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THE LETTER COLLECTION OF SIDONIUS, SOME OBSERVATIONS
WITH A NEW EDITION, TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON
EPP. 5.11–15

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NOTE TO THE READER

The present dissertation is in continuity with my previous PhD diss. from 2021 (San Marino Univ.) on Sidonius Letters Book 5 Part 1, published in 2023 for the *Edinburgh Studies in Later Latin Literature* of Edinburgh University Press. While collating the second half of Book 5, questions concerning the names of Sidonius' addressees (and Sidonius' own name) in the manuscript tradition of his letters came up, as well as inconsistencies encountered in editions. For this reason, the introductory pages of this dissertation offer results of the collation of the names of the addressees in both branches of the manuscript tradition (see Marolla 2024b). Further, these introductory pages offer the results of the experimental application of Prof. Peter Heslin's machine dedicated to the detection of book division in letter collections: the inability to correctly assign letters to Sidonius' books (compared to better results for other authors) prompted some observations on the themes of the collection. Some general remarks on Book 5 are then followed by the edition, translation and commentary of letters 11–15.

THE NAMES OF SIDONIUS' ADDRESSEES AND THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF THE LETTERS

How secure is our knowledge of the names of Sidonius' addressees? Unlike the correspondents in Pliny's or Symmachus' letter collections, whose lives and careers are well known through various sources, Sidonius is, most of the time, the only source of information on his addressees. His letters are, therefore, vital for the prosopography of the fifth-century aristocracy based in southern Gaul. And yet, when it comes to names, editions of Sidonius' text tend to be tralatitious or — especially in the case of Loyen's Budé — rely heavily on the readings of a single codex, Laudianus latinus 104, believed to be *optimus* by virtue of its antiquity.¹ The manuscript tradition of Sidonius' 9 books of *Letters* and *Carmina* has very recently been the object of a detailed study by Franz Dolveck, who offered an updated census and proposed a reassessment of the relations of the manuscripts.²

Having already verified the overall trustworthiness of this piece of scholarship for what concerns Book 5 of the *Letters*, in what follows I suggest a timely reassessment of the manuscript tradition on the names of Sidonius' addressees by using manuscript studies and onomastics as a tool for prosopographical studies. This contribution also follows up on the edition of the paratexts of the *Carmina* by Gavin Kelly, who has shown that there is a case for most of these texts probably being authorial.³

Introductory remarks on names in the Late Antique West, on Sidonius' own name, and on what is commonly believed to be his epitaph are followed by an outline of the main features of the branches, by a prospect of the manuscripts collated and by some of the most noteworthy case studies of diverging readings in his collection. The fortune of names in Sidonius' prosopography will also provide

¹ See Loyen 1970, l–liii.

² Dolveck 2020.

³ While in previous editions of the *Carmina* paratexts were often shortened or suppressed, Kelly argues in favour of including these texts in future editions, since they often provide readers with new details on the poems Kelly 2021a, *passim* and 72 n. 2 for reference works on classical Latin paratexts.

cause for reflection on the remnants of prior editions and on their influence over the collective knowledge of the author and of his network of contacts.

Late Roman Onomastics and the Case of Sidonius' Name

When thinking of Latin onomastics we are wont to refer to the standard *tria nomina* system, comprising *praenomen*, *nomen gentilicium* and *cognomen*, often also followed by an *agnomen*. And yet, as is thoroughly explained by Salway, this system is only 'typical of the best documented class in one of the best documented, and certainly most studied, eras of Roman history - the late Republic and early Empire'. Already by the end of the first century B.C. the *praenomina* used were few, fossilised in families, and fell gradually into disuse. A big phenomenon of the third and fourth century was the addition, to one's name, of a *signum* (a nickname) after the *cognomen*. Characterised by the ending *-ius*, *signa* originally entered Roman onomastics as Graecisms around the third century but soon became fashionable with more and more coinages from Latin roots being attested.⁴

Therefore, in late Latin, the *tria nomina* system was not the norm,⁵ with Sidonius (Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius) being one of the very few exceptions where we have evidence of a *praenomen*, even though Sidonius never mentions it and it is only attested in the paratexts of the manuscripts of his works.⁶ Although the *gentilicia* continued in use as indicators of descent, the increasing presence of *cognomina* came to play the same role in some way. This process resulted in polyonymy of familiar *cognomina* (to commemorate paternal and maternal ancestors) and also in the addition, as a last element of one's name, of a

⁴ See Kajanto 1966, 42–90; Cameron 1985, 175; Salway 1994, 136, also for the 'diacritic shift' at 128–129. An effective example is given by Woudhuysen 2019, 850: 'the most famous of the Christian apologists, one L(ucius) Caelius Firmianus, became known to posterity almost exclusively by his *signum*: Lactantius'.

⁵ Cameron 1985, 173; Salway 1994, 130; 135.

⁶ On *praenomina* having gradually lost meaning and fallen into disuse see Salomies 1987, 339–341. On Sidonius' name see below and Kelly 2021a, 90: 'the praenomen was extremely rare by the fifth century (a grandiose pretension?)'.

diacritic, the individuating name, often, by the fourth century, a former *signum*.⁷ In a fundamental piece of scholarship on polyonymy of late Roman aristocrats, Alan Cameron stressed how common it is for us to miscall ancient writers such as Macrobius (full name Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius) who was known by the last name Theodosius, and Rutilius Namatianus (Rutilius Claudius Namatianus), who went by the diacritic Namatianus or Namatius.⁸ To these examples one may add that of Marcellinus: that his how the historian, that we are wont to call Ammianus, would have been known and how Priscian, for instance, mentions him.⁹

In line with contemporary taste, addressees of Sidonius' letters are always mentioned by a single name, the diacritic, followed where applicable by the indication of their role as bishop. In compliance with Cameron's warning, let us consider as exemplary the name of the philosopher, and good friend of Sidonius, Mamertus Claudianus, mostly known as Claudianus Mamertus in scholarly tradition. Sidonius refers to him as Mamertus Claudianus (*Ep.* 5.2.1) and simply as Claudianus in *Ep.* 4.11.1; 6 v. 3. Claudianus, therefore, must have been his diacritic. Note also that, in the paratexts of Sidonius' manuscript tradition, Claudianus is the only name designating him in his *Ep.* 4.2 to Sidonius (part of the latter's epistolary corpus),¹⁰ as well as in the paratexts of the manuscripts of Claudianus' *De statu animae*.¹¹

⁷ Cameron 1985, 175 mentions for instance Asterius, a *signum* in the early fourth century which had become a *nomen* by the end of the century and then a 'standard family diacritical'. On the diacritic in late Roman names see also Cameron 1995, 257; Woudhuysen 2019, 844–845; Stover and Woudhuysen 2022, 183–184.

⁸ Cameron 1985, 174–175; for Namatius see Charlet 2005, 62.

⁹ Priscian 9.51 (ed. Hertz 1855, p. 487); see Matthews 1994, 254, also *passim* for Libanius' letter to Marcellinus.

¹⁰ On his name see Mathisen 2020a, 35 n. 49. On the contrary, Claudianus' namesake brother, the bishop, is consistently called Mamertus, possibly to distinguish the two within the collection, see *Ep.* 4.11.6 v.1; *Ep.* 5.14.2 (*Mamertus pater et pontifex*) and *Ep.* 7.1 addressed *Mamerto papae*.

¹¹ As e.g. in the majority of the highest manuscripts in Engelbrecht's stemma: Par. lat. 16340; Par. lat. 2779; Par. lat. 2164; Par. lat. 2165; Einsidlensis 318; Vat. Reg. 201; Leip. Univ. 286.

Let us now consider the case of Sidonius' own name. The α branch of the manuscript tradition of his works and one paratext (of *Carm.* 3) in the δ branch¹² give what would appear to be the full name of the author, enclosing a further *cognomen*, Modestus: Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius.¹³ Sollius is his *nomen gentilicium*;¹⁴ Modestus is the least important element, being a *cognomen* but not as important as the family *cognomen* Apollinaris: Sidonius' grandfather, his cousin, and his son are all called Apollinaris by the author.¹⁵ As van Waarden points out, the last element, Sidonius, is the diacritical name, by which he was generally known and is also his identifying name within the family.¹⁶ Despite the early-modern tendency to refer to this author as Sidonius Apollinaris,¹⁷ he did not go by this name in his time: when someone addresses the author in his works, he does so by calling him either Sidonius¹⁸ or Sollius,¹⁹ and, analogously, both in the preface and in the opening paragraph of Mamertus Claudianus' *De statu animae* (dedicated to him) he is addressed as Sollius Sidonius.²⁰ Further evidence is given by his younger relatives Avitus of Vienne and Ruricius of

¹² On which see the following section.

¹³ On the occurrence of Modestus in the paratexts of *Carm.* 3 also in the δ branch, see Kelly 2021a, 81; 90–91.

¹⁴ See before for the *praenomen*. On Sidonius' *nomina*, see Mommsen in Lütjohann 1887, xlv.

¹⁵ A common theophoric *cognomen*, see Kajanto 1982, 53; 55 and 62. For his cousin Apollinaris see Mathisen 2020a, 58–59 and Marolla 2022.

¹⁶ Van Waarden 2020, 13 n.1.

¹⁷ Although Colvius 1598 is the first to invert the last two elements 'C. Solli Sidoni Apollinaris... opera', Baret 1878 seems to be the first to consistently use the form 'Sidoine Apollinaire' in an edition, followed by Loyer.

¹⁸ In *Ep.* 1.11 he is called Sidonius twice: first, in 1.11.4, the malevolent Paeonius refers to him as Sidonius, then, in 1.11.13, emperor Majorian himself is said to have called him '*comes Sidoni*'. The name then occurs in *Ep.* 7.9.14 and *Carm.* 13.25.

¹⁹ *Epp.* 1.9.6 *Solli meus*; 5.17.9 *uide, domine Solli*; the author also refers to himself as Sollius in *Ep.* 9.15 v.16 *ut ipse cernis esse Sollium*; *Carm.* 23.28 *Sollium ligasti*.

²⁰ Ed. Engelbrecht 1885, *praef.* p. 18 *praefectorio patricio doctissimo et optimo uiro Sollio Sidonio*; *Anim.* 1.1, p. 21 *Solli Sidoni, frater amantissime*.

Limoges, both referring to him either as Sollius or as Sidonius,²¹ and the same applies to Gregory of Tours' *Libri Historiarum*, where the bishop is called Sidonius (in more than ten occurrences) and once *Sollius noster* (Greg. *Hist.* 4.12).²² Apollinaris Sidonius, therefore, were the last two elements of the author's name, but he went by Sollius (his *nomen gentilicium*) Sidonius (his diacritic, presumably a former *signum*).

His being called exclusively Sidonius or Sollius constitutes evidence in favour of the hypothesis that what is known as 'Sidonius' epitaph' might actually be that of his son Apollinaris.²³ In the text, in fact, the deceased is mentioned as Apollinaris (vv. 1–2 *Sanctis contiguus sacroque patri,/uiuit sic meritis Apollinaris*) in both transmitted versions, in *C* (Madrid, BNE, 9448) and *S* (IRHT, Collection Privée, 347), and, as Furbetta pointed out,²⁴ the first verse of the epitaph would be more appropriate if it referred to his son Apollinaris, who would therefore 'rest close to his father' Sidonius, being buried next to him. Moreover, in *S*, vv. 10–11 mention Apollinaris as editor of his father's works: *haec inter tamen et facundus ore/libris excoluit vitam parentis*, while the couplet in *C* is referred to Sidonius (*haec inter tamen et philosophando/scripsit perpetuis habenda seclis*).²⁵ Although that of the epitaph is a thorny issue, and far from the aims of this contribution, it is worth emphasising that a contemporary would not have chosen to mention Sidonius by the *cognomen* Apollinaris, as the author of the epitaph does at v. 2. It would also be fitting that the inscription ends — in both versions — with the mention of Sidonius (vv. 15–18):

²¹ Ruricius *Ep.* 2.26.3 *Sollium enim nostrum domnum patremque communem*, and his three letters to him (*Epp.* 1.8; 1.9 and 1.16) are addressed *Sidonio*; see also Avitus *Ep.* 51, p. 80 *communis Sollii opus illustre* (ibid. also Sidonius); *Ep.* 43, p. 73 *domni Sidonii*.

²² *Sollius noster* also in Greg. *Liber de passione et uertutibus Iuliani* 2. The mentions of Apollinaris concern Sidonius' son (*Hist.* 2.37; *Liber in gloria martyrum* 44; 64).

²³ Furbetta 2015b, 251–253; Montzimir 2017.

²⁴ Furbetta 2015b, 252.

²⁵ For the comparison between the two epitaphs see Furbetta 2015b, 251. For the debated issue of the date of the epitaph see Mathisen 2020a, 62–64; Kelly 2020, 188–189.

Quisque hic dum lacrimis deum rogabis,/dextrum funde preces super sepulchrum:/nulli incognitus et legendus orbi/illic Sidonius tibi invocetur.

‘Whoever you are, when you will beseech God with tears here, utter prayers over the grave on the right: unknown to nobody and to be read by all the world, may Sidonius be invoked by you there’.

