomes unmanly.⁷⁸ How can a man avoid this Priapic dilemma? His superior status and dominance depend on the fact that he has a well-functioning male genital. Yet precisely this genital can turn him into an inferior plaything without self-control.

There is only one solution, I think, and this is the solution a grown-up Roman elite man is supposed to take: sublimation. He becomes a gentleman without abdomen. His genital is sublimated not even into a phallus, but into some sort of bodiless virility,⁷⁹

75 Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.33 *nam simulac uenas inflauit taetra libido*. Compare also Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.6 *conuulneratum libidinibus*.

76 Catull. 32.10 f. *nam pransus iaceo et satur supinus / pertundo tunicamque palliumque*. Note the first person *pertundo*: this is no longer Catullus but his *mentula* speaking.

77 Priap. 23 *Quicumque hic uiolam rosamue carpet / furtiuumue holus aut inempta poma, / defectus pueroque feminaque / hac tentigine, quam uidetis in me, / 5 rumpatur, precor, usque mentulaque / nequiquam sibi pulset umbilicum*. Further references to this kind of bursting erection in Goldberg (note 241), 145.

78 Williams (note 227), 39; Edwards (note 229), 85 f.

79 Compare Williams (note 227), 167 f. on words like *uir* and *uirilitas* replacing a more direct expression for the penis. While this, of course, proves the importance of the male genital for masculine identity, it also shows to which extent that genital itself can vanish once the masculinity of an agent has been established.

stiffness, rigidity⁸⁰ or impenetrability. The appearance of adult elite masculinity is not characterised by bodily features such as muscles or penis size, it manifests itself in certain manners, an outward appearance that hides and effaces rather than enhances the body, as an utterly sexless *virtus*.⁸¹

It is interesting to see what happens to Achilles' overwhelming sensual beauty, when he finally commits the decisive act of penetration and thus proves himself a man⁸² in Statius' *Achilleis*: „With force he takes possession of his wishes and with all his heart / applies real embraces.“⁸³ Does this man have a penis? His masculinity manifests itself not in his own body but in violence and force, in the reaction of the abashed moon (1. 644), in the anguished cries (645) and the fear of the raped woman.⁸⁴ Similarly it is Juno's fear that marks the „turn of Jupiter's love“ in the comparison with which Statius describes what happens between Achilles and Deidamia.⁸⁵ In both scenes the penetrative act is completely elided, and with all the erotic innuendos surrounding these scenes⁸⁶ the demands of generic propriety cannot be the sole reason for this.

If at all, the heroic body appears as a weapon-wielding tool, as an impenetrable shield that withstands every hardship. This is the new body of young Achilles after he has fully assumed the role of warrior and man, when the story of his youth is retold, now not to the reader by Statius' narrator but by Achilles himself to his fellow soldiers (2.106-9).

Already then weapons in my hands, already then the quiver on my neck
and premature love of iron, my skin steeled by much
sun and ice; no flaccid limbs on a weaklings'
bed, but a slab of stone to share with my giant tutor.

80 Williams (note 227), 128 f. on softness as „the antithesis of masculinity“.

81 For the republic see, e.g., Myles McDonnell. *Roman manliness: 'Virtus' and the Roman Republic*. Cambridge, 2006. 167: „But what is odd about *virtus* is that there is no apparent connection between it and male sexuality, even where one might be expected. [...] That *virtus* does not have a sexual denotation is all the more striking for the fact that *uir* and other words related to it regularly designate male sexual activities.“ He also notes (168) that republican *virtus* is not even connected with procreation. For imperial Rome, Shadi Bartsch (*The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire*. Chicago and London, 2006) makes a similar observation: „In Roman ideology, virtue is not sexy; its absence is“ (159).

82 Stat. *Ach.* 1.561 f. [...] *Aeaciden finto iam nouerat una latenti / Deidamia uirum*; 639 (Achilles to himself) [...] *teque marem (pudet heu!) nec amore probabis?*

83 Stat. *Ach.* 1.642 f. *ui potitur uotis et toto pectore ueros / admouet amplexus*.

84 The fear continues after the act (1.562-3) as fear of detection.

85 Stat. *Ach.* 1.588-91 *sic sub matre Rhea iuuenis regnator Olympi / oscula securae dabat insidiosa sorori / frater adhuc, medii donec reuerentia cessit / sanguinis et ueros germana expauit amores*.

