

Much valuable scholarship has been focused on how Romans and Greeks defined themselves as westerners, with all that this implied, as against a feminized Eastern “Other.” A related question arises as to the perception of the non-Greek or non-Roman westerner who moves east and rejects his native ethnic and culture to embrace a Greek or Roman (or Greco-Roman) identity. Maud Gleason, in her seminal study of the Second Sophistic, has effectively used gender theory to shed light the controversial career of the second-century sophist and alleged hermaphrodite Favorinus of Arles, a transplanted western provincial who gained fame after relocating from Arles to Ephesus. In this paper, I shall expand upon Gleason’s analysis by applying contemporary post-colonial theory to examine Favorinus and Apuleius of Madauros, another transplanted western provincial whose oratorical talents and esoteric education made him both a celebrity and a target.

The literary evidence will reveal that while these sophists and self-styled philosophers, sought to present themselves as having transcended the circumstances of their birth through a combination of *paideia* and talent, others frequently viewed them with suspicion, or more precisely with a combination of fascination and disgust, as one might have viewed a prodigious natural oddity such as the birth of a two-headed calf or a hermaphrodite infant. That is to say, border-crossers were perceived as a threat on two levels: they threatened the established social order by using their mastery of the hegemonic discourse to advance themselves socially and economically. On a more fundamental level, their mastery of the privileged discourse *in se* challenged deep-seated mental classifications of geography, peoples and gender.

The crux of the threat posed to the Greco-Roman establishment by such individuals, transplanted western-provincials, is that of the successful cultural hybrid: the colonial subject (feminized as members of a dominated and allegedly culturally inferior group) who have not only mastered the hegemonic language(s) and discourse, but employed that mastery to rival and even surpass their “betters” economically and socially, and furthermore whose successes had a sexual component: For example, Favorinus was, according to his chief rival and enemy Polemo, a “born eunuch” from Gaul who nonetheless mastered Greek perfectly and seduced the wife of a consular, while Apuleius managed to seduce and marry a wealthy older woman, thus incurring the enmity of her late husband’s family and an accusation of criminal magic.