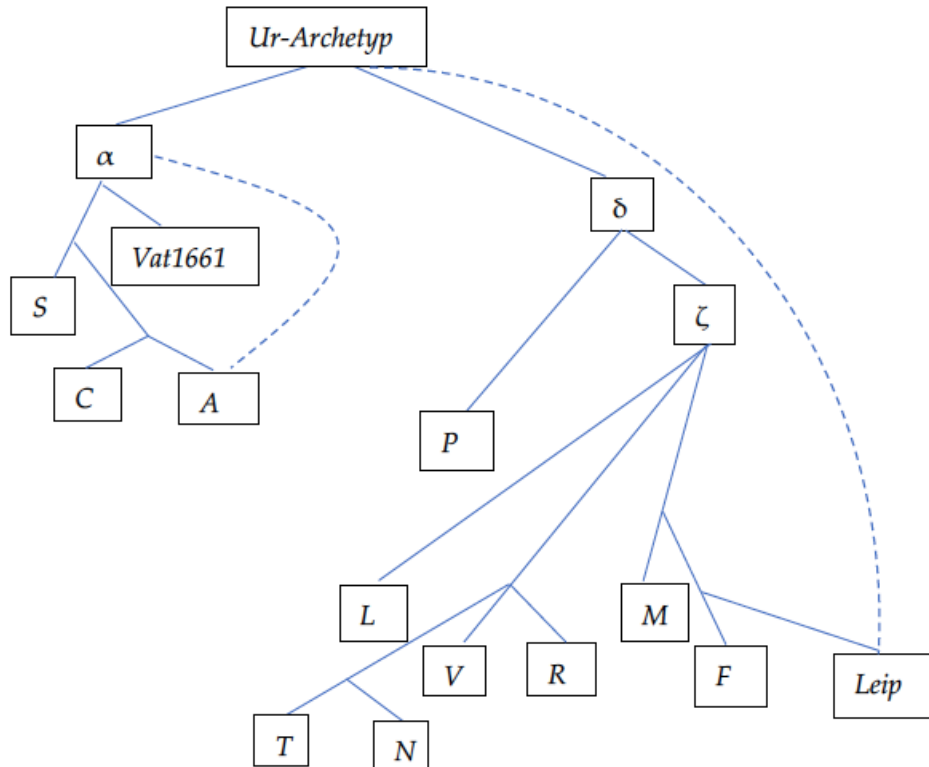
If read verbatim, the passage, which exhorts the passing visitor to ‘utter prayers’ over Sidonius’ grave, gives the information that his tomb was located on the right of that of his son (*dextrum... sepulchrum*); incidentally, this detail is coherent with the mention of Apollinaris being buried ‘beside his holy father’ (v.1 *contiguus sacro patri*) at the beginning of the epitaph.²⁶ The funerary inscription of Apollinaris would, therefore, exhort the passing visitor to turn to Sidonius’ grave and to honour father and son together.

As these preliminary remarks have highlighted, names in the Late Antique West deserve further studies as they can shed considerable light on tangled questions; for this reason, in what follows, I offer a reassessment of problematic diacritical names of addressees in Sidonius’ *Letters* and, in some cases, I suggest solutions to solve prosopographical puzzles.

The New Stemma and the Manuscripts Collated

Dolveck theorised a bipartite stemma: an α branch and a δ branch deriving from a common ancestor (*Ur-Archetyp*), comprising both letters and poems of Sidonius. For the sake of clarity, I offer here a simplified version of Dolveck’s stemma showing the manuscripts containing the letters (both complete and partial).

²⁶ *Dextrum sepulchrum* is a rare iunctura, however compare the occurrence in Bede’s *Vita Metrica S. Cudberti* 37 vv. 801–802 (*sepulchro/altaris dextro*), where it concerns the saint being interred at the right side of the altar. See Lapidge 2019, 292–293.



The α branch, arising from α — an eleventh century manuscript (at the latest) —²⁷ is represented by four manuscripts:²⁸ *A* Vatican City, Bibl. Vat., Vat. lat. 3421 (s. XI); *C* Madrid, BNE, 9448 (s. XI²); *S* formerly Schøyen collection, now Paris, IRHT, Collection Privée, 347 (s. XII²);²⁹ *Vat1661* Vatican City, Bibl. Vat., Vat. lat. 1661 (s. XII^{ex}/ XIIIⁱⁿ). As can be inferred from the stemma, Dolveck believes *A* to have been collated against an exemplar close to α .³⁰ He also shows that the text of *A ante correctionem* and that of *C* are closely related, and the assessment of addressee names in this branch confirms his hypothesis. Moreover, Dolveck suggests that another witness, Par. lat. 2168, is related to the α branch and that only

²⁷ Dolveck 2020, 503.

²⁸ This family notably bears witness to the epitaph of Sidonius, transmitted in *C* and in *S*, and its most distinctive feature is the inversion of *Epp.* 7.6 and 7.7 after *Epp.* 7.8 and 7.9 in comparison to the standard order of Book 7 in editions. Whether the conventional order is actually right is, at the very least, debatable.

²⁹ A private reproduction I had access to thanks to the *Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes*. For the *siglum S* see Kelly 2021a, 80 (*Sch* in Dolveck 2020).

³⁰ For the discovery of the epitaph in *S* see Furebetta 2015b, for the *status quaestionis* on the epitaph and Sidonius' date of death see Mathisen 2020a, 62–64 and Kelly 2020, 188–189.

collation might prove him right.³¹ The names of addressees of Par. lat. 2168 unequivocally place it in the α branch: when the tradition is split the readings of this witness consistently agree with α ,³² and, when the tradition is split within α , they agree with either *S* or *Vat1661*, if not with both.³³ Par. lat. 2168 therefore might be a good representative of the branch,³⁴ unfortunately missing most of the last three books.³⁵

The δ branch comprises manuscripts which have long been favoured by editors;³⁶ that is the case, for instance, of the *Laudianus latinus* 104, known as *L* which in view of its antiquity has been systematically preferred to other witnesses both in the *MGH* edition by Lütjohann and in Loyen's edition.³⁷ Here are the highest manuscripts, in alphabetical order : *F* Paris, BNF, Par. lat. 9551 (s. XIII^{1/4}); *L* Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Laud. lat. 104 (s. IX¹); *Leip* Leipzig, UB, Rep. I 48 (s. XII or XIII^{1/4}); *M* Florence, BML, S. Marco 554 (s. XI²); *N* Paris, BNF, Par. lat. 18584

³¹ Dolveck 2020, 501.

³² See for instance, cases in which the tradition is split: in *Ep.* 1.10, *Campanio* is the reading of α , Par. lat. 2168 opposed to *Campaniano* in δ ; in *Ep.* 2.4 *Siagrio* is the reading of α and Par. lat. 2168 while *Sagittario* that of δ ; see also *Ep.* 5.1 *Petreio* in α and Par. lat. 2168 contra *Petronio* in δ . These readings will be discussed further.

³³ See e.g. *Ep.* 1.8 *Candidiano* (Par. lat. 2168, *S*, *Vat1661*, δ) opposed to *Candidio* (*A*, *C*); *Ep.* 4.15 *Elaphio* (Par. lat. 2168, *S*, *Vat1661*, δ) contra *Alephio* (*A*, *C*) ; and lastly in *Ep.* 5.18 *Attalo* (Par. lat. 2168, *S*, *Vat1661*, δ). A further testimony of its being related to *S* and *Vat1661* (and presumably to the *editio princeps* (see Dolveck 2020, 500-501) is the occurrence of the ciphered paratext, although exclusively at the end of both Book 4 and Book 6, in which letters are simply replaced with the following in alphabetical order. Note that, while there are wrongly spelled words in the ciphered sections of both *S* and *Vat1661* (on which see Dolveck 2020, 501), there are no spelling mistakes in the two ciphered paratexts in Par. lat. 2168.

³⁴ In light of the statistically high number of good readings for the names of addressees and of the lack of spelling mistakes in the ciphered passages.

³⁵ It is not possible to demonstrate the connection in terms of structure (i.e. position of *Epp.* 7.6–8), since this witness abruptly ends at the beginning of *Ep.* 7.2.2.

³⁶ I eliminated the reconstructed archetype β , useful for the *Carmina* but not for the *Letters*, and rather referred directly to δ , its reconstructed hyparchetype for the *Letters*. The same criterion of simplification was used with regards to other reconstructed hyparchetypes of β (that is γ and ϵ) for the sake of concision. For the general stemma see Dolveck 2020, 506.

³⁷ See e.g. Leo's description of *L* as *praestantissimus codex* in Lütjohann 1887, xxvii; or the mention of *L* as the best witness for the *Letters* in Loyen 1970, 1.

(s. X); **P** Paris, BNF, Par. lat. 2781 (s. X^{ex}); **R** Reims, BM, 413 (s. IX^{2/4}); **T** Florence, BML, Plut. 45.23 (A s. XII, B s. XI); **V** Vatican City, Bibl. Vat., Vat. lat. 1783 (s. X-XIⁱⁿ).

Overall, the new stemma scales down the importance of *L*, surpassed by a codex which had received little to no attention in previous editions: Parisinus latinus 2781 (known as *P*). The implication of Dolveck's assessment of the tradition is that, in view of the bipartite nature of the stemma, when α agrees with *P* or even better with *LMP* the reading is archetypal.

For the sake of comprehensiveness, the names of Sidonius' addressees in the ninth-century codex Sangallensis 190 were also collated.³⁸ This manuscript, which is the only witness of Ruricius of Limoges' letters, preserves an index of 23 selected letters of Sidonius (at f. 2 and 3) from Books 3 to 9, together with fragments of his *Ep.* 2.1 (at f. 130–2). The index and the fragment would appear to be the vestiges of an earlier stage of the tradition, that Mathisen fascinatingly suggests might derive from Ruricius' personal archive.³⁹ Since there is not enough textual evidence to ascribe Sangallensis 190 to known branches of the manuscript tradition of Sidonius,⁴⁰ its index is a valuable witness for collation.

Readings Ignored in Editions and Forgotten

Filimatus

The addressee of *Ep.* 1.3 is commonly called Philomathius both in modern editions and in reference works; however, in both branches of manuscript tradition and in the *editio princeps* (presumably arising from a now lost manuscript) the letter is addressed to *Filimatio suo*, and the same reading occurs in *Ep.* 5.17.7; 10. Wilamowitz's conjecture *Filomatio* first appeared in the apparatus of the *MGH*

³⁸ Dated by Bischoff 1998–2014, 3.313 n. 5648.

³⁹ Mathisen 2020b, 639.

⁴⁰ According to Dolveck, however, this does not necessarily mean the codex is extra-stemmatic. See Dolveck 2020, 483–484, Mathisen 2020b, 635–642 and Mathisen 1998.

edition,⁴¹ and the variant Philomathius has been included ever since in editions, prosopographical tools,⁴² and studies, overshadowing the unanimously transmitted reading.⁴³ The same can be said for the name of his daughter, to whom Sidonius writes the epitaph in *Ep.* 2.8.3: Philomathia has generally been preferred to the unanimously transmitted reading Filimatia.⁴⁴ In her commentary on Book 1, Köhler argued in favour of the manuscript readings by employing Sirmond's linguistic reconstruction and little known evidence.⁴⁵ Filimatio would derive from the Greek φίλημα (kiss) with a standard late Latin transition from *Ph* to *F* and *η* to *i*.⁴⁶ Sirmond mentions the similar name in *CTh* 10.20.5 (a. 371) *Filematio comiti sacrarum largitionum* (but see also 10.20.7) and *CIL* 12.2958 dedicated to *Titia Philematio*.⁴⁷ To this one may also add *CIL* 13.1.2180 dedicated to *Iulia Filemation* in Lyon⁴⁸ and the inscription in Fortunati 1859, 53 n. 65, found on the Via Latina and dedicated to a Philimatus.⁴⁹

Asper

Ep. 4.21.3–4 offers a wide description of the addressee's family and origins: he is said to be an Aeduan from his father's side, but to have been brought up in the Auvergne by his maternal side of the family when she died prematurely. Sidonius also praises the maternal grandfather Fronto (*blandus tibi, sibi seuerus*),

⁴¹ Lütjohann 1887, 4.

⁴² With the exception of W. Enßlin *RE* 1938, 2514.

⁴³ Neither Anderson nor Loyen indicate the manuscript reading or the paternity of the conjecture in the apparatus. Against the reading Philomatius see Masson 1987, 74 n. 8. Compare also Salway 2008, 290 n. 84 and Woudhuysen 2019, 852 n. 56 on the similar issue of Aconius Catullinus *signo* Philomathius/Philematius (cos. 349).

⁴⁴ In *Ep.* 2.8.1; 3 v.4 the only diverging reading is *Filimacia* in *C*.

⁴⁵ Köhler 1995, 166; Sirmond 1652, *Notae*, 29.

⁴⁶ On which see e.g. Väänänen 1981³, 37; 56. The occurrences in literature exclusively concern names of prostitutes (Lucian, *Dialogi meretricii* 11.2 and in Plautus' *Mostellaria*); one should consider, however, the significance of the kiss in Christianity.

⁴⁷ For similar occurrences see also *OPEL* III, 137.

⁴⁸ Dated to the second century or early third century in Allmer and Dissard 1887, 199 n. 90.

⁴⁹ So far, I have not been able to find this inscription in standard repositories.

grandmother Auspicia, and in particular his aunt Frontina for her piety. The addressee is said to have attended Auvergnat schools of grammar and rhetoric, and Sidonius tries to persuade him to return home by appealing to all sorts of incentives, his origins, the beauty of the land, the warmth of the city waiting for him, and of the *boni ciues* who long to see him, as well as his estates which would certainly benefit from his making his home there. At the time Sidonius writes to him, the addressee has been living in Aeduan territory, where presumably he has estates on his father's side of the family, and has not visited for many years (*Ep.* 4.21.3), to the point that Sidonius flamboyantly complains that the people of the Auvergne are being treated as if they were living in enemy territory, while it is in the Auvergne (*hic*) that, as a child, the addressee was carried in the arms of his fellow-citizens.⁵⁰

So far, I have not mentioned by name the addressee of the letter in order to outline information before turning to onomastics: in most of the manuscript tradition his name is Asper, while the reading is Aper in *C* (*post correctionem*) *FT* (not that high in Doveck's stemma).⁵¹ The consensus of α and *MP*, key representatives of δ (Asper is also in *NRV*), shows that the archetypal reading should be Asper. Further evidence in favour of this reading also comes from the list in Sangallensis 190, where the letter is mentioned as *ad Asperum*; as is detailed *supra*, Sangallensis is not ascribable to known branches of the manuscript tradition.

With the notable exception of Savaron's, modern editions have Aper in the heading and only in Lütjohann's edition is the alternative reading Asper signalled in the apparatus.⁵² Such preference is due to the name of the addressee of *Ep.* 5.14,

⁵⁰ In *Ep.* 4.21.3 Sidonius mentions the addressee's *ciuici*: *hic ciuicarum baiulabare pondus ulnarum*. For the structure of the letter see Amherdt 2001, 434–437.

⁵¹ Also in *Leip*, although written by the seventeenth-century owner of the manuscript, probably using an edition; see Dolveck 2020, 517; Aper is the reading of the *editio princeps*. The *cognomen* Asper indicates a moral defect, see Kajanto 1982, 265 for its occurrences; while for Aper being one of the commonest names deriving from fauna, meaning 'boar', *ibid.* 86 and 325.

⁵² While in Anderson and Loyen the existence of the alternative reading Asper is not even acknowledged.

Aper in both branches of the manuscript tradition. In this letter, Sidonius, already bishop of Clermont, trusts that an invitation to Rogations will be a good occasion for Aper to be called back to the city. There is certainly a similarity of content: in both letters Sidonius asks the addressee to visit, although at the same time the tone of the two requests is considerably different. While the addressee of *Ep.* 4.21 has made Aeduan territory his permanent residence, that of *Ep.* 5.14, according to the beginning of the letter, has a tendency to wander about, either for leisure or to attend business.⁵³ In *Ep.* 4.21 Sidonius says that he is speaking on behalf of all the prominent citizens of the city who wish to see Asper again and the letter, with its laudatory description of the addressee's family and upbringing in the Auvergne, is rather formal. In a passage filled with sentimentality, the author relates what would be the common thinking of the people of the Auvergne, reproaching the addressee for his absence since they had fostered him 'from the cradle'. One may also wonder if the slightly patronising exhortation and mentions of his infancy would indicate that the interlocutor is younger than Sidonius.⁵⁴ On the contrary, the tone of *Ep.* 5.14 is less formal and there seems to be a higher level of familiarity between the two, conveyed immediately by the jocose opening, when Sidonius wonders 'whether it is thermal baths that are keeping Aper away' or if he is having some hard time choosing a place to retreat in the mountains because of the multitude of fortifications.⁵⁵ Their friendship is also mentioned explicitly at the end of the letter, where Sidonius facetiously says that, knowing him as well as he does, he suspects that the prospect of attending days of public prayers would appeal to him more than an invitation to a feast.

Asper is also a plausible diacritic, and a research on an epigraphic database, such as that of Clauss-Slaby, shows that it has a number of epigraphical occurrences in Gaul.⁵⁶ In light of the fact that the two letters, while superficially

⁵³ *Ep.* 5.14.1.

⁵⁴ Similar exhortations are also in *Ep.* 3.3 to Ecdicius, as is signalled by Amherdt 2001, 436.

⁵⁵ *Ep.* 5.14.1.

⁵⁶ Asper has numerous epigraphic occurrences in *Gallia Narbonensis* (e.g. *CIL* 12.543 from Aix-en-Provence; 1090 from Apt; 1393 from Vaison; 2589 and 2604 from Geneve) and in *Germania* (e.g. *CIL*

similar, are quite different, it is more than plausible that *Ep.* 4.21 was addressed to a man named Asper, while *Ep.* 5.14 was addressed to Aper, since, at least stemmatically, the consensus of the two branches and of Sangallensis 190 leads to the inference that Asper is the archetypal reading of *Ep.* 4.21. But even if one believes that in this case stemmatics is not probative, that is it necessary to emend, and that the two addressees are identical and named Aper, one should at least acknowledge the existence of the alternative reading Asper, not signalled in editions and, consequently, not in prosopographies either.

When Stemmatic Evidence Is not Conclusive: Sagittarius or Syagrius

The case of the addressee of *Ep.* 2.4, a commendation letter, is probably one of the most interesting in the collection, given that, as Gavin Kelly has demonstrated, stemmatic praxis does not lead to conclusive results.⁵⁷ The letter is addressed *Sidonius Siagrio suo* in all the α branch, while the reading of most of δ is *Sagittario*, with two notable exceptions: *F* (*Siargio*) and *Leip* (*Siagrio*), belonging to the same sub-branch of the manuscript tradition, which, however, is rather low on Dolveck's stemma. As is shown by Kelly, up until Lütjohann's *MGH*, former editions, including the *editio princeps*, had *Sidonius Siagrio suo* (or at times *Syagrio*) in the heading.⁵⁸ The reading of all modern editions, however, is *Sagittario*. The presence in *F* and *Leip* of the α reading is not, in itself, a strong argument as it would be in *P* or *M*; thus, stemmatic evidence is not conclusive in this case. One should, therefore, turn to onomastics, as Kelly does.

The diacritic Siagrius is certainly not problematic, since two letters in the collection are addressed to someone with this name (*Epp.* 5.5 and 8.8) and descendant of the consul Flavius Afranius Syagrius. In *Ep.* 2.4, the addressee, in

13.6870 from Mainz; 6618; 7409 and 7587: though all three concerning the two Aspri, consuls in 212 AD), only one in Lyon (*CIL* 13.1711). There are also numerous epigraphic occurrences of Aper in Lugdunensis, (e.g. *CIL* 13.1926 and 1998 from Lyon; 2979 from Sens) and in *Gallia Narbonensis* (*CIL* 12.1880 from Vienne; 4199 from Montpellier). See *OPEL* I, 63 and 81.

⁵⁷ Kelly 2021c.

⁵⁸ Pio 1498, 47; Savaron 1609, 127; Sirmond 1652, 42.

light of his guardianship of the recently deceased Optatianus' daughter, is asked to approve her betrothal to the *vir clarissimus* Proiectus. There is no evidence which would point clearly in the direction of Syagrius, and yet, the interpretation of *Ep.* 2.4.3 *quia dignus es ut domus tuae celeberrimam disciplinam etiam procul positorum petat ambitus* may lead to speculation. Anderson and Loyen translate the passage differently: while the former has 'if the aspirations even of total strangers should seek a place in a family so famous...', Loyen's translation is more literal 'puisque tu mérites que des gens de résidence même lointaine fassent l'impossible pour obtenir une place sous la discipline...'. Should we interpret the passage verbatim, it might mean that Syagrius is not living close to Sidonius and to those involved, either in Lyon or Clermont at the time. Since in *Ep.* 8.8.1 Syagrius is said to have an estate at Taionnacum (believed to be located near Autun), and is ironically pictured as devotedly intent to farming it personally,⁵⁹ *Ep.* 2.4 may refer to that family estate. However, the formality of *Ep.* 2.4 is in stark contrast with the bantering tone and familiarity of both *Epp.* 5.5 and 8.8, and one may wonder to what extent the commendatory function of the letter would have influenced the way of writing to a close friend such as Syagrius, since other commendation letters of Sidonius usually include less formal salutations.

A second point of criticism, still related to the reverential tone of *Ep.* 2.4, might be that in both *Epp.* 5.5 and 8.8 one also gets the impression that Syagrius, who is said to be *Gallicanae flos iuventutis* (in *Ep.* 8.8.1), is younger than Sidonius.⁶⁰ Of course young age would not have meant that one could not have had guardianship, but maybe his possibly being a contemporary or his being older than Sidonius and the deep deference of the letter may suggest he is not the same Syagrius of *Ep.* 5.5. and 8.8, but he could be a namesake, older relative (?), living in Autun.

On the other hand the reading Sagittarius is not implausible. In inscriptions, Sagittarius only appears to be an indication of the military role of archer, belonging

⁵⁹ *Ep.* 8.8.1 *Quousque tua te Taionnacus patriciae stirpis lassabit agricolam?*

⁶⁰ As is suggested in Marolla 2023, 144–145.

to the *cohors sagittariorum*;⁶¹ however, there is abundant information concerning another man named Sagittarius: the bishop of Gap, who lived in the second half of the sixth century (before 552–85) and was brought up in Lyon together with his brother Salonius, bishop of Embrun.⁶² The diacritic, therefore, is attested in the same area, even though almost a century later.⁶³ As Kelly points out, Sagittarius, sounding more like a description than a name, could have been changed by a copyist into Siagrius, given that the consul (great-grandfather of the addressee) is mentioned in Book 1 (*Ep.* 1.7.4); but it is equally plausible that a transmitted name Siagrius could have been wrongly considered to be an abbreviation of the more common noun Sagittarius (Sag'arius).

Cases of Split Tradition

Heronius or Herenius

The manuscript tradition is split when it comes to the name of the addressee of *Epp.* 1.5 and 1.9. Heronio is the reading of α *MPRV Leip* and of the *editio princeps*, while Herenio is peculiar to *LNT* (three manuscripts with the common ancestor η in the stemma). Given that α agrees with two of the most trustworthy witnesses of the δ family, Heronio should be the archetypal reading and, for instance, it is the chosen reading in Savaron's, Lütjohann's, and Anderson's editions, as well as in the *PLRE* 2 entry. Epigraphical evidence from Lugdunensis may support the transmitted reading: Eronius is attested in *CIL* 12.4784 and is listed, though as a gentilicium, in *CIL* 11.6045;⁶⁴ while Heronius does not seem to be attested elsewhere before the twelfth century.⁶⁵

⁶¹ That is the case, for instance, of *CIL* 3.14701/2 and *CIL* 8.2515; *OPEL* IV does not have an entry for Sagittarius.

⁶² See *PCBE* 4, 1680–1683 for the numerous sources.

⁶³ Kajanto 1982, 320 mentions the occurrence in *CIL* 6.37262 (though corrupted in Sagittaris), but the inscription refers to Aurelius Maior, a soldier of the *Legio II Partica*, said to be 'ex sagittaris'.

⁶⁴ See also *CIL* 12.4783 (*Eroneus*); and *CIL* 13.7042 (*Sibbaeus Eronis*). Cf. *OPEL* II, 122.

⁶⁵ In the *Vita Meinweri episcopi Patherbrunnensis* 199, p. 115. There are, however, plenty of epigraphical occurrences of the name in the third declension.

Presumably out of Loyen's preference for *L*, in his Budé edition he opted for the reading Herenio, a trivialisation of Herennius, and this is the name in the *PCBE* 4 entry, which clearly depends on Loyen, whose edition is mentioned in the notes.⁶⁶ This is simply one example of how perverse the research on an addressee could be: if one consults Loyen and then looks for the Herenius entry in *PLRE*, one will not find the same person under the same name, nor an indication that there is an alternative reading, and the same applies if one reads Lütjohann or Anderson and then turns to *PCBE* looking for Heronius.

Campanius or Campanianus

The tradition is definitely split on the name of the addressee of *Ep.* 1.10: *Campanio* is the reading of α (*Companio* in the *editio princeps*) and *Campaniano* that of δ .⁶⁷ While Campanius is a *gentilicium*,⁶⁸ Campanianus is attested as a *cognomen* in inscriptions,⁶⁹ such as the third-century *praefectus Urbi* Iulius Ferox Campanianus (*CIL* 6.1670),⁷⁰ and *PLRE* 2 lists four individuals with this name. According to Ralf Scharf, Campanianus 1 (Sidonius' addressee), Campanianus 2 (the author of an epigram in *Anth. Lat.* I, 772a Riese),⁷¹ Campanianus 4 — Iulius Felix Campanianus, who as *comes formarum* had Roman aqueducts repaired (*CIL* 6.1765) and then as *praefectus Urbi* funded improvements in the baths of Trajan (*CIL* 6.1670) —, and Anonymus 15 (the poet, *praefectus Urbi*, and native of Rome mentioned in Sidonius *Carm.* 9.302–3; 309–10) are the same person.⁷² Actually, Chastagnol had already considered Sidonius' Campanianus to be the same as the

⁶⁶ Herenius also in Köhler 1995, 52 and 183.

⁶⁷ Lütjohann 1887, 15 wrongly ascribes *Campanio* to *F*.

⁶⁸ See e.g. Solin and Salomies 1994, 44; Scharf 1992, 274; *OPEL* II, 28–29.

⁶⁹ E.g. in *OPEL* II, 213 where it is listed as a Christian *cognomen*.

⁷⁰ Already signalled by Sirmond 1652, *Notae*, 21. See also *CIL* 3.4462 and 3.6755.

⁷¹ *Inlustris Campanianus patricio Olybrio* and addressee of one in return, in an epigrammatic exchange. This Olybrius *patricius* could be identical with the future western Augustus of 472, see *PLRE* II, s.v. Olybrius 1 and Olybrius 6.

⁷² Scharf 1992, 274–278.

comes formarum and then prefect Iulius Felix Campanianus,⁷³ but neither Chastagnol nor Scharf's theories, however attractive, have enjoyed popularity in Sidonius' scholarship.⁷⁴ Should this identification be correct, we could say much more on this addressee, given that *Ep.* 1.10 has generally been believed to be the only source of information on Campanianus up to now.⁷⁵

Florentius or Florentinus⁷⁶

Another case of diverging readings is that of the addressee of *Ep.* 4.19 addressed to Florentius both in most of the α branch (*ACS*) and in the *editio princeps*, but to Florentinus in δ and in *Vat 1661*.⁷⁷ The latter is the reading chosen in modern editions and the plausibility of the alternative reading Florentius has never been discussed.⁷⁸ Both Florentius (the reading of most of α) and Florentinus have occurrences as *cognomina*;⁷⁹ both names are also attested as diacritics in prosopography; however, while there are four persons named Florentius attested

⁷³ Chastagnol 1960, 495.

⁷⁴ Not being mentioned either in Köhler 1995, 282–284 or in Mathisen 2020a, 87.

⁷⁵ Campanianus is also attested later as a diacritic in Cass. *Var.* 9.4.2 *uxorem Campaniani viri disertissimi*. Though, interestingly, Mommsen 1961², 271 signals in apparatus the reading *Campanii* of *Laur.* Plut. 16 sin.11. See also Köhler 1995, 282 who follows Sirmond.

⁷⁶ Compare also the name of the addressee of *Ep.* 1.8: Candidianus is the reading of two manuscripts of the α branch (*SVat1661*), all the δ branch, and of the *editio princeps*; it is therefore presumably the archetypal reading, while Candidius (mostly attested as a *gentilicium*) is the faulty reading of *A* and *C*. The addressee was a man from Cesena who moved to Ravenna (Mathisen 2020a, 87) and his diacritic *cognomen* has numerous epigraphical occurrences in Italy, and even one from Classe, e.g. TM 244255 (see *AE* 1977 n. 265); cf. also, e.g. *Caesonius Candidianus* in *CIL* 6.34728 (third century); *Candidianus* dedicatee of the fourth-century *ICVR* 8.23118 from Rome. For a literary parallel, although slightly later, see the Candidianus commended by Avitus of Vienne in his *Ep.* 70 and cf. Candidiani in *PLRE* 2, 257.

⁷⁷ As there is no other evidence that this manuscript is separate to the rest of α , the occurrence in *Vat1661* is likely to be due to an independent error.

⁷⁸ Lütjohann 1887, Anderson 1965, Løyen 1970. Note however that Savaron 1609, 285 has *Florentio*.

⁷⁹ Solin and Salomies 1994, 333; for inscriptions see e.g. Clauss-Slaby database; *OPEL* II, 148–149; 219. Florentius is a distinctive feature of '*signa proper*' according to Kajanto 1966, 52, who lists it as one of the new coinages in *-ius* which became popular from the second century onwards. As stated before, by the fifth century many *signa* had become diacritics.

in fourth and fifth-century Gaul, individuals named Florentinus are attested only later in the sixth century. The message Sidonius writes to him, the shortest letter in the collection,⁸⁰ is generally considered to be the only source of information on this man; and, although it gives no hint as to his social position or exact location, it is believed to have been written before Sidonius' bishopric (thus before c.a. 470).⁸¹

I would like to suggest here a possible identification of this addressee with presbyter Florentius, a man mentioned in Faustus of Riez's *Ep.* 12. Before doing that, it may be worth emphasising that not only is Faustus of Riez an addressee of Sidonius, but also that it is not uncommon for the letter collections of the two to address or mention the same people.⁸² In 485 Florentius, who seems to have been close to Faustus and a long-time acquaintance, served as a bearer of a message to bishop Ruricius of Limoges.⁸³ The letter, only transmitted in the already mentioned Sangallensis 190, is in its second half a commendation for Florentius,⁸⁴ who is travelling about in order to rescue his sister from captivity.⁸⁵ Given the lack of evidence this is merely a hypothesis, but it may serve as an example revealing that the question of diverging readings in the manuscript tradition has never been raised and that attention to names might help us solve prosopographical puzzles.

⁸⁰ *Ep.* 4.19 *et moras nostras et silentium accusas. Utrumque purgabile est; namque et venimus et scribimus. Vale.*

⁸¹ See *PCBE* 4, 784. On the lack of information on the addressee of *Ep.* 4.19 and on the content of this note see Amherdt 2001, 419.

⁸² See e.g. the interconnections between Sidonius/Faustus and Eminentius, Graecus, Paulinus, Ruricius of Limoges himself, Sidonius' brother (Anonymus 35 in Mathisen 2020a, 138) who had been educated by Faustus. On these aristocratic and monastic interactions see Mathisen 2020a, 74; for detailed information on the people mentioned and references to the *corpora* of Sidonius and Faustus, see *ibid.* 92; 99; 112; 118; 138.

⁸³ *PCBE* 4, 787.

⁸⁴ As is clearly indicated by the verb *insinuo*.

⁸⁵ *Ep.* 12 *pro germanae suae absolutione peregrinatur*. For context, see Mathisen 2003, 103.

Minor Cases of Split Tradition

The tradition is split between the two branches when it comes to the addressee of *Ep.* 3.14, a man from Grenoble called Placidius in the α branch (with the exception of *Vat1661*), Placidus in δ (with the exception of *Leip*) and in the *editio princeps*.⁸⁶ Placidus is the commonly printed reading in editions, but the alternative reading of the α branch is not signalled in apparatus, though both readings have occurrences as *cognomina*.⁸⁷

That of the two readings Petronius (δ) Petreius (α) of the name of the addressee of *Ep.* 5.1 is not, strictly speaking, a minor case, but it is a solvable one. Although the reading Petreius is certainly interesting, given that a Petreius, nephew of Mamertus Claudianus, is the addressee of another letter in the corpus (*Ep.* 4.11), the choice of modern editors, Petronius, can be confirmed on the basis of the content of the letter.⁸⁸

Changed Spelling

Although it is not fruitful or conclusive to linger on merely orthographic differences such as th/t; y/i; some cases are worth a closer look. The addressee of *Ep.* 7.3, who had asked Sidonius for a copy of his (not otherwise known) *Contestatiunculae*,⁸⁹ is named Megethius in Andersons' and Løyen's editions, without any indication pertaining to alternative manuscript readings. Both seem to rely on Lütjohann's edition, which has Megethio in the heading, and mentions the reading Megethtio of *P* in apparatus, although the reading has an initial *Mi*-, as in the rest of the manuscript tradition.⁹⁰ The commonly printed reading Megethio, therefore, is not transmitted and the attested readings are Migetio *A Vat1661*;

⁸⁶ *Vat1661* agrees with δ while *Leip* agrees with α .

⁸⁷ Kajanto 1966, 10 and 12; Kajanto 1982, 262. Epigraphically, Placidus has many more occurrences as a *cognomen*. See also *OPEL* III, 144.

⁸⁸ As is detailed in Marolla 2023, 43–44. In *Ep.* 4.11 is enclosed Sidonius' epitaph for Claudianus (*Carm.* 30).

⁸⁹ *Ep.* 7.3.1. The only prosopographic entries on this addressee are in *PCBE* 4, s.v. Megethius1, 1315–1316 (on which more below) and in Mathisen 2020a, 108 succinctly relating the content of *Ep.* 7.3.

⁹⁰ On two occurrences of Megethius in inscriptions see *OPEL* III, 73.

Migethio *C M*; Migethtio *P*; Migecio *S Leip*; Migerio *F*. The *editio princeps* prints Migecio, as does Savaron,⁹¹ while in Anderson's edition, a note highlights that 'this Megethius, (who is not the Megethius of *Ep.* VIII.14.8) is not otherwise known'.⁹² Stemmatically, therefore, the preferable reading should be Migethius, a name which has occurrences: for instance, in *PCBE* 4 are listed two bishops named Migethius later in the sixth century.⁹³ According to *PCBE*, however, Sidonius' addressee is to be identified with Megethius 1 (*PCBE* 4, 1315–6), a bishop who appears to have undersigned (with no indication of his episcopal seat) the letter addressed by Faustus of Riez to publicly condemn bishop Lucidus' profession of predestinationism.⁹⁴ According to the prosopographical entry in *PCBE*, there would be no reason to identify Megethius 1 (signatory in Par. lat. 2166 and addressee of Sidonius' *Ep.* 7.3) with two men named Migetius, the first bishop of Besançon, the second of Belley, who are listed in Duchesne's *Fasti*.⁹⁵ And yet, if the first is believed to have been a seventh-century bishop, it should be pointed out that Miget(h)ius' episcopate in Belley is dated to A.D. 450⁹⁶ and such date would make him a contemporary of Sidonius, who lived less than 100 km east of Lyon.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Savaron 1609, 422.

⁹² The Megethius passingly mentioned in *Ep.* 8.14.8 is said to be a letter bearer (*gerulus*) and in this case Megethius is the transmitted reading in both branches of the manuscript tradition. See also *Ep.* 9.8.1 (*gerulus antiquus*), van Waarden 2010, 196.

⁹³ *PCBE* 4, 1330 s.v. Migethius 1 and Migethius 2.

⁹⁴ Since in Lucidus' letter Megethius is eleventh out of thirty bishops, van Waarden gathers the names are in order of seniority and cautiously suggests, by comparing his position to that of other known bishops, he might have become bishop in the early 460s. Note that the list of bishops, transmitted exclusively by Par. lat. 2166, has two different readings (f. 3r): first Megitius in the list of undersigning bishops, and then, a few lines below, in the heading of Lucidus' letter, Megetius. Though the letter is also transmitted by Sangallensis 190, it lacks the prefatory section with the names of undersigning bishops, see *CSEL* 11, 164–165. A digitised black and white version of Parisinus 2166 is freely accessible on Gallica; for f. 3r see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100331593/f5.item.r=LATIN%202166.zoom>.

⁹⁵ Duchesne 1915, 199 and 216. The entry in *PCBE* 4 does not explain the reasons why the possibility should be ruled out, apart from the *Fasti* being later and 'peu fiables' sources.

⁹⁶ For instance in Rousset 1851, 216; he is also listed as the third bishop of Belley in Hauréau 1850, 605.

⁹⁷ Megethius is said to be bishop of Besançon in Mathisen 1990, 137 who dates his episcopal see between 451 and 463.

The addressee of Sidonius' *Ep.* 7.3 is either firmly or tentatively identified with Migethius bishop of Belley also by editors who print Megethius in the text, and mainly Sirmond, Lütjohann, and Loyen. These editors suggest to change, for purposes of identification, a name which, as stated before, is *already* Migethius in the manuscript tradition.⁹⁸

We are accustomed to refer to the addressee of *Ep.* 5.2 with the name Nymphidius, in accordance with the editions of Lütjohann, Loyen, and Anderson, but this reading (with the y) is peculiar to *L* and *Leip*, and is actually Nimphidius in the rest of δ and in α .⁹⁹ Since the addressee is also mentioned in *Carm.* 15.200, it's worth looking at the reading in this poem as well. Nimfidius is attested in αFPT ,¹⁰⁰ while Nymphidius is only in the *editio princeps*.¹⁰¹ Given the consensus of the manuscripts on Nimfidius/Nimphidius both in *Ep.* 5.2 and *Carm.* 15.200, one should assume that this is the reading of the archetype,¹⁰² although it is more than plausible that the *cognomen* was originally Nymphidius, a diacritic of Greek origin attested both as a *nomen gentilicium* and a diacritic *cognomen*.¹⁰³

Lastly, the name of the addressee of *Ep.* 8.6 is Nammatus in both branches of manuscript tradition and that is also the name printed in the *editio princeps* and in older editions,¹⁰⁴ while, after Lütjohann, the commonly printed name has been Namatus, a diacritic which has numerous occurrences.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Sirmond 1652, *Notae*, 72; Lütjohann's *Index Personarum* in his edition, 1887, 430; Loyen 1970, v. 3, 38 n. 13. See also van Waarden 2010, 194 n. 2.

⁹⁹ Nymphidius in Sangallensis 190, though with y signalled as *littera incerta*.

¹⁰⁰ First letter erased in *A*.

¹⁰¹ *Carm.* 15 is not extant in *L*, *M* and *Leip*.

¹⁰² Cf. *CIL* 12.487 (found in Marseille), dedicated to a Nymfidius who died in 489.

¹⁰³ See e.g. Nimphydia Miserina in *CIL* 8.12794; Publius Nymphidius in *CIL* 14.221 from Ostia and the Nymphidius dedicating *CIL* 6.23179 to his son. Cf. *OPEL* III, 108.

¹⁰⁴ Also Pio, 1498, 113; Savaron 1609, 495; Sirmond 1652, 219; Baret 1878, 403.

¹⁰⁵ Lütjohann 1887, 130.

CONVERSATION WITH AN ALGORITHM
SIDONIUS' LETTER COLLECTION THROUGH THE LENSES
OF MACHINE LEARNING

In “Conversare con Orion”, Carlo Ginzburg described an epiphanic interaction he had with the on-line library catalogue of UCLA. Ginzburg said that he was under the impression that most library catalogues, including the electronic ones, are conceived so that users find what they are looking for, but that he often uses them with the opposite intent: to find what he is *not* looking for or what he does not even suspect may exist: «anzi, ciò di cui non sospetto nemmeno l'esistenza».¹⁰⁶ Taking a page from Ginzburg and accepting his invitation to add a little randomness to one's research, in what follows I will explain how the apparent randomness of computer data can point scholars to new coordinates for future research on letter collections. I intend to show how patterns that are not evident may be revealed through machine learning data and in particular how Peter Heslin's new algorithm can help prove some points or theories formulated over the years on Sidonius' letter collection. The further aim will be to advocate in favour of its auxiliary function for research on epistolary corpora.

Let us first consider the collection in its entirety: Heslin's column chart can help visualise the number of letters in each book and make some preliminary observations.

*This work comes out of the experimental testing of Peter Heslin's machine to identify patterns in letter collections, which will be officially launched in the coming months. The database tries to predict to which book a letter belongs in a collection by analysing linguistic and thematic occurrences. This chapter will be published in a forthcoming *Classical Continuum* issue: I do not own any rights to images and statistics below, as the copyrights symbol indicates © Peter Heslin 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Ginzburg 2001, 905.

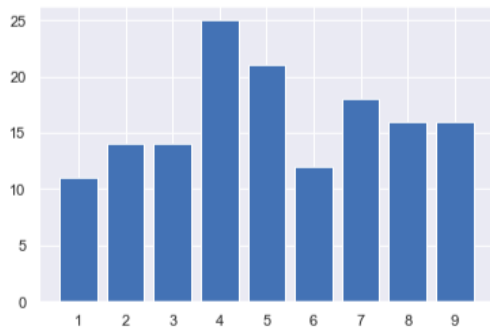


Figure 1: Distribution of letters in Sidonius' collection © Peter Heslin 2023.

There are eleven letters in Book 1, although there is a lacuna in the Book, of around 900 words, therefore several letters are missing according to Kelly 2020: 167 n. 11. Both Books 2 and 3 have the same number of letters, fourteen, while Book 4 is the biggest in the collection with twenty-five letters. There are then twenty-one letters in Book 5, only twelve letters in Book 6 and eighteen in Book 7. The last two books of the collection, Books 8 and 9, contain sixteen letters each.

