

This paper examines the manifestation of literary criticism in Claudian's scoptic epigrams. Of the fifty-three poems in the *Carmina minora*, the collection of assorted minor verse by Claudian, five contain responses to past literary criticism or include attacks on their target's intellectual or poetic ability: *carm. min.* 13 (*In Podagricum Qui Carmina Sua Non Stare Dicebat*), 23 (*Deprecatio ad Alethium Quaestorem*), 43 (*In Curetium*), 44 (*In Eundem*), and 50 (*In Iacobum Magistrum Equitum*).

Although isolated assessments of the function of literary criticism in Claudian's scoptic epigrams have been made (e.g. Cameron 1970, 287-8; Michners 2004: 180), much of the scholarly attention to these poems has focused on determining the extent to which they represent reactions to authentic grievances and attacks on real personages (e.g. Cameron 1970 *passim*; Brummer 1972: 339-52; Moroni 2002: 75-96; Consolino 2004: 142-74; Michners 2004: 175-86). Rather than pursuing these biographical phantoms, this paper explores the vocabulary and modes of literary criticism in Claudian's scoptic epigrams in the context of traditional epigrammatic critiques of literature and late antique modes of literary criticism, most notably those found in Ausonius.

The four-verse *carm. min.* 13 is a heated attack on the poetic abilities of a critic who has assailed the narrator's prosody and that critic's fitness to judge the narrator's craft. The poem employs technical vocabulary of literary criticism (e.g. *pedibus*, *scandere*, *claudicat*, and *nutat*) in a manner reminiscent of Ausonius' epigrams targeting the *grammaticus* Auxilius (*Epig.* 81 Green) and the *rhetor* Rufus (*Epig.* 45-52). The twenty-verse *carm. min.* 23 is a mock capitulation to an unnamed *quaestor*, who has objected vehemently to the narrator's previous criticisms of his own poetry. Rather than face the wrath of his social better, Claudian's narrator promises—with tongue firmly in cheek—that he will praise with a cry of “sophos” whatever emanations (*flatus*, v. 19) the poetaster manages to produce. It is possible that the poem's target is the *grammaticus* mentioned in v. 6—and so the poem may participate in the traditional epigrammatic critique of *grammatici* as seen in the *Palatine Anthology* (11.138-40), the *Epigrammata Bobiensia* (46, 47, 61, and 64), and Martial (14.120). The fourteen-verse *carm. min.* 50 combines the familiar and alien, as a defense of the narrator's poems (*ne laceres versus, dux Iacobe, meos*, v. 1 and 14) brackets what appear at first glance to be unrelated invocations of Christian saints and withering mockery of Iacobus' courage. Unlike Claudian's other scoptic epigrams, which are cast explicitly as part of literary disputes, the ten-verse *carm. min.* 43 and the eight-verse *carm. min.* 44 target Curetius, the son of a crooked astrologer, Uranius, who wastes his patrimony by paying to perform cunnilingus. Yet, the criticism of Curetius' poetic abilities in *carm. min.* 44. 4 (*procul a Musis*) and the presence of puns on literary terminology in *carm. min.* 43 (*hiatus* in v. 7; *lingua* in vv. 9 and 10) suggest an affinity with the mode of criticism found in Ausonius' scoptic series against Eunus the Syrian (*Epig.* 82-87), where intellectual critique is masked within sexually explicit invective.

In the process of discussing Claudian's practice of and response to literary criticism and his engagement of poetic models, this paper explores the production of epigrammatic literature and the reception of contemporary Latin verse in late antiquity.