

**Bret Mulligan (bmulligan@brown.edu), “Vulgar Invective in the Epigrams of Claudian and Ausonius”
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DECIMUS MAGNUS AUSONIUS (c. 310 – 393/4 CE) ♦ CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS (c. 370 – 404? CE)

1. Ausonius *Epig.* 82

Eune, quid affectas vendentem Phyllida odores?
diceris hanc mediam lambere, non molere.
Perspice ne mercis fallant te nomina, vel ne
Aere Sephasiae decipiari cave,
Dum κύσθον κόστονque putas communis odoris
et nardum ac sardas esse sapore pari.

Eunus, why are you courting Phyllis the scent-seller? The rumor is you are licking her middle, not pounding it. Watch out that the names of her wares do not deceive you, and take care that you are not misled by the odor of Sephasia, in that you think quims and quinces have the same smell, and nard and sardine the same flavor.

2. Ausonius *Epig.* 83

diversa infelix et lambit et olfacit Eunus;
dissimilem olfactum naris et oris habet.

Unhappy Eunus licks and smells different things; he has different sensations from his nostrils and his tongue.

3. Ausonius *Epig.* 84

salgama non hoc sunt quod balsama – cedite odores.
nec male olere mihi nec bene olere placet.

Pickles are not the same thing as balsam—away with odors! It pleases me to smell neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

4. Ausonius *Epig.* 85

Λαῖς Ἔρωσ ἐτ Ἴτυς, Χείρων ἐτ Ἐρωσ, Ἴτυς alter
nomina si scribas, primam elementa adime,
ut facias verbum, quod tu facis, Eune magister.
dicere me Latium non decet opprobrium.

Lais, Eros and Itys, Cheiron and Eros, Itus again: if you write down these names, take their first letters to make a word which describes what you do, teacher Eunus. It is not decent for me to speak the insult in Latin.

5. Ausonius *Epig.* 86

Eune, quod uxoris gravidae putria inguina lambis
festinas γλώσσας non natis tradere natis.

Eunus, in that you lick the putrid groin of your pregnant wife, you are rushing to give tongue to your unborn children.

6. Ausonius *Epig.* 87

Eunus Syriacus, inguinum ligurritor,
opicus magister (sic eum docet Phyllis),
muliebre membrum + quadriangulum + cernit;
triquetro coactu ∆ litteram ducit.
de valle femorum altrinsecus pares rugas
mediumque, fissi rima qua patet, callem
Ψ dicit esse: nam trifissilis forma est.
cui ipse linquam cum dedit suam, ∆ est
veramque in illis esse ∅ notam sentit.
quid, imperite, ∅ putas ibi scriptum,
ubi locari ∅ convenit longum?
miselle doctor, ∅ tibi sit obsceno
tuumque nomen ∅ sectilis signet.

Eunus the Syrian, licker of groins, ignorant school-master – thus Phyllis teaches him – sees the female member + as a square + and with a triangular stroke draws the letter *delta*. The equal creases on either side of the valley of the things and the channel in middle, where the crack of the slit opens, he says are the letter *psi*, since the shape is three-pronged. When he has given his tongue to it, there is a *lambda*; and he senses that a real letter *phi* is in amongst these things. Why, you idiot, do you think *rho* is fitting to put a long *iota*? You wretched little teacher, an *OU* to you for your depravity and may the cleft theta mark your name.

(Translations of Ausonius by N.M. Kay 2001;
translations of Claudian based on Platnauer 1922)

7. Claudian *carm. min.* 43 (In Curetium)

Fallaces vitreo stellas componere mundo
et vaga Saturni sidera saepe queri
venturumque Iovem paucis promittere nummis
Cureti genitor noverat Vranus.
In prolem dilata ruunt periuria patris
et poenam merito filius ore luit;
nam spurcos avidae lambit meretricis hiatus,
consumens luxu flagitiisque domum,
et quas fallacis collegit lingua parentis,
has eadem nati lingua refundit opes.

He knew to set deceptive stars in a glass sphere, and to complain over the errant course of Saturn, and ensure for a pence the favorable influence of Jove, did Curetius' father Uranus. The father's chicanery meets with its punishment, so long deferred, in the son whose mouth needs must pay the just penalty. For filthy are his delights and he wastes all his substance in wantoning and debauchery. And so the tongue of the son has squandered all the riches that that of his lying father gathered together.

8. Claudian *carm. min.* 44

Si tua, Cureti, penitus cognoscere quaeris
sidera, patre tuo certius ipse loquar.
Quod furis, adversi dedit inclementia Martis;
quod procul a Musis, debilis Arcas erat;
quod turpem pateris iam cano podice morbum,
femineis signis Luna Venusque fuit;

If you, Curetius, would have sure knowledge of your horoscope, I can speak more clearly than your father. That you are mad is caused by the evil influence of Mars; that you are distant from the Muses, is caused by a feeble Mercury; that you suffer a shameful disease with a foamy fundament, Luna and Venus cause with their feminine signs; Saturn has wasted your property. But his one thing puts me at a loss: