

Eunuchs in Roman Poetry

Catullus 63 (Late Republic, first century BCE) “Borne in his swift bark over deep seas, Attis, when eagerly with speedy foot he reached the Phrygian woodland, and entered the goddess’ abodes, shadowy, forest-crowned; there, goaded by raging madness, bewildered in mind, he cast down from him with sharp flint-stone the burden of his member. So when she felt her limbs to have lost their manhood, still with fresh blood dabbling the face of the ground, swiftly with snowy bands she seized the light timbrel,... (Catullus 63.1-8)

Horace *Epodes* 9.13-14 (context: of Actium which was 31 BCE) “a [Roman] soldier bears a palisade and arms and can serve wrinkled eunuchs! (fert vallum et arma miles et spadonibus / servire rugosis potest)

Horace *Carmina* 1.37.9f (with Cleopatra) “with her flock of shameful men contaminated with disease” (*contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo uirorum*)

Vergil *Aeneid* (1st Century BCE) 4.215 (Iarbas of Aeneas) “but now that Paris with his half-male entourage” (*et nunc ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu*)

Vergil *Aeneid* 9.617-620 “O truly Phrygian women, for Phrygian men you are not, go over the heights of Dindymus, where to accustomed ears the pipe utters music from double mouths ! The timbrels call you, and the Berecynthian boxwood of the mother Ida : leave the weapons to men and surrender the sword” (*o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta / Didyma, ubi adsuetis biformem dat tibia cantum. / tympana uos buxusque uocat Berecynthia Matris / Idaeae; sinite arma uiris et cedite ferro*)

Vergil *Aeneid* 11.768-77 (Chloereus, sacred to Cybele); 12.99 “half-man Phrygian” (semiviri Phrygis)

Ovid *Amores* 2.2 (1st Century BCE) (Ovid asks Bagoas, woman’s servant, to let him in); 2.3 (eunuch Bagoas, who refused, can’t understand)

Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* (c. 70 CE) 6.695f (squire of Myraces): “at the same time his armour-bearer went, half-man, and bearing youthful and sterile youth” (*simul armiger ibat / semiuir impubemque gerens sterilemque iuuentam*)

Statius *Silvae* 3.4 (Earinus, Domitian’s favourite: positive portrayal)

Martial, *passim* (e.g. 5.41.1-3 of Dindymus: “more emasculate than a flabby eunuch, more womanish than the catamite of Gelaenae [Attis], whose name the gelded priest of the mad Mother howls” (*spadone .. euiratior fluxo, / et concubino mollior Celaenaeo, / quem sectus ululat Matris entheae Gallus*)

Juvenal *Satire* 6 (early second century CE)

Claudian (4th century CE) *In Eutropium*