86 For example Achilles' hot breath (1.585 f.) when he is close to Deidamia; Achilles laughing to himself when he hears that all men are prohibited from the rite (602); Achilles swinging the thyrsos with a heavy hand while the whole crowd fears and admires him (612 f.; compare Ov. *Ars* 1.696 *quassanda est ista Pelias hasta manu*).

He who was able to touch hearts with his singing (1.188-94; 1.240) now speaks a verbless military staccato. Now the returning boy is covered in blood, and kisses become the reward for a kill (2.127 f.). Love he only feels for the iron of this weapons. The moist, rosy complexion that has so delighted the reader is now just a hard, impenetrable cover. He does not cuddle at Chiron's protective shoulder, close to the breast he knows so well (1.195-97), but must lie on hard stone, cramped beside the spacious teacher.⁸⁷

If penetration and Priapic stance were the essence of masculine sexuality *tout court*,⁸⁸ why should men like Cicero be so squeamish about referring to men's private parts and using the word *mentula*?⁸⁹ The man of standing is supposed to have a penis, to use it when he „applies himself to procreation“,⁹⁰ but never to show it. In Petron's *Satyrica*, Encolpius addresses his penis in a fit of anger about his impotence (132.1-11) but then feels ashamed and starts justifying himself and his right „to utter with candid tongue“ what everyone practises anyway. Petronius plays with conventional taboos, defending obscene language in hackneyed terms of diatribes on artless simplicity.⁹¹ What is interesting is the precise nature of the obscenity Encolpius is ashamed of: not his erotic affairs with various partners – or his attempts to have such affairs – nor his impotence, which he has just characterised as extremely embarrassing,⁹² but the fact that he has spoken to his penis:⁹³

87 Stat. *Ach.* 2.106-09 *iam tunc arma manu, iam tunc ceruice pharetrae, / et ferri properatus amor durataque multo / sole geluque cutis; tenero nec fluxa cubili / membra, sed ingenti saxum commune magistro.*

88 Compare e.g. Williams (note 227), 18: „Like this phallic deity, a Roman man was ideally ready, willing, and able to express his dominion over others, male or female, by means of sexual penetration.“ Of course, Williams does not present things as simply as that. In later chapters, in particular ch. 5, he shows that „[...] the distinction between insertive and receptive role did not stand in a nonproblematic, one-to-one relationship with the opposition between acceptably masculine and unacceptably effeminate behaviour“ (126). According to him, the most basic opposition constituting masculinity is that between domination and subjection (141), and the opposition between penetration and being penetrated is only one of several that had *all* to be observed in maintaining one's masculinity (142). I differ from Williams's interpretation in that I do not posit a combination of sometimes contradictory binary oppositions under an overruling principle of control and domination but try to show paradoxical antinomies within one of these binary oppositions, namely that effeminate subjection and loss of control is inherent in the – purportedly dominant – Priapic masculinity itself, an antinomy that goes beyond the tension between lustfulness and self-control „inherent in the Priapic model“ that Williams notes in passing (153).

89 Cic. *Fam.* 9.22; see on this letter also Richlin (note 227), 18-26. Cicero also discusses the obscenity of other words for both male and female genitals.

90 Cic. *Fam.* 9.22.3 *liberis dare operam.*

91 I agree with Christopher Gill. „The Sexual Episodes in the Satyricon.“ *Classical Philology* 68 (1973), 184 f. that this is not a serious authorial statement but „simply another piece of Petronian pastiche“.

92 See in particular the references to *pudor* in 132.7 and 9.

93 Petron. 132.12 *nec minus ego tam foeda obiurgatione finita paenitentiam agere sermonis mei coepi secretoque rubore perfundi, quod oblitus uerecundiae meae cum ea parte corporis uerba*

„[...] that forgetting my usual decency, I had exchanged words with that part of my body the knowledge of whose mere existence men of a more severe character would not even admit.“

As we learn from the justification that follows (132.13), someone with more shame and self-respect than Encolpius would neither talk to nor think about his genitals. And yet, Encolpius did not even use the word *mentula*, recurring instead to elaborate circumscriptions like „the one that had been the source of all my troubles“ (132.7) or „shame of all men and gods“ (132.9).⁹⁴