The fact that blocks of Books 2-3 and 8-9 have the same number of letters (14 and 16 letters each) appears to be an editorial choice, and one may wonder whether it reflects Sidonius' intention of marking off the first three books of the collection as a separate unit.

Although there is a consensus among scholars that Sidonius is the editor of his letter collection, the exact date of publication of single books and clusters of books is debated.

It is difficult to define private circulation since we know Sidonius was wont to send his closest friends his works before formally publishing them, whatever 'publishing' means in the ancient and late Roman world. It is generally believed that Books 1 and perhaps also Book 2 enjoyed an early circulation before or right after Sidonius was appointed as bishop of Clermont Ferrand in 469 or 470 though this is not universally accepted. As Kelly recently pointed out, in terms of authorial statements, 'the clearest division between the letters consists of Books 1–7, Book

8, and Book 9'.¹⁰⁷ While in the first three Books of the collection, there is a sense of chronological progression between one book and the next, starting with Book 4 the letters appear to be from very different times in Sidonius' life: a thing that makes dating these letters challenging given that they often lack dating elements.¹⁰⁸ Dating *ad annum* is not only almost impossible but would also be a futile exercise since Sidonius edited the collection and there is no way of knowing how much the editorial work affected original letters and to what extent letters were modified or even created for the sake of publication.¹⁰⁹

Let us turn to Peter Heslin's confusion matrix to signal some general trends before analysing each book.

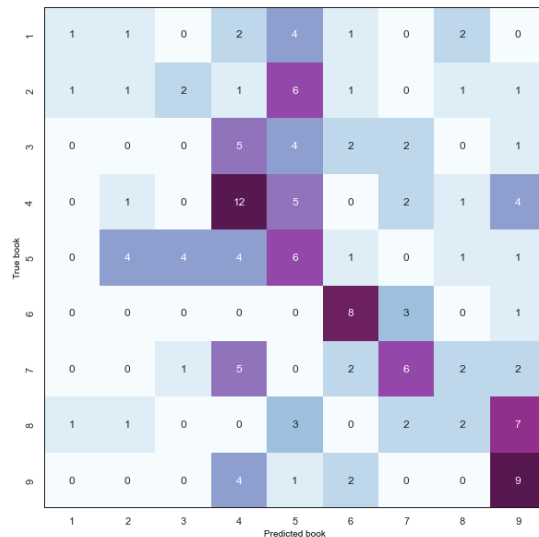


Figure 2: Confusion matrix of Sidonius' collection, © Peter Heslin 2023.

The classifying algorithm was confused when trying to do the predictions for the first two Books, with just one item correctly assigned to each of them. The worst predictions, though, concern Book 3. Not only did the computer not assign a single letter correctly to this book but also, not one letter of Book 3 was wrongly assigned to Books 1 and 2. Six letters of Book 2 are wrongly assigned to Book 5 and,

¹⁰⁷ Kelly 2020, 186.

¹⁰⁸ On the themes of the books in the collection, see Gibson 2020, 378.

¹⁰⁹ See Marolla 2023, 3.

although the computer correctly assigns twelve letters to Book 4, the highest number of letters incorrectly placed in Book 4 are, once again, five letters assigned to Book 5.

The thematical similarity of Books 2 to 5 is also confirmed by the fact that six items are correctly put in Book 5 but the misplacement mainly concerns Books 2, 3 and 4 (with four letters each). The algorithm, in this case, confirms the idea that Book 5 has much in common with Books 2 to 4 and that it is a transitional book which introduces the reader to the second half of the collection and in particular to the changed episcopal tone of Books 6 and 7.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the algorithm correctly assigns eight letters out of the twelve letters of Book 6 (a statistically high number). The letters in this book are exclusively addressed to bishops and are mostly commendation letters or requests for legal interventions. There are other commendation letters in the collection, but not in such a high concentration. Being distinctively different from the rest of the collection, Book 6 has effectively been dubbed as ‘the book of the bishops’ by Roy Gibson because of its coherence in terms of topics and addressees.¹¹¹ Note, also, that six letters out of eighteen are correctly assigned to Book 7 and I will try to give reasons why five items of Book 7 are misplaced in Book 4.

The algorithm was confused when trying to assign letters to Book 8, but at the same time, since there is a consensus that Books 1 to 7 constitute a first collection, it is not surprising that most of the letters in Book 8 are wrongly put in Book 9 rather than in previous books. The last Book has a good score: nine letters out of sixteen were placed correctly. It is interesting that, on the contrary, no items in Book 9 were assigned to Book 8, they were instead placed in Book 4 (four letters) and 6 (two letters). Let us now analyse the most interesting data the computer gives us.

¹¹⁰ Marolla 2023, 8–11.

¹¹¹ Gibson 2013b, 350.

BOOK 1

For anyone familiar with Sidonius' letter collection, the inability of the computer to match the letters in Book 1 (with the sole exception of letter 7) is a cause for reflection. In terms of internal coherence, and also of chronological progression, Book 1 is one of the most distinctive of the collection. It is in this book that Sidonius gives a detailed self-portrait of his political persona as that of an influential well-connected aristocrat who is moving to Rome and is then Prefect of the City.

The most distinctive features concern the mentions of the city of Rome and of the Senate, with ten occurrences, more than in all the rest of the collection,¹¹² and a good part of the letters of Book 1 recount episodes that are some the most famous in all the collection, take for instance the portrait of the king of the Visigoths Theoderic II (*Ep.* 1.2), the trial of Arvandus, prefect of the Gauls (*Ep.* 1.7), or the episode of the so-called 'Satire of Arles', an anonymous epigram that circulated at the court of emperor Majorian (*Ep.* 1.11).¹¹³

```
All predictions:
Book 1, item 1:  8
Book 1, item 2:  4
Book 1, item 3:  5
Book 1, item 4:  5
Book 1, item 5:  2
Book 1, item 6:  8
Book 1, item 7:  1
Book 1, item 8:  5
Book 1, item 9:  5
Book 1, item 10: 6
Book 1, item 11: 4
```

Figure 3: Predictions for Book 1, © Peter Heslin 2023.

One of the most confident wrong predictions concerns *Ep.* 1.10, wrongly assigned to Book 6: it does not seem unfair speculation that this is because of the mention of a commendation at the beginning of the letter, although the letter in itself is not a *commendaticia*.

¹¹² E.g. Sid. Apoll. *Epp.* 1.5, 1.6, 1.8.

¹¹³ On *Ep.* 1.2 see Gualandri 2000, 107–117. See the commentary by Köhler 1995, *ad loc.*

Book 1
 auienus: 55.6
 praefectura: 49.2
 aruo: 48.8
 uos: -48.7
 uester: -47.7
 senatus: 44.3
 paulo: 41.1
 sedeo: 40.9
 inquio: 39.3
 paeonius: 39.2
 princeps: 39.0
 augustus: 38.4
 publicus: 36.5
 portus: 35.6
 aio: 35.0
 sto: 34.9
 consul: 34.0
 nauis: 33.9
 iudicium: 33.5

Figure 4: List of significant lemmas for Book 1, © Peter Heslin 2023.

The word on top of Heslin's list of significant lemmas in Figure 4, Avienus, is distinctive since it occurs (seven times), exclusively in *Ep.* 1.9, and yet, as can be seen from Heslin's list of predictions (Figure 3), the computer puts this letter in Book 5. In the list of words we have Paeonius, which occurs eight times exclusively in *Ep.* 1.11, and yet, even though this word has a positive score (39.2), it is not the highest on the list and, more importantly, although the name is only attested in Book 1 letter 11, this letter is wrongly attributed to Book 4 (Figure 3).

As stated before, Books 1 and 2 have a similar score and the computer struggles to assign letters to both. In this case, we might be inclined to think that, given the similar score, the two books somehow seem similar to the computer which does not detect distinctive features; and yet, we know that Book 2 is thematically very different from Book 1, even though the computer data we have does not reflect this difference.

BOOK 2

Book 2 marks a move from Sidonius' political life to the private sphere made of civilities and aristocratic leisure, it is a book on *otium* as is well reflected by *Ep.* 2.2, a detailed description of Papianilla's family villa and of the surrounding lake

scene,¹¹⁴ and also by letter 9: a description of Sidonius' stay at his relatives' estates and of the leisurely activities they engage with to pass the time.¹¹⁵ We have already observed that six letters of Book 2 are wrongly assigned to Book 5 by the algorithm (see Figure 5); and yet, although the aristocracy at leisure appears in Book 5, it is not a dominant theme the way it is in Book 2.¹¹⁶

Book 2, item 1: 5
 Book 2, item 2: 2
Book 2, item 3: 5
 Book 2, item 4: 3
 Book 2, item 5: 6
Book 2, item 6: 5
 Book 2, item 7: 3
Book 2, item 8: 5
 Book 2, item 9: 8
 Book 2, item 10: 4
 Book 2, item 11: 9
Book 2, item 12: 5
 Book 2, item 13: 1
Book 2, item 14: 5

Figure 5: Predictions for Book 2, in red letters wrongly ascribed to Book 5 © Peter Heslin 2023.

What makes these six letters similar to letters in Book 5 to a computer? Let us consider the most interesting cases. The first wrong prediction is easily justifiable: the despicable corrupt official Seronatus is the object of two letters of invective, one is the first letter of Book 2 (*Ep.* 2.1) and the other is in Book 5 (*Ep.* 5.13). *Ep.* 2.6 concerns the addressee's good choice of a friend, and there are thematic similarities with *Ep.* 5.10, therefore in this case the computer prompts the user to look for comparisons one might not have searched for.

The same can be said for *Ep.* 2.12: it concerns the illness of Sidonius' daughter Severiana and it does not seem to be fortuitous that the computer wrongly

¹¹⁴ Papianilla was Sidonius' wife, see Mathisen 2020a, 111.

¹¹⁵ On the themes of Book 2 see Hindermann 2022, viii–xi.

¹¹⁶ As Hanaghan 2019, 73 points out, in Book 2 there is a sense of progression of time, from the early summer setting of *Ep.* 2.2 to the late autumn in *Ep.* 2.14. On the contrary, in Book 5, the author appears to be living in a perpetual autumn, see Marolla 2023, 9–11.

places it in Book 5, where there is the only letter to a woman in the collection, that to Sidonius' wife Papianilla and where Roscia, another of their daughters, is mentioned. Once more, thanks to the wrong prediction of the machine, one is encouraged to compare the two letters on the grounds of the shared family theme.

Book 2
 uos: -42.7
 seu: 40.1
 deuincio: 39.7
 exstruo: 34.8
 dignor: -34.3
 opto: 33.8
 mater: 33.5
 mora: 33.3
 celebrer: 33.0
 respuo: 32.9
 multus: -31.7
 uerecundus: 31.2
 spatium: 31.1
 uocito: 31.0
 triplex: 30.6
 facio: -30.1
 papa: -29.9
 lacus: 29.1
 ignoro: 29.0

Figure 6: List of significant lemmas for Book 2, © Peter Heslin 2023.

Reading Heslin's word list for Book 2 (Figure 6), we might be inclined to discard the first entry which is *vos*, and yet its negative score (-33.3) is telling if related to Sidonius' collection. According to van Waarden,¹¹⁷ Sidonius uses *tu/uos* alternatively to show closeness or distance with addressees. It is common that he uses them alternatively in the same letter and that he uses *vos* when he wishes to be more formal, when he wants to show deference or when he is not comfortable saying something. The absence of *vos* from Book 2 would then testify that Sidonius is at ease in writing to the addressees in this book and, in light of the themes and setting of these letters, this theory would appear to be validated.

BOOK 3

As stated before, for the machine, Book 3 is not distinctive in any way; and yet, in Book 3 there is the first mention of Sidonius becoming bishop of Clermont-

¹¹⁷ Van Waarden 2020, 426–428.

Ferrand, which is important information for the chronology of the letters and for the development of the collection. The mention of the episcopate in Book 3 openly recalls Pliny's assumption of the consulship in his own Book 3.¹¹⁸ Sidonius' Book 3 is also a valuable source of information on the siege of Clermont. For instance, there are mentions of looming barbarians in letters to Felix (*Epp.* 3.4 and 3.7) and Visigoths are also said to be uncouth and *bellicosi* in *Ep.* 3.8.¹¹⁹ The algorithm gets *res publica* as a useful lemma, this word has four occurrences in Book 3, three of them are only in *Ep.* 3.8, and yet the letter is wrongly placed in Book 5, where it occurs only once (see Figure 7).

```

Book 3, item 1: 7
Book 3, item 2: 7
Book 3, item 3: 4
Book 3, item 4: 5
Book 3, item 5: 6
Book 3, item 6: 4
Book 3, item 7: 4
Book 3, item 8: 5
Book 3, item 9: 4
Book 3, item 10: 6
Book 3, item 11: 5
Book 3, item 12: 5
Book 3, item 13: 4
Book 3, item 14: 9

```

Figure 7: Predictions for Book 3, © Peter Heslin 2023.

Although one may be discouraged by the inability of the machine to correctly assign letters to this book, it is relevant that it does not assign any letter of Book 3 to Books 1 and 2. The tone and the themes are indeed considerably different from the political setting of Book 1 as well as from the leisurely setting of Book 2. Book 3 determines a shift in themes that, to us, is made evident by its position in the collection, but such themes are also in the following Books: the confusion of the machine is, therefore, understandable. Take, for instance, the predictions for Book 3 (Figure 7). It is not surprising that the computer puts the last letter (*Ep.* 3.14) in Book 9. *Ep.* 3.14 is a letter on literary matters and on the addressee's appreciation

¹¹⁸ Gibson 2013b, 347–348.

