

How might eunuchs be characterized?

- Of Favorinus (intersex):

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)

- Attis (first follower of Cybele): “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..” (Catullus 63.1ff.)

- Verg. *A.* 9.617-620 “O truly Phrygian women, for not Phrygian men, go over lofty Dindymus .. where the Berecyntian boxwood of the Idaean Mother calls you; leave arms to the men”)

- Statius, *Silvae* 3.4.67ff (loeb) (Occasion= celebration of dedication of hair of Earinus at Pergamene temple of Asclepius. Composed c. 94 AD. Earinus a favourite of Domitian “Once too your country’s god himself left lofty Pergamus to cross the sea, lest the first down mar your shining cheeks and darken your beauty’s joys. None other was entrusted with the power to soften the boy, but with silent skill Phoebus’ son gently bade this body leave its sex, not shocked by any gash. Yet Cytherea is gnawed by worry, fearing the boy might suffer. Not yet had the leader’s noble clemency begun to keep male children intact from birth. Now ’tis forbidden to mollify sex and change manhood; rejoicing Nature sees only those she created. No more under an evil law do slave mothers fear to bear the burden of sons.

You too, had you been born later, would now be a young man, with shaded cheeks and limbs full-grown, stronger.”

- Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.9f (with Cleopatra) “together with a contaminated crowd of men shameful with disease”

- Luc. 10.133-5 (court of Cleopatra) “There too were hapless boys who had lost their manhood by the knife; and opposite them stood youths, whose cheeks, in spite of their age, were scarce darkened by any down”
- “Or, wouldst thou be a devotee, let Cybele, not Mars, be the object of thy worship. Learn to imitate the madness of the Corybantes to the accompaniment of rolling drums. Thou mayest carry cymbals, pierce thy breast with the sacred pine, and with Phrygian knife destroy what yet is left of thy virility” (*In Eutr.* 1.277-80)
- “Great is his self-esteem; he struggles to swell out his pendulous cheeks and feigns a heavy panting; his lousy head dust-sprinkled and his face bleached whiter by the sun, he sobs out some pitiful complaint with voice more effeminate than effeminacy’s self and tells of battles. In tremulous tones he calls his sister to witness that he has spent his strength for his country’s need;” (*In Eutr.* 1.258-64)