An epigram by Martial (1.58) makes an explicit connection between addressing one's penis and the subordination of the Priapic man to his genital. Martial presents ‚himself‘ as quarrelling with his penis, which complains that the epigrammatist is not willing to pay the price for a good-looking boy it, the penis, wants to have. Instead of calling his penis to order like Odysseus his rebellious heart (compare Petr. 132.13), the epigrammatist lowers himself to the level of his member and complains in turn that, of course, he would like to buy the boy and that it is not his but the penis's fault because it is too small and lazy to earn the astronomic income Phoebus, who was able to purchase the boy, derives from *his* member. This slur allows Martial to keep the epigrammatist's self-denigration at an acceptable level. Just as he does not actually admit to being penetrated by his slaves in 11.63 (see above, p. 237), he now stops short at the very point where Priapic masculinity turns the man into a venal sex toy. Although he is disrespectful enough to have a penis with which he has conversations and whose counsel he would follow if he could, his genital is at least so weak and small that he is kept from utmost degradation.⁹⁵

A similar combination of venality⁹⁶ and penises seems to be what Seneca Pater (*Contr.* 1.2.21-23) criticises as obscenities an orator should avoid. Contrary to what one would expect, it is not the pornographic subject of the *controversia* itself that Seneca regards as obscene. He does not advise his readers to avoid pleading for a woman who having been sold into a brothel wants to become a priestess, although association with a prostitute was embarrassing in a public context and, accordingly, a common topic of politi-

contulerim, quam ne ad cognitionem quidem admittere seuerioris notae homines solerent. See already 132.9 *nam ne nominare quidem te inter res serias fas est.* Obermayer (note 245), 87 f. reads this as a signal of intertextuality.

94 Gill (note 248), 177 f. notes that Encolpius' narrative uses less obscene language than we find in Catullus, Martial and the *Priapea*. „The more physical and intimate the actions are, the more obliquely they are expressed“ (178). The effects Petronius intended to achieve in this manner are, according to Gill, „prurient indirectness“ (179), literary parody and „disparity between verbal style and physical content“ so that the „directness of the sexual impact [is] undercut by the self-conscious style of representation“, at the same time maintaining the scene's character of a „theatrical *spectaculum*“ (180).

95 Mart. 1.58 *Milia pro puero centum me mango poposcit: / risi ego, sed Phoebus protinus illa dedit. / hoc dolet et queritur de me mea mentula secum / laudaturque meam Phoebus in inuidiam. / sed sestertiohunc donauit mentula Phoebo / bis decies: hoc da tu mihi, pluris emam.*

96 See on this point in Greek sources Davidson.

cal invective.⁹⁷ He only criticises particular *expressions* as lacking in taste.⁹⁸ First he rejects expressions, which he characterises as „dirty“ (1.2.21 *sordide*) because they refer at the same time to the filth and venality in a brothel; then follow expressions that fall under the heading „obscene“ (21 *obscene*).

All passages under this heading refer to intercourse. The first two are references to anal penetration in very general and rather harmless terms but with increasing physiological details first as „a different kind of lust“ and then as „playing in adjacent parts“ (21 *alio libidinis genere*; 22 *uicinis tamen locis ludunt*). Then follow examples that are supposed to show that Greek orators are even less restrained in what they say and one Roman example that is regarded as at least as shocking (23 *non minus obscene*). The Greeks plead a case in which a married man catches a penetrating lesbian (*tribas*) with his wife and kills her. Again, Seneca does not find any fault with pleading the case itself but only with particular phrases that focus on the artifice by which the woman had got herself a penis: one Greek orator wonders how the „man“, *i.e.* the male genital, „had either grown or been sown onto her“, while the other speaks of „seizing“ a „sham-man adulterer“, where again the adulterer may stand for the adulterous genital.⁹⁹ In the last example, which is Latin and pertains to the same *controversia* as the first two, the woman who wants to become a priestess seems to hold the penis of a customer in her hand, possibly stimulating and thus „catching“ his ejaculated sperm: „[...] and while she was pushing back his lust, she caught it.“¹⁰⁰ The gradation from „dirty“ to „obscene“ and from Latin to more licentious Greek as well as the introduction of the final Latin phrase as „no less obscene“ suggest that the examples are supposed to be read as a climax with the most obscene at the end. As it seems, the most shocking thing an orator could say was a reference to a penis in arousal, even if that reference is so veiled that one needs a learned commentary to understand it.