¹¹⁹ The adjective *bellicosus* is not spotted by the computer but it would have been useful to assign the letter to Book 3 since that is its only occurrence in Sidonius' corpus.

of Sidonius' works; similarly, Book 9 is dedicated to literature and in particular to metaliterary discussion on Sidonius' own poems. Letters in the second half of Book 9 are actually accompanying notes to as-yet unpublished verse compositions which he sends the addressees.¹²⁰

BOOK 4

With twelve letters rightly assigned, Book 4 has the highest number of letters predicted correctly in all the collection.

Book 4, item 1:	5
Book 4, item 2:	4
Book 4, item 3:	9
Book 4, item 4:	5
Book 4, item 5:	4
Book 4, item 6:	4
Book 4, item 7:	4
Book 4, item 8:	9
Book 4, item 9:	7
Book 4, item 10:	4
Book 4, item 11:	4
Book 4, item 12:	4
Book 4, item 13:	4
Book 4, item 14:	4
Book 4, item 15:	4
Book 4, item 16:	4
Book 4, item 17:	9
Book 4, item 18:	9
Book 4, item 19:	5
Book 4, item 20:	5
Book 4, item 21:	2
Book 4, item 22:	8
Book 4, item 23:	5
Book 4, item 24:	4
Book 4, item 25:	7

Figure 8: Predictions for Book 4, © Peter Heslin 2023.

This book preserves the only letter from an addressee to Sidonius, *Ep.* 4.2, written by Mamertus Claudianus, guessed correctly by the computer (see Figure 8).¹²¹ Note, however, that *Ep.* 4.3, Sidonius' answer to Claudianus' letter, is wrongly assigned to Book 9. Think back at what we said about literary themes dominating Book 9: this fits the scheme, since *Ep.* 4.3 is in praise of Claudianus' theological

¹²⁰ *Ep.* 3.14 is also very similar to *Ep.* 5.1, where Sidonius is flattered that the addressee repeatedly reads his works, see Marolla 2023, 56–59.

¹²¹ Together with Mamertus Claudianus' epitaph, written by Sidonius, in *Ep.* 4.11. On the two letters see Amherdt 2001, 93–106 and 279–303.

treatise *De statu animae*, praise which had been prompted, or better, strongly requested, by Mamertus Claudianus in his letter to Sidonius. The same can be said for *Ep.* 4.8, another letter on literary matters also containing poetry — an epigram in praise of Ragnahilda, queen of the Visigoths — which was wrongly assigned to Book 9.¹²² Moreover, there are two groups of consecutive letters: 5 to 7 and 10 to 16 all assigned correctly to Book 4 and it is worth trying to understand what makes these clusters of letters distinctive. Both groups of letters have some addressees in common: Simplicius and Apollinaris, likely to be cousins of Sidonius, are addressed letters 4, 6 and 7. Letters 5 and 10 are sent to Magnus Felix, a relative by marriage, and letter 14 to Polemius, Felix's brother-in-law. All of them, at different times in the collection, are said to be ignoring Sidonius, and he had likely offended them to the point they had been refusing to answer his letters for years.¹²³ Having all of these addressees correctly put in Book 4 is suggestive of the similarity of language and themes when it comes to this circle of relatives and close friends of Sidonius.

In what follows, I will discuss briefly Books 5, 6 and 7, partially because I already made some preliminary observations, but also because these are less problematic than the rest of the collection.

BOOK 5

In addition to the preliminary observations made regarding the confusion matrix, note in particular that *Ep.* 5.4 is assigned to Book 4. This is a letter to Simplicius, therefore it is not surprising given that there are letters in Book 4 addressed to this man. In total, the machine assigns four letters of Book 5 to each previous book, a thing that makes evident how much in terms of themes Book 5 has in common with the first half of the collection.

¹²² Becht-Jördens 2017, Leatherbury 2017 and Amherdt 2001, 238–249.

¹²³ Marolla 2023, 98–100.

Book 5
 potenter: 38.0
 uos: 31.8
 papa: -31.5
 musa: 31.4
 quod: 30.4
 memor: -30.4
 indipio: 30.1
 opera: 29.7
 dignor: -28.8
 amo: 27.2
 fallo: 26.8
 dominus: -26.7
 uictoria: 26.1
 propior: 26.0
 aequae: 25.7

Figure 9: List of significant lemmas for Book 5, © Peter Heslin 2023.

What is more, note, in Heslin's wordlist (Figure 9), the negative score the words *papa* and *dominus* have, in line with previous books and differently from the following books. Such data is coherent with the nature of Book 5 and with its focus on non-episcopal matters. The word with the highest positive score is *potenter*, but it is not, in itself, a high score (38.0). The adverb only occurs twice in the collection, once in *Ep.* 5.21 and once in Book 9 (*Ep.* 9.9).¹²⁴ In this case, although the word has a positive score, the letter in which it is attested is wrongly assigned to a different book: *Ep.* 5.21 is wrongly placed in Book 3.

BOOK 6

If one compares Heslin's word lists, only starting from Book 6 does the noun *papa* have a positive score; comprehensibly so, since it is the common way of addressing a bishop and, as stated above, letters in this book are exclusively addressed to bishops. The only letters in Book 6 not guessed correctly by the computer are *Epp.* 6.1, 6.3 and 6.12 assigned to Book 7, and *Ep.* 6.9 assigned to Book 9. The misplacement of the latter is in particular coherent with other similar cases, since Sidonius comments on the addressee's writing he received.

BOOK 7

¹²⁴ While *Ep.* 9.9 is correctly assigned to Book 9.

As I argued in the introductory section, there is a high number of letters in Book 7 wrongly assigned to Book 4. It is worth trying to figure out what makes these five letters in Book 7 similar to Book 4.

```

Book 7, item 1: 7
Book 7, item 2: 9
Book 7, item 3: 9
Book 7, item 4: 6
Book 7, item 5: 7
Book 7, item 6: 7
Book 7, item 7: 4
Book 7, item 8: 7
Book 7, item 9: 7
Book 7, item 10: 7
Book 7, item 11: 6
Book 7, item 12: 3
Book 7, item 13: 4
Book 7, item 14: 8
Book 7, item 15: 4
Book 7, item 16: 4
Book 7, item 17: 4
Book 7, item 18: 8

```

Figure 10: Predictions for Book 7, © Peter Heslin 2023.

Both *Epp.* 7.7 and 7.13, are characterised by detailed descriptions, the former of times of hostility, the latter a flattering portrait of the priest Himerius, and thorough descriptions are indeed a characteristic feature of Book 4. Letters 7.15, 7.16 and 7.17, also wrongly assigned to Book 4, are very different, but *Ep.* 7.17 certainly stands out, being a funerary epitaph for the monk Abraham. Notably, Book 4 contains Mamertus Claudianus' epitaph which represents the pinnacle of Sidonius' writing to honour the memory of friends. Prompted by the error of the machine and by the affinities detected, one could, for instance, compare the two epitaphs and look for similarities.

BOOK 8

Is Book 8 not distinctive in any way? If one looks at the data it would appear to be so: seven letters out of a total of sixteen were wrongly assigned to Book 9 (Figure 11).

	Book 8, item 6:	9
	Book 8, item 7:	8
	Book 8, item 8:	5
	Book 8, item 9:	9
	Book 8, item 10:	9
	Book 8, item 11:	9
	Book 8, item 12:	2
	Book 8, item 13:	9
	Book 8, item 14:	7
	Book 8, item 15:	7
	Book 8, item 16:	9
Book 8, item 1:	9	
Book 8, item 2:	5	
Book 8, item 3:	1	
Book 8, item 4:	8	
Book 8, item 5:	5	

Figure 11: Predictions for Book 8, © Peter Heslin 2023.

Since, at the beginning of Book 8, Sidonius says he has “emptied his book-cases” at the request of the addressee Petronius, one would probably expect the letters to show a variety of themes.¹²⁵ On the contrary, Book 8 is one of the more themed of the collection and is distinctively focused on two epistolary genres, which at times intertwine: metaliterary reflection either on the works of Sidonius’ friends or on his works, and praise of the addressee or of a shared friend. The insistent literary theme is a consequence of the Visigothic rule, a constant presence in the Book, which is arguably one of the darkest in the collection.¹²⁶ In *Ep.* 8.2 Sidonius says that knowledge of literature will be the only indicator of nobility under Visigothic rule and it seems the book is true to this assertion: *Ep.* 8.1 concerns the choice to gather material for Book 8; in *Ep.* 8.2 Sidonius praises the addressee Johannes as a defender and promoter of culture, *Ep.* 8.3 concerns Sidonius’ translation/transcription of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana (on which more below, see *Ep.* 5.15), in *Ep.* 8.4 Consentius is praised for his poetic production, *Ep.* 8.9 contains Sidonius’ unpublished verses and, in *Ep.* 8.15, Sidonius refuses to write a history of the war with Attila and siege of Orleans: he starts writing it but then decides against completing the task.¹²⁷ Lastly, *Ep.* 8.16 concerns the publication of Book 8 which Sidonius is entrusting to Constantius.¹²⁸ No wonder, since the

¹²⁵ *Ep.* 8.1 *etiam scrinia Aruerna petis euentilari*.

¹²⁶ See the seminal works by Overwien 2009, 96 and Gibson 2020, 378.

¹²⁷ The letter is assigned to Book 7.

¹²⁸ Almost all the other letters in the Book, (4-11, 13 and 14) concern the praise of an addressee or shared friend.

computer consistently relates metaliterary themes to Book 9, that all these letters, and in particular the first and last letters of Book 8, are assigned to Book 9.

BOOK 9

Book 9 is certainly distinctive since the last four letters contain verses Sidonius publishes by enclosing them in the *Letters*. Therefore, if we look at the list of lemmata for Book 9 (Figure 12), it is not surprising that *scribo* comes out with the highest positive score (56.9). *Scribo* also appears exclusively in the list for Book 4 but with a much lower score (35.6). The majority of the wrongly predicted letters of Book 9, incidentally, are also assigned to Book 4.

Book 9	Book 9, item 1:	5
scribo: 56.9	Book 9, item 2:	9
dominus: 49.8	Book 9, item 3:	9
papus: 48.7	Book 9, item 4:	9
multus: 48.3	Book 9, item 5:	6
iungo: 48.0	Book 9, item 6:	4
forte: 44.4	Book 9, item 7:	9
opus: 40.3	Book 9, item 8:	6
papa: 39.5	Book 9, item 9:	9
quippe: 38.9	Book 9, item 10:	9
dignor: 38.8	Book 9, item 11:	4
metrum: 37.5	Book 9, item 12:	4
pes: 36.9	Book 9, item 13:	9
queo: 36.3	Book 9, item 14:	4
littera: 36.3	Book 9, item 15:	9
difficilis: 36.2	Book 9, item 16:	9
praesens: 36.1		
cunctus: 35.4		
quaero: 34.0		
incipio: 33.2		

Figure 12: List of significant lemmas and predictions for Book 9 © Peter Heslin 2023.

Once more, it seems the algorithm spots a theme by wrongly assigning *Ep.* 9.12 to Book 4. This may be because it contains a *recusatio* of writing new poems and, instead, Sidonius chooses to send poems he had already written but never published before. Book 4 contains the *recusatio* par excellence in the collection: in *Ep.* 4.22 Sidonius turns down a request to write about contemporary history and one could, for instance, compare the two letters on the grounds of thematical affinity.

The similarity spotted by the algorithm may also prompt scholars to search for comparisons one would not normally think of. For instance, *Ep.* 9.6 is also assigned to Book 4. *Ep.* 9.6 is a commendation for a man who had indulged a passion for a concubine and thus had wasted his inheritance; Sidonius intercedes for him with a fellow bishop. The same conciliatory tone is found in *Ep.* 4.23, when Sidonius, already a bishop at the time of writing, asks a father to forgive his son's misconduct. This could, for instance, encourage one to look into all the letters in the collection which share a similar theme: intercession not on legal matters but on family or spiritual reconciliation.¹²⁹

I will limit myself to drawing tentative conclusions. The algorithm works on lemmas, therefore it does not take into account synonyms and when it comes to an author like Sidonius that can be a limitation. This author is wont to resort to circumlocutory expressions and rare words with the aim of surprising the reader and if that is a hindrance for scholars who struggle to understand the meaning of many passages, let alone for the machine, especially when it comes to placing a letter in a book because of lexical similarity.¹³⁰ As we have seen, the first books of Sidonius' collection and Book 8 have their own distinctive features despite what the data suggests. At times, lemmata would be decisive in assigning a letter to a specific book because they only occur in one letter but the computer is not able to make the connection, as is the case for Paeonius and *Ep.* 1.11. And yet, lemmatic research *can* be useful in identifying themes within a book as is the case for the cluster of letters to a group of addressees in Book 4; and also the high number of commendation letters rightly put in Book 6. It is also useful for spotting recurring themes throughout the collection, as is the case for the letters wrongly assigned to Books 5 or 9. It is up to us to make sense of the guesses and to see patterns that

¹²⁹ Both letters appear to be modelled on Plin. *Ep.* 9.21.

¹³⁰ Compare, by way of example, the abstruse first sentence opening Sidonius' collection (*Ep.* 1.1.1) with the plain and limpid beginning of Pliny's own *Ep.* 1.1.1.

may only be hinted by the lexical similarity detected by the machine and which, at times, may lead to new patterns and to surprisingly innovative results.

SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON BOOK 5

As an aristocrat, an office-holder, a poet and later bishop of Clermont in the period when Roman government was replaced by kingdoms under the Romans' former 'barbarian' allies, Sidonius (c. 430 – 479 or after) gives us vivid eyewitness testimony to both high politics and ordinary life. In Michael Kulikowski's words, 'Sidonius was born into a world that had ceased to exist at the time of his death'.¹³¹ His artful letters are often the only source for the events described, and Book 5 provides readers with crucial insight on the transition to post-imperial Gaul. It testifies to the shift in relations between the (former) centre and peripheries, and to how the old categories are not applicable to the new local powers. Burgundians and Visigoths are the creators of a new system, which Sidonius finds hard to conceptualise, and is therefore even harder for scholars to conceptualise. The events in Sidonius' life in relation to an ever-evolving political and social milieu, and to the turmoil of the last days of Roman rule in Gaul, are thoroughly analysed and contextualised in the comprehensive *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*. In light of the depth and breadth of information on Sidonius, his family and his time provided by the *Companion*,¹³² it seems superfluous to linger on details concerning his life in this work. Therefore, this section will provide the reader with some essential biographical coordinates, useful for navigating the events mentioned in Book 5.

