

the virile member—of others. So Eugene of Savoy was one of those military figures whose homosexuality freed them to devote their lives to a dangerous career without the distractions of a wife and family, and he is remembered as one of the ablest generals in Austrian history.

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EULENBURG UND HERTEFELD, PHILIPP FÜRST ZU (1847–1921)

German politician and diplomat, an intimate of Kaiser Wilhelm II. A former guards officer, jurist, and owner of a vast estate, he entered the German diplomatic corps in 1877. Eulenburg formed a close personal relationship with the future Kaiser in 1886 thanks to which he was able to play a key role in German politics that far exceeded his official position as Ambassador to Austria–Hungary (1894–1903). He both reinforced the megalomania of the Kaiser and judged him critically, but also acted as intermediary between Wilhelm II and the Foreign Office.

Eulenburg was the center of a homosexual clique that was effectively penetrated by the first secretary of the French legation and later ambassador to Berlin, Raymond Lecomte (1857–1921), who used his position to reveal to the Quai d'Orsay that Germany was bluffing in the Morocco crisis of January–April 1906, which ended in a French diplomatic victory at the Algeciras Conference. This reverse for Germany inspired a bitter attack on Eulenburg and his circle in November 1906 by Maximilian Harden, the jingoist editor of *Die Zukunft*, an influential political weekly. In the series of trials that followed, Harden was victorious and Eulenburg was exposed as a homosexual and socially ruined, spending the remain-

ing years of his life in isolation on his country estate, though he was spared the final disgrace of imprisonment. The **Scientific-Humanitarian Committee**, the homosexual rights organization headed by Magnus Hirschfeld, who testified as an expert witness, suffered a severe setback and loss of support, and the monarchy itself was exposed to such humiliation that the whole subject has been a “blind spot” for German historians ever since. Although this episode was the Watergate of the Second Reich, references to it in standard works are laconic and uninformative. In all likelihood, the missing piece in the picture was Wilhelm II's own homosexuality—hence the peculiar attachment that gave Eulenburg such influence over his sovereign in the shaping of German foreign policy, which Lecomte in turn intercepted to his country's advantage. Ironically enough, it was the journalistic use of the term *homosexual* in the vast contemporary coverage of this scandalous affair that confirmed it as the usual word for the subject in German and the other modern languages.

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EUNUCHS

Eunuchs are men or boys whose testes or external genitals have been removed. This condition differs from other physical defects such as amputation of the hand or foot or removal of the eye in that, at various historical epochs it was intentionally created, so that the eunuch had not merely a physical or medical but also a social definition.

Antiquity. The practice of castrating slaves or prisoners of war began in the Ancient Near East and reached Greece

as a cultural influence from the Orient. The Greeks themselves anachronistically ascribed the invention of the eunuch to the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis. In Babylonia and Assyria (*Mesopotamia*) eunuchs played a major role both as officials of the royal court and as members of the priestly castes in the temples. Eunuchs held the highest offices as chamberlains of the sovereign and as provincial governors. The heterosexual employ of the eunuch, then and later in the Islamic Middle Ages, was as guardian of the harem. In religion the *assinnu* and *kurgaru* had both erotic and mantic functions, serving as hierodules and as practitioners of incantation and magic, particularly in connection with the cult of Ishtar, who had supposedly consecrated their status. The Akkadian texts describe the eunuch as *sinnisanu*, "effeminate," and even as a "half-man," anticipating the Latin *semivir*. The courtier served his ruler sexually much as the hierodule served the worshipper—in the passive role.

In Greece the keeping of eunuchs as slaves began gradually toward the end of the fifth century B.C., increased during the Hellenistic period, and reached Rome in the second century, becoming more frequent under the principate and then the empire. Eunuchs as costly slaves serving their masters in highly personalized functions were part of the economic stratification of Greco-Roman society: they were acquired by the wealthiest classes to perform the functions of housekeeper, valet, guard, and tutor. The political role of the eunuch was a function of the Orientalization of the Hellenistic and Roman administrations; where the Greek presence was strongest, eunuchs only exceptionally acquired power and influence at court; but where the layer of Hellenization was thin and superficial, eunuchs were able to assert their age-old position in the political hierarchy. The eunuchs' interests, while coinciding with those of the ruler, often collided with those of the upper strata of

the aristocracy, so that they excellently served a centralizing monarchical power.