Outside of licentious contexts such as satire and epigram, Roman elite males seem to have avoided speaking about genitals and in particular their own penis. But they also refrained from showing their body or drawing attention to it. Not only practices that gave men a feminine appearance were rejected: *any* attention to one's own body could seem unmanly, even bathing and other forms of hygiene.¹⁰¹ It is telling that the middle path advocated by traditional voices in imperial literature¹⁰² is best suited to efface the

97 Williams (note 227), 42 f. 45 f.

98 Williams (note 227), 162 f. regards the explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse as Seneca's target of criticism.

99 Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.23 ἐγὼ δ' ἐσκόπησα πρότερον τὸν ἄνδρα, <ει> ἐγγεγένηται τις ἢ προσέρραπται; εἰ δὲ φιλόαρρενα μοιχὸν ἔλαβον.

100 Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.23 *fortasse dum repellit libidinem, manibus exceptit*. See Richlin (note 227), 17 f.

101 Williams (note 227), 129-32, in particular 130: „[...] masculinity was associated with a certain uncultivated roughness“ and e.g. Sen. *Epist.* 86; Iuv. 14.194 f.

102 E.g. Sen. *Epist.* 5.2 f.; 114.14; Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.47.

male body: it does not smell, it is neither smooth nor too bristly, it does not stand out. There is nothing edgy or remarkable about it.

Cicero praises Ennius for saying „that the foremost scandal is to show one's body naked among citizens. Even if they maintain sexual integrity, as I believe it to be possible, still they are concerned and anxious and all the more so because they have to restrain and coerce themselves.“¹⁰³ Cicero seems to see dangers of two kinds. Firstly, the naked men must avoid being aroused, which is striking if we think in terms of a simplistic Priapic model, where arousal and subsequent penetration should not disgrace a man. Again we see how the elite code of behaviour demands the suppression of a man's sexual physiology. Secondly, the naked men must preserve their sexual integrity, *i.e.* refrain from the act itself. Cicero does not change the subject: he does not speak of those who „maintain their sexual integrity“ (*publici*) on the one hand and others who anxiously restrain themselves (*solliciti ... et anxii*). Both characterisations pertain to the same men. It follows that sexual integrity here includes both sexual roles, those of the penetrator and the penetrated. The best explanation why *penetration* should constitute an infringement on the man's sexual integrity (*publicitas*) is that he is seen as subjected to *insertion* rather than as a dominant Priapic penetrator.

What is so outrageous about showing one's body, thus, is the fact that the agent affords pleasure to others. Whether these others are penetrators or insertors is irrelevant, just as young Achilles attracts both male and female admirers before he becomes a sexless warrior. It is this availability for the gratification of others that characterises and, in the Roman eye, debases professional performers such as actors and gladiators, whether they are desired as penetrators or as objects of penetration. Just being looked at as an object of sexual desire besmirches a man, not unlike the intercourse that defiles a virgin woman. This is the reason why a Roman elite male must avoid to be a source of pleasure for others. The desire for sexual integrity, for avoiding the dilemma of the sexually ready and available Priapic man, explains the strong objections against senatorial participation on stage and in the arena as we find them expressed in conservative sources and the many recommendations in rhetorical writings that are supposed to distinguish the orator from the actor.¹⁰⁴

103 Enn. *Scen.* 378 apud Cic. *Tusc.* 4.70 *bene ergo Ennius „flagiti principium est nudare inter cuius corpora.“ qui ut sint, quod fieri posse uideo, pudici, solliciti tamen et anxii sunt, eoque magis, quod se ipsi continent et coercent.* See also Williams (note 227), 69-71 on reservations against nudity.

104 See, e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 14.20 [...] *ut proceres Romani specie orationum et carminum scaena polluantur? quid superesse nisi ut corpora quoque nudent et caestus adsument easque pugnas pro militia et armis meditentur?* Iuv. 8.225 f.; Nero „prostitutes“ himself on stage; Gell. 1.5.2 f. on the theatrical performance style of the orator Hortensius; Bartsch (note 247), 138-82, in particular the section „Senatorial Safeguards“; Williams (note 227), 138-40; Catharine Edwards. „Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome.“ In: Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, eds. *Roman Sexualities*. Princeton, 1997. 66-98; Maud W. Gleason. *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*. Princeton, 1995.