First, a necessary caveat: the information we have on Sidonius is purely autobiographical, as has been repeatedly pointed out, by Harries, Hanaghan, and van Waarden among others.¹³³ The partiality and fragmentary nature of the information Sidonius carefully chooses to enclose in his collection is an obstacle that cannot be overcome, and one has to acknowledge the limitedness of having

¹³¹ Kulikowski 2020, 197. For the complexity of these years see also Delaplace 2015; Mratschek 2020, 214–36.

¹³² Kelly and van Waarden eds. 2020.

¹³³ Harries 1994, 1; Hanaghan 2019, 18–20; van Waarden 2020a, 13.

Sidonius as the sole witness of most of the autobiographical events he mentions in his artful letter collection and specifically in Book 5.¹³⁴ Books 1–7 are believed to have been edited by Sidonius for publication in 477, soon after his return from exile, and it is impossible to state to what extent letters were modified, edulcorated or even created for the sake of publication.¹³⁵

Biographical coordinates

Although a broad chronological progression can be detected in the first three books, Sidonius' letters are not arranged in chronological order, in accordance with epistolographical trends and with Pliny's programmatic assertion in his *Ep.* 1.1.1 *collegi non servato temporis ordine*. As the commentary on *Ep.* 5.13 further explains, this general rule does not apply to major events in the author's life (and the same happened in Pliny). In what follows, the most relevant events in Sidonius' life in relation to the letters of the book are listed.

429–32 Sidonius was born in Lyon on 5 November, though in which year is uncertain.

452–5 Sidonius married Papianilla, daughter of Eparchius Avitus. *Ep.* 5.16 is addressed to Papianilla (it is the only letter to a woman in the collection) but it provides readers with scant information concerning her as it is entirely focused on her brother (see below).

455 Sidonius' father-in-law Eparchius Avitus became emperor with the support of the Visigothic king Theoderic II, praised for his Romanness and

¹³⁴ As is argued by Gibson and Morello 2012, 13, although letter collections cannot be equated with autobiography, 'clearly they possess autobiographical potential', which should be scrutinised.

¹³⁵ For the date of publication see e.g. Harries 1994, 8; van Waarden 2020a, 26; for the impossibility of determining with any certainty the extent of letter adaptation or even creation for the collection see Kelly 2020, 181–5.

as a model of *ciuilitas*.¹³⁶ Theoderic has been suggested as a likely candidate for the identification of the hunting *rex* of Secundinus' panegyrics mentioned in *Ep.* 5.8.

456 Sidonius recited the Panegyric for the consulship of Avitus in Rome (*Carm.* 7). Avitus, however, was defeated by Ricimer and is believed either to have been killed or to have been forced into a bishopric and to have died soon after.

458 Sidonius recited the Panegyric of Majorian (*Carm.* 5).

461 Majorian was murdered. Around this time Sidonius was baptised by Faustus of Riez, who is commonly believed to have been the author of the anonymous letter *Quaeris me*, refuted by Mamertus Claudianus in his *De statu animae*. For further context and for the dispute between the two see *Ep.* 5.2.

466–7 Euric murdered his brother Theoderic II and thus became king of the Visigoths. Sidonius presents him on various occasions as the embodiment of otherness and the negation of the good qualities of the former monarch. In 467, at the head of a Gallic delegation, Sidonius informed emperor Anthemius of Euric's predatory attitude.

468 A prosperous year for Sidonius: he recited the Panegyric of Anthemius (*Carm.* 2) and was named *patricius* and *praefectus urbi*.

468–9 The 'Arvandus affair' took place. Sidonius informed Arvandus, the twice *praefectus praetorio Galliarum* (464–8), of the accusations that a Gallic delegation comprising the author's relatives and friends was bringing

¹³⁶ On Theoderic II see Gualandri 2000, 107–18; Fascione 2019, 53–62.

against him, aiming at his impeachment. Arvandus, who was accused of collusion with the Visigoths, underestimated the seriousness of the charge and acted defiantly when questioned.¹³⁷ Sidonius, who at the time was *praefectus urbi* and therefore a judicial authority, did not attend the trial in Rome but neither did he explain his absence from the city. In 469, in the aftermath of the Arvandus affair, it seems likely Sidonius had been shunned by close friends and family members, as can be surmised from *Epp.* 5.3 and 5.4, in which the author complains of being ignored by his relatives.

469 Sidonius probably published Book 1 of the *Letters*.

469–70 Sidonius' election as bishop of Clermont-Ferrand is dated to this time. Løyen believed the election could be dated as late as 471, but an earlier date (469–70) is likelier. The possibility that his accession to the bishopric should be seen as a removal from political life when he was in disfavour for his implicit support of Arvandus deserves serious consideration.¹³⁸

471–4 Every summer, Euric's Visigoths besieged Clermont. Sidonius led the resistance with the help of Burgundian troops and of his brother-in-law Ecdicius. As is argued by Delaplace, Sidonius started being closer to the Burgundians by virtue of their support against the Visigothic threat. *Ep.* 5.12 to Calminius is written during one of the seasonal sieges.

473 Sidonius introduced *Rogationes* in Clermont. In *Ep.* 5.14 Sidonius explains that bishop Mamertus (the elder brother of Mamertus Claudianus)

¹³⁷ In *Ep.* 1.7 Sidonius describes the trial and admits he had alerted his friend Arvandus; on Arvandus see *PLRE* II, 157–8; Mathisen 2020a, 82; Harries 1994, 159–66.

¹³⁸ See van Waarden 2020a, 23. For the political significance of the bishopric in the fifth century see Consolino 1979, 89–91.

is the *inuentor* of these public celebrations, which were being held at the time he was writing to the addressee, Aper.

474 Julius Nepos became emperor. In both *Epp.* 5.6.2 and 5.7.1, concerning rumours of his relative Apollinaris having encountered disfavour at the Burgundian court, he is vaguely mentioned as ‘the new *princeps*’. Presumably in 474 the emperor granted to Ecdicius, Sidonius’ brother-in-law, the rank of patrician, and this appointment is enthusiastically welcomed by Sidonius in *Ep.* 5.16 to Papianilla. It seems worthy of mention, however, that in this laudatory self-representation of his extended family, the figure of Ecdicius overshadows that of the emperor, whose only acknowledged merit seems to be that of having granted him the rank of patrician, which had been repeatedly promised by the previous emperor, Anthemius.

475 Julius Nepos surrendered Auvergne to Euric in exchange for Provence and Sidonius was exiled to Livia.

476–7 Sidonius was pardoned, helped by Leo of Narbonne, who had a key role at Euric’s court, being the writer of the king’s speeches and probably his legislator.

477 Sidonius is generally believed to have published Books 1–7 of the *Letters* in (or very close to) this year. It is the only certain *terminus ante quem* for those letters that lack dating elements and for which Loyen’s chronology proves to be unsustainable or arbitrary. At separate points after 477, Books 8 and 9 were published.

ca. 480s Death of Sidonius.

The choice of the book unit

Being the editor of his own letter collection, Sidonius *chose* to structure it in nine books. The obvious model was the senatorial tradition of epistolary writing, and mainly the letters of Pliny the Younger and Symmachus, of which Sidonius intended to be a continuator.¹³⁹ And yet, structuring a letter collection in books was not the norm by the time Sidonius was publishing his correspondence. Not being characteristic of the collections which were chronologically closer to him, the book division was an artistic choice.

In terms of materiality, the book as a compositional unit was no longer necessary in the age of the codex, as is apparent when thinking of the great letter collections of Jerome, Paulinus of Nola and Augustine. These epistolary corpora were not originally divided into books and, as Gibson put it, ‘there exists no late antique canonical edition or ordering of their correspondence’.¹⁴⁰ Jerome was keen to have his letters circulate early on, either independently or in thematical dossiers. There is evidence that he chose to have some of his pre-393 correspondence circulating as separate collections (mainly his *Epistularum ad diversos liber unus*; *Ad Marcellam Epistularum Liber* and his exchanges with Damasus), but a late antique or medieval archetype of his complete correspondence did not exist.¹⁴¹ Paulinus is believed not to have kept copies of his own letters, and, in light of the probable lack of a single archetype for the manuscripts, the collection and publication of his letters are likely to have been posthumous.¹⁴² As for Augustine, the manuscripts of his over 300 extant letters reflect traditions which diverge

¹³⁹ As Sidonius declares programmatically in *Ep.* 1.1.1, on which more below.

¹⁴⁰ Gibson 2012, 77. For Ambrose’s not being a model for Sidonius, see Gibson 2020, 389 n. 85.

¹⁴¹ For further details see Cain 2009, 13–19, 68–71, 223–7. One could also mention his *Ep.* 123 on monogamy as a post-393 example. Jerome says the letter (*libellus*) will circulate as a treatise by the name of his addressee, Geruchia (*Ep.* 123.17), and urges her to read similar letters (*Epp.* 54 and 79) he has already written on the same topic together with the famous letter 22, which he calls *liber*. See Marolla 2017, 127–8; Marolla 2024b.

¹⁴² Conybeare 2000, 13–15.

considerably from each other in terms of the order and number of letters transmitted.¹⁴³

Unlike the collections of his immediate predecessors, Sidonius's *Letters* are not the product of arbitrariness, nor of the editorial criteria of others. Careful selection and arrangement of letters in Books are the product of well-pondered authorial design, which should not be overlooked when reading single letters of the collection.

Themes and structure of Book 5

Book 5 can be considered as a middle book in many respects other than its position in the collection, and looking at the *Letters* as a whole allows one to perceive its transitional nature. Book 1 notably centres around Rome and Sidonius' political influence, and while in Book 2 'Gallic aristocracy at leisure' could be considered the dominant theme,¹⁴⁴ in Book 3 Sidonius 'the bishop' is actively engaged in defending Clermont from Euric's siege and the author traces a portrait of himself as a leader of heroic stature.¹⁴⁵ Book 4 shows a complexity and variety of themes closer to those of Book 5,¹⁴⁶ whereas Book 6 is known as 'the book of the bishopric' since its letters are exclusively addressed to bishops. Letters to fellow bishops are similarly found in blocks in Books 7 (*Epp.* 1–11), 8 (*Epp.* 13–15) and 9 (*Epp.* 2–11). Moreover, the second half of Book 7 comprises letters dedicated to

¹⁴³ In 1981, Divjak published a substantial group of unknown letters (1*–29*) he found in two manuscripts, Marseille 209 and *Par. Lat.* 16861. See Divjak 1981, ix–x; xiii–xiv.

¹⁴⁴ On *otium* in Book 2 see Hindermann 2022, viii–xii.

¹⁴⁵ Mirroring Pliny's assumption of the consulship in his Book 3 – see Gibson 2012, 69. On the themes of the first three books being 'career, leisure and crisis' see Hindermann 2022, xi.

¹⁴⁶ As argued by Gibson 2020, 378, the following broad topics can be identified in Book 4: 'politics and contemporary realities; literary matters; the courtesies and events of friendship, including praise of *amici*; and religious and ecclesiastical matters'.

spiritual themes,¹⁴⁷ while both Book 8 and the second half of Book 9 stand out for the *carmina* studiously incorporated in the epistles.¹⁴⁸

Compared with the Books 6 and 7,¹⁴⁹ Book 5 stands out for its peculiar features, since the author's representation of his literary persona touches upon different aspects of his life, and one can distinguish Sidonius the influential politician, the cultivated reader, the poet and the relative, while Sidonius the bishop mostly remains in the background. There are only passing mentions of the bishopric, such as the brief description of his feelings concerning his appointment in *Ep.* 5.3, or, in *Ep.* 5.14, the invitation to preside over Rogations in Clermont, which, however, appears to be an excuse to ask the addressee, Aper, to visit, rather than a request of a spiritual nature. Hence, the bishopric does not appear to play a crucial role in the narrative of events in Book 5 and, unlike the blocks mentioned above, no letter is sent to a fellow bishop.

Unlike the straightforward complaints in Books 7–9,¹⁵⁰ Sidonius does not explicitly mention the deal struck between the emperor Julius Nepos and the Visigothic king Euric in 475, nor his exile in the aftermath of that truce. And yet, this does not necessarily entail that contemporary events are not mentioned in Book 5: quite the opposite. Sidonius may not be as explicit about the political situation or his personal disappointment as he appears to be in later books, but a close reading reveals that convoluted expressions and careful language conceal unease, for instance in mentioning his new bishopric (*Ep.* 5.3); in defining the role the Burgundians have in Lyon (*Epp.* 5.6–5.7), and in the affected *reticentia* of *Ep.*

¹⁴⁷ Letters 7.12–18 are significantly called 'the ascetic letters' by van Waarden 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Sidonius claims to have written Book 8 at Petronius' request, by emptying his *scrinia* looking for additional letters to publish. For the dedication to Petronius also of Book 5, see the introduction to *Ep.* 5.1.

¹⁴⁹ Books 1–7 are believed by most scholars to have been published together in 477; for this date see Kelly 2020, 180.

¹⁵⁰ According to Gibson (2020, 378) Books 7–9 'include the darkest and hardest political material of the collection'.

5.12 to Calminius. In this letter, the besieged Sidonius states he cannot openly speak about the Visigoths and that the *necessitas silentii*, dictated by fear that letters may be intercepted, is no doubt familiar to the addressee.¹⁵¹

Entering the field of speculation, one may conjecture either that Sidonius was not ‘ready to speak his mind’ about contemporary events, as Gibson suggests,¹⁵² or that in Book 5 he did not envisage including material that was to be discussed in later books, but no firm conclusion can be reached given the heterogeneous nature of this book, which will be discussed in the following pages.