Castration was most often inflicted on slaves without their consent to enhance their value as merchandise. The operation was usually performed on boys in childhood; but if the object was to market the boy as a *catamite*, castration was effected at the onset of puberty so that sexual response would be present. While Roman law forbade castration, it never sought to restrict the trade in eunuchs imported from foreign lands. The wealthiest members of the Roman upper class did not shrink from paying enormous sums for particularly handsome eunuchs.

The outstanding characteristic of the eunuch in the ancient mind was his *effeminacy*, equated with physical weakness and unfit for military service. In the sexual sphere the eunuch was supposed to behave "like a woman," that is, to take the passive-effeminate role in a relationship with a man. In this role the eunuch was deemed neither male nor female, but as a kind of third sex, *tertium genus hominum*. The effeminacy and sterility of the eunuch were a stigma even in the pagan world, and more so in Christian times. On the other hand, the social isolation of the eunuch made him ever more dependent upon his master for advancement, and this assured his loyalty—a quality praised by ancient writers.

The mentality of the eunuchs and of those who kept them must be seen against the background of the markedly transsexualizing tendencies of Hellenistic and then Roman society. The Greeks in particular were aware that the practice of keeping eunuchs as catamites differed enormously from the pederastic relationship in which the emphasis lay in developing the virile qualities of the younger partner to ready him for his duties as warrior and as citizen. It was an aspect of Eastern sensuality and servility that contradicted and undermined the social values of *paiderasteia*. But when the conquests of Alex-

ander the Great broke down the barriers between Hellenic and Near Eastern cultures, the sexual customs of the Orient gained ground in the Hellenistic monarchies. Alexander himself loved the Persian eunuch Bagoas. As Hellenistic culture spread to Rome, so did the role of eunuchs as effeminized passive partners for Roman men. The general Fabius Valens (about 69) had a retinue of "concubines and eunuchs." Titus, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Commodus, Caracalla, Heliogabalus, and others were accompanied by such *exoleti*, and some emperors and other magnates even celebrated marriages with their favorite eunuchs. Nero went so far as to confer upon the eunuch Sporus the honors of an empress. Roman moralists criticized the practice of castrating slaves as a violation of their human dignity and as an act of cruelty, even while Roman society tacitly acknowledged the right of the owner to use the slave as he desired.

The Judaeo-Christian Tradition.

Judaism, possibly abreacting to the role that eunuchs played in the Ishtar-Tammuz cult, formally excluded them from its sacral community [Deuteronomy 23:1]. For that reason one of the most enigmatic utterances ascribed to Jesus is Matthew 19:12: "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." For Christian theologians and commentators this verse has been a source of endless embarrassment; one can only surmise that it found its way into the text of Matthew from an ascetic circle on the periphery of the early Church where castration was recommended if not rigorously practiced as the ultimate denial of the sexual urge, and that the otherwise Judaizing author of the Gospel was unaware of the Old Testament strictures on the matter. The usual evasion has been to interpret all three parts of the verse as

meaning "like eunuchs," and William Tyndale even translated the verse: "There are chaste, which were so born out of their mother's belly . . ." but the reputation of the eunuch in antiquity was hardly for chastity, rather for passive-effeminate homosexuality—which would leave the Church in an even greater quandary, since the plain meaning of the verse makes the eunuch an ideal of asexuality. Some modern homophile apologists have even construed the first part of the triptych as an allusion to innate homosexuality, but such an interpretation ill fits the tenor of the passage. The verse well exemplifies the extra-Judaic sources of Christian sexual morality whose ascetic tendency directly contravened the established norms of Judaism itself.

But otherwise faithful to the Judaic tradition that rejected the eunuch, the Christian Church in its canon law nowhere prescribed castration as a penalty for any offense, so that castration as a punishment for sodomy in the royal and municipal law of the late Middle Ages cannot be ascribed to ecclesiastical influence or precept. The Church did not, however, forbid the secular authorities to inflict such penalties, nor did it prevent the making of *castrati* for singing in church choirs. In principle, however, since it opposed the practice of castration as a violation of the dignity of the human subject, the policy of the Church deprived the eunuch of his political and erotic functions, and ultimately made him disappear as a social category from the Western world.

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