Having thus analysed the Priapic dilemma and made a few suggestions how Roman men went about avoiding it, I should now try to explain the particular position of the young man in this system. It is obvious, that sublimation cannot work for the young man, at least not as well as it does for a fully grown adult. Sublimation presupposes the sublimated feature as a natural given and then transforms it. Accordingly, one can only sublimate what already *is* a normal physical feature. However, in the adolescent male, these features are still developing. As it is changing dramatically, the body of the youth draws attention to itself. It cannot be ignored; it is interesting and particularly subject to the curious gaze, not only of insertors who watch the boy's hair and genitals grow but also of readers of refined poetry such as Statius' *Achilleis*. Together with his physiological equipment, the adolescent male must also develop his sexual desire that is supposed to be absent in young boys and then, again, blanked out in the adult male. And like the masculine body, this desire can only be sublimated after it has manifested itself.

This difference between the adult and the adolescent man allows us to suggest a tentative explanation for the four paradoxes outlined above. The boy has to become a man before he can become a woman because only the man has sexual desires that can be turned in the wrong direction. Only as a man capable of desire can the youth become an avid insertor instead of a penetrator. It is at this liminal stage that the young man has to choose the role he prefers. With his growing body the boy develops sexual assertiveness, becomes demanding, active and thus more dominant. He is now no longer just someone who might be penetrated and, of course, this new option to become either insertor or penetrator also includes the possibility that he becomes both, *i.e.* a *moechocinaedus*.

In contrast to the sexless adult elite man, whose body has been blanked out and is hidden under thick protective layers of propriety and cultural codes, the pubescent young man still *has* a visible penis and body and a strong sensual presence. Therefore, he can become the object of sexual desire for both men and women. For women, these youths are – if I may say so – the *only* real men available, whereas men might be attracted by two things: either by a male body suitable for both insertion and penetration or by something which reminds them that they, too, once had a man's body.

The very moment in which pubescent sensuality is transformed into sublimated masculinity is, I think, again captured admirably by Statius. It is the moment when Achilles takes the weapons Odysseus has laid out for him. All the time since Achilles was dressed up in women's clothes, Statius has been drawing the reader's attention to the contrast between the male body and its female attire by having the young hero's body struggle against and emerge from its garments (*e.g.* 1.768 f.; 1.837). Achilles' body thus was a constant focus of the narrative and subjected to the reader's gaze. Now, with the sound of the war trumpet, while all the real girls run away in fear, the female dress falls off his breast without anyone touching it. Achilles takes the weapons, and his naked body vanishes into towering greatness with only a huge hand

and shoulders left. It becomes a light that instils fear and a giant, threatening, rumpless stride and the fear of the others.¹⁰⁵

Untouched his garments fell from his breast,
Now the shield is grasped and the spear, too small for his hand
– who would believe it! – and with his shoulders he seemed to tower above the Ithacian
and the Aetolian warlord. So much do the sudden arms and heat
of Mars with terrible glare unsettle this home.
Superhuman in his step, as if he were just about to shout for Hector,
he stands in the centre of the trembling house, and the young daughter of Peleus
is missing.

To sum up: the Priapic model of sexuality leads to a paradox. The over-emphasis on penetration, together with the unequal distribution of desire, undermines what the model is supposed to achieve. The superiority of the penetrator is undercut in two ways. [1] Because of the focus on the penetrative act, the penetrator is always in danger of being reduced to a penetrating penis. [2] Emotional involvement and the joy of sex being associated with the penetrated rather than with the penetrator, the receptive and thus passive role tends to become an active agency, all the more powerful for the emotions it invests. In the end, a desiring agent joyfully devours and incorporates the penis to which the penetrator has been reduced, whereas the penetrator is petrified in a state of joyless rigidity.

This Priapic dilemma is solved by sublimation: the elite male recoils from any activity that would turn him into a source of pleasure for others and avoids reference to his penis or his body, replacing physical features of Priapic masculinity with their symbolic counterparts, such as uprightness, stiffness, hardness and other forms of male dominance and superiority. This solution is not yet available to the pubescent youth, whose manhood is in the making: his developing body is still there to be seen and, accordingly, the source and target of all the opalescent forms of sensuality and aggression the desire of men and women can assume.

105 Stat. *Ach.* 1.878-85 *illius intactae cecidere a pectore uestes, / iam clipeus breuiorque manu consumitur hasta / 880 (mira fides!) Ithacumque uneris excedere uisus / Aetolumque dicem: tantum subita arma calorque / Martius horrenda confundit luce penates. / inmanisque gradu, ceu protinus Hectora poscens, / stat medius trepidante domo, Peleaque uirgo / 885 quaeritur.* Heslin (note 231), 241 sees „a clear phallic joke“ in line 879, since the spear is a symbol for the penis, among other passages also in the parallel version in the *Ars Amatoria*.