

(actual/perceived) Eunuchs

1) Of Favorinus:

a) "He was born double-sexed, both male and female, as his appearance made plain: his face remained beardless even into old age. His voice revealed the same ambiguity, for it was penetrating, shrill and high-pitched, the way nature tunes the voices of eunuchs. Yet he was also so hot-blooded when it comes to sex that he was actually charged with adultery by a man of consular rank. Thus he used to speak in oracular riddles about the three paradoxes of his life: he was a Gaul who spoke Greek, a eunuch who was prosecuted for adultery, and one who quarrelled with the emperor and was still alive. (Philostratus, *Lives* 489; tr. Gleason *Making Men* 1995 : 3, 6)

b) "He was libidinous and dissolute beyond bounds he had a bulbous forehead, flabby cheeks, wide mouth, a gangling scraggly neck, fat calves, and fleshy feet. His voice was like a woman's, and likewise his extremities and other bodily parts were uniformly soft; neither did he walk with an upright posture: his joints and limbs were lax. He took great care of his abundant tresses, rubbed ointments on his body, and cultivated everything that excites the desire for sexual intercourse and lust...he used to go about cities and market-places, gathering crowds in order to display his wickedness and indulge his taste in sexual debauchery ... " (Polemo [rival orator], *On Physiognomics* 1.160ff)

2) "Borne in his swift bark over deep seas, Attis, when eagerly with speedy foot he reached the Phrygian woodland, and entered the goddess's abodes, shadowy, forest-crowned; there, goaded by raging madness, bewildered in mind, he cut off with a sharp flint the weights of his groin. So when she felt her limbs to have lost their manhood, still with fresh blood dabbling the surface of the ground, swiftly with snowy hands she seized the light timbrel, thy timbrel, Cybele, thy mysteries, Mother, and shaking with soft fingers the hollow oxhide thus began she to sing to her companions tremulously: "Up away, ye Gallae, go to the mountain forests of Cybele together, together go, roving herd of the lady of Dindymus, who swiftly seeking alien homes as exiles, followed my rule as I led you in my train, endured the fast-flowing brine..." (Catullus 63.1-15)

3) Statius, *Silvae* 3.4 (see moodle)

4) (The king of Assyria has ordered his friend Combabus to accompany queen Stratonice to the Holy City and there to help her to build a votive temple to Hera. Worried about what may be thought, he takes action) "Saying this he unmanned himself, and he stowed away the mutilated pudenda in a little vessel together with myrrh and honey and spices of various sorts. He sealed this vessel up with a ring" (entrusts to king and later able to show it when faces charges) (Lucian (2nd C CE) *De dea Syria* 20)

5) Claudian *In Eutropium* (see moodle)

6) (later) Abelard (1079-1142) secretly had a relationship with Heloise; he went on to marry her after their son was born. Her uncle was against the relationship:

"So, after our little son was born, we left him in my sister's care, and secretly returned to Paris. A few days later, in the early morning, having kept our nocturnal vigil of prayer unknown to all in a certain church, we were united there in the benediction of wedlock her uncle and a few friends of his and mine being present. We departed forthwith stealthily and by separate ways, nor thereafter did we see each other save rarely and in private, thus striving our utmost to conceal what we had done. But her uncle and those of his household, seeking solace for their disgrace, began to divulge

the story of our marriage, and thereby to violate the pledge they had given me on this point. Heloise, on the contrary, denounced her own kin and swore that they were speaking the most absolute lies. Her uncle, aroused to fury thereby, visited her repeatedly with punishments. No sooner had I learned this than I sent her to a convent of nuns at Argenteuil, not far from Paris, where she herself had been brought up and educated as a young girl. I had them make ready for her all the garments of a nun, suitable for the life of a convent, excepting only the veil, and these I bade her put on.

When her uncle and his kinsmen heard of this, they were convinced that now I had completely played them false and had rid myself forever of Heloise by forcing her to become a nun. Violently incensed, they laid a plot against me, and one night while I all unsuspecting was asleep in a secret room in my lodgings, they broke in with the help of one of my servants whom they had bribed. There they had vengeance on me with a most cruel and most shameful punishment, such as astounded the whole world; for they cut off those parts of my body with which I had done that which was the cause of their sorrow. This done, straightway they fled, but two of them were captured and suffered the loss of their eyes and their genital organs. One of these two was the aforesaid servant, who even while he was still in my service, had been led by his avarice to betray me.” (Abelard, *History of my calamities*, ch. 7)