Autumnal references in the book

One narratological observation deserves to be made about the ‘mood’ of the book and its position in the narrative arc of the collection (this follows up on an acute suggestion by Joop van Waarden): both explicit discussion and passing mentions of time in Book 5 all concern autumn. The seasonal references start with the image of himself as a tree, scattering words in place of leaves in *Ep.* 5.3.3. This seasonal image conveys the mood of Sidonius the newly elected bishop and his feeling of unworthiness when he thinks of the pastoral guidance which is expected of him. This is the least explicit seasonal reference in the book; however, its detection may be useful to interpret the more explicit ones. *Ep.* 5.6.1 starts with the seasonal indication that the letter recounts the events that happened at the beginning of autumn (*cum aestas decessit autumnno*). Although fleeting, the mention (*Ep.* 5.13.1) of the fallen leaves that the diligent Evantius has had removed to facilitate the passage of Seronatus hints at the same seasonal frame; while in *Ep.* 5.17.4 the heat of the night is said to resemble that of summer days, despite it being early autumn (*etsi iam primo frigore tamen autumnalis Aurorae detepescebat*).

Hanaghan has highlighted the importance of the seasonal references in Sidonius’ letter collection. As he rightly points out, ‘a clear sense of the progression of time is conveyed to the reader through Book 2, from the early

¹⁵¹ *Ep.* 5.12.1.

¹⁵² Gibson 2013a, 210.

summer of *Ep.* 2.2 through to the late autumn of *Ep.* 2.14'.¹⁵³ The same sense of the passing of time is detected by Hanaghan in Book 3, where Constantius' winter journey to Clermont (*Ep.* 3.2) is followed by Ecdicius' brave defence of Clermont in the summer (*Ep.* 3.3).

And yet, the impression conveyed by Book 5, which comprises letters from very different times and places, is that events are set in a protracted autumn. There is no signalled seasonal change which may hint at time progression, not even in *Epp.* 5.6 and 5.7, which concern the same episode and in which it is clear that some time must have passed between their composition.

One may venture to suggest this is a way to mirror Sidonius' mood at the time he put the book together: his perception that the summer days of his younger adulthood are almost behind him and that he is entering the autumn of his life.¹⁵⁴ The idea that he is now approaching old age is expressed explicitly in *Ep.* 5.9.4, where the author tells the addressee that they are *in annis iam senectutis initia pulsantibus*. After all, Book 5 is the last book of the initial collection of Books 1–7 to comprise letters from both before and after his election to bishop: a time of political and social transition which can be compared to the passage from summer to autumn (as the image of the tree in *Ep.* 5.3 seems to suggest). As stated above, this can be considered as a transitional book, for many reasons other than its place in the collection, and the seasonal setting may be listed as further evidence of its unique nature. The seasonal progression would also be coherent with the context of the last letter of the collection, since *Ep.* 9.16 is set in winter and the symbolic

¹⁵³ See Hanaghan 2019, 73.

¹⁵⁴ On Sidonius' perception of ageing see van Waarden 2018, 191–6; Hanaghan 2019, 181–2. Note how, similarly, Cicero (*Cato* 19.71) makes old age equivalent to autumn. The parallelism age/seasons is traditionally attributed to Pythagoreanism, although it is usually winter that is linked to senescence: in *Ov. Met.* 15. 199–214 Pythagoras himself compares human ageing to the passing of the seasons (see in particular v. 212 *senilis hiems*); see also *Diog. Laert.* 8.10, and for further parallels see Powell 1988, 243. Winter stands for old age also in, for example, *AP* 5.258 and 10.100 (on which see Albani 1995, 317 and 325). One cannot fail to mention Horace's Ode 4.7 for reflection on the endless cycle of seasons compared to the inevitability of human mortality, on which see Thomas 2011, 174–84. On Horace being one of Sidonius' favourite poets, see Stoehr-Monjou 2013; Peltari 2016; Mratschek 2017.

function the wintry conditions described by Sidonius have in the last letters of Book 9 are well known to scholars.¹⁵⁵

Themes in Book 5

Letters in Book 5 have been classified according to standard ancient categorisations of epistolary writing. As Gibson suggests, ancient classifications can be applied to Sidonius' letters with interesting results, since he was versed in the same rhetorical studies from which these systems of classifications were created.¹⁵⁶ The themes of letters in this book can be fruitfully compared to the twenty-one types in Pseudo-Demetrius' Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί.¹⁵⁷ Although, as is argued later, a single letter could be ascribed to more than one category, it seems useful to employ classifications which were probably familiar to Sidonius.¹⁵⁸ The theorisation of these types outlined by Paolo Cugusi (1983) in his *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina* proved useful in conducting a comparative study

¹⁵⁵ See Hanaghan 2019, 180–4; Kelly 2020, 189.

¹⁵⁶ Gibson 2020, 383.

¹⁵⁷ The twenty-one types listed by the Pseudo-Demetrius *Praef.* are the following: (i) friendly, (ii) commendatory, (iii) blaming, (iv) reproachful, (v) consoling, (vi) censorious, (vii) admonishing, (viii) threatening, (ix) vituperative, (x) praising, (xi) advisory, (xii) supplicatory, (xiii) inquiring, (xiv) responding, (xv) allegorical, (xvi) accounting, (xvii) accusing, (xviii) apologetic, (xix) congratulatory, (xx) ironic, (xxi) thankful (translated by Malherbe 1988, 31). A later classification is that by Ps.-Libanius listed in Ἐπιστολικάιοι Χαρακτῆρες 4: (i) advice; (ii) blame; (iii) request; (iv) recommendation; (v) irony; (vi) thanks; (vii) friendship; (viii) entreaty; (ix) threat; (x) denial; (xi) command; (xii) repentance; (xiii) reproach; (xiv) sympathy; (xv) conciliation; (xvi) congratulation; (xvii) contempt; (xviii) counter-accusation; (xix) reply; (xx) provocation; (xxi) consolation; (xxii) insult; (xxiii) news; (xxiv) indignation; (xxv) representation; (xxvi) praise; (xxvii) instruction; (xxviii) refutation; (xxix) slander; (xxx) reproof; (xxxi) enquiry; (xxxii) encouragement; (xxxiii) consultation; (xxxiv) declaration; (xxxv) mockery; (xxxvi) jesting; (xxxvii) coded communication; (xxxviii) suggestion; (xxxix) grief; (xl) love; (xli) mixed type. For this passage see Trapp 2003, 191 and 323–6. For these two manuals of letter writing see the edition by Malosse 2004. A useful anthology of ancient epistolary theorists is also in Malherbe 1988, 30–41; a comparative study is in Fögen 2018, 49–55.

¹⁵⁸ Fernández López 1994 structured her study on the letters of Sidonius by dividing them according to their function: metalinguistic, phatic, expressive, impressive, and declarative/poetic (with twenty-five subdivisions). However, as argued by van Waarden 2010, this classification 'is all-encompassing to the detriment of clarity'; Gibson 2020, 384 is of the same opinion.

between Sidonius and his predecessors, mainly his declared models in *Ep.* 1.1.1, Pliny the Younger and Symmachus. When approaching the commentary on Book 5, it seemed sensible to take this programmatic assertion into account, to try to understand whether and in what way the Plinian and Symmachan imprint is detectable in the book.¹⁵⁹

Like Pliny, and unlike Symmachus – whose letters are notably succinct – Sidonius includes within Book 5 short salutations, longer letters and even particularly long letters (such as *Epp.* 5.7 and 5.17). To this diversity in length corresponds a variety of themes and addressees, like in Pliny,¹⁶⁰ while Symmachus’ Books 1–7 are organised by addressee.¹⁶¹

Table 1: Letters in Book 5

Letter	Theme	Addressee
5.1	Commendation	Petronius
5.2	Direct request/literary matters	Nymphidius
5.3	Epistolary silence/valetudinarian	Apollinaris (relative)
5.4	Epistolary silence	Simplicius (relative)
5.5	<i>Epistula symbuleutica</i>	Syagrius
5.6	<i>Epistula symbuleutica</i>	Apollinaris (relative)
5.7	Vituperative against informers	Thaumastus (relative)
5.8	Literary matters/epistolary silence	Secundinus
5.9	Declaration of friendship (and family history)	Aquilinus
5.10	Literary matters	Sapaudus

¹⁵⁹ The presence of the Plinian model in Sidonius’ epistolary collection has been discussed at length by Roy Gibson – e.g. Gibson 2011; Gibson 2013a; Gibson 2013b.

¹⁶⁰ See Gibson 2020, 378.

¹⁶¹ For this criterion of arrangement of Symmachus’ letters, for the diversity of Symm. Books VIII–X, and for what this implies concerning a later publication, see Kelly 2013, 264–7; Kelly 2015, 199–201.

5.11	Declaration of friendship	Potentinus
5.12	Epistolary silence (his own)	Calminius
5.13	Vituperative	Pannychius
5.14	Invitation	Aper
5.15	Commendation	Ruricius
5.16	Informative	Papianilla (his wife)
5.17	<i>Lettera d'arte</i>	Eriphius
5.18	Declaration of friendship	Attalus
5.19	Legal issue	Pudens
5.20	<i>Epistula symbuleutica</i>	Pastor
5.21	Direct request	Sacerdos and Iustinus

The following categorisation shows how varied the themes of Book 5 are. Most of Sidonius' letters can be ascribed to more than one genre.¹⁶²

Commendation (*Epp.* 5.1; 5.15)

The collection is opened under the sign of Symmachus with a *commendaticia* (unusual at the beginning of a book). *Epp.* 5.1 and 5.15 are close to Symmachus' commendation letters in terms of length, style and status of the *commendatus*, being considerably different from Pliny's detached commendations for imperial high offices.

Declaration of friendship (*Epp.* 5.9; 5.11; 5.18)

Praise of the addressee, the intention of strengthening ties of friendship and the possibility that those ties may grant future favours are all elements that can be gathered from these letters, which do not give information to the

¹⁶² As argued by Gibson 2020, 378 the same difficulty applies to all the collection: single letters could be placed in more than one thematic grouping. Pliny, in contrast, more often than not tried to confine himself to a single theme in each letter.

addressees but can be considered as a way to reconnect and re-establish Sidonius' network of contacts. Incidentally, these letters provide the reader with a comprehensive view of the extent of Sidonius' influence, or, rather, of his intended self-presentation as an influential aristocrat. Declarations of friendship can often be read in Symmachus' collection.

Direct request (*Epp.* 5.2; 5.21)

Although *Ep.* 5.2 can also be ascribed to the genre of literary matters, this letter (like *Ep.* 5.21) ends on a pragmatic note. Sidonius demands the return of his copy of Mamertus Claudianus' *De statu animae*, while in *Ep.* 5.21 he brazenly claims for himself the *carmina* of Vincentius, being his 'successor by profession', as the addressees are by birth.

Epistolary silence (of others in *Epp.* 5.3; 5.4; 5.8; his own in 5.12)

Much has been said in the commentary on *Epp.* 1–10 on epistolary silence and in particular on the pervasive presence – both thematic and linguistic – of Symmachus as model (see Marolla 2023, 94–7). Complaining about being ignored by the addressee or asking for forgiveness for one's own failure to write were standard forms of interaction.

Informative (*Ep.* 5.16)

For obvious reasons informative letters are the most common type of private letter, as argued by Cugusi.¹⁶³ And yet, in Book 5, the informative content is often subsidiary to other defining elements, with the exception of *Ep.* 5.16. This letter, addressed to his wife, Papianilla, is also the only letter addressed to a woman in Sidonius' letter collection, and yet it does not concern her directly as much as her brother, Ecdicius. Including this informative letter in the collection may have the purpose of highlighting the news that his brother-in-law had received patrician dignity.

¹⁶³ Cugusi 1983, 106.

Invitation (*Ep.* 5.14)

Letters of invitations are very common in letter writing. In *Ep.* 5.14 Sidonius invites Aper to attend *Rogations* in Clermont, though he does not spare his friend some wry comments on his being at leisure.

Legal (*Ep.* 5.19)

Though in some letters there are references to justice (*Ep.* 5.7) – or to minor legal issues like inheritance in *Ep.* 5.21 – *Ep.* 5.19 is the only letter of the book entirely dedicated to a crime and distinguishes itself as a legal letter. The son of Pudens' wet-nurse had seduced the daughter of Sidonius' wet-nurse, hence the author discusses reparations.

Lettera d'arte (*Ep.* 5.17)

Cugusi's definition of *lettera d'arte* as a text aimed at *delectare* rather than *docere* and which avails itself of numerous rhetorical devices seems apt to describe this letter.¹⁶⁴ *Ep.* 5.17 shows unity of content and the aim of informing the reader is overshadowed by the entertaining features of the writing. It is a type of letter favoured by Pliny the Younger.

Literary matters (*Epp.* 5.2; 5.8; 5.10)

As the introduction to *Ep.* 5.2 explains at length, letters on literary matters had been common in epistolary collections since the Late Republic. Both Pliny and Symmachus are wont to praise literary works of friends in their letter collections. While in Sidon. *Ep.* 5.2 the object of praise is not the addressee but Mamertus Claudianus, in *Epp.* 5.8 and 5.10 it is the addressee, Secundinus and Sapaudus respectively, who is praised for his literary prowess.

¹⁶⁴ Cugusi 1983, 127.

***Symbuleuticae* (Epp. 5.5; 5.6; 5.20)**

Sidonius' *symbuleuticae* are very different from those of Pliny the Younger:¹⁶⁵ the latter usually wrote advisory letters to friends who were about to assume an imperial office, while Sidonius' unsolicited advice usually concerns personal matters. The author admonishes Syagrius to stop speaking Burgundian in *Ep.* 5.5, he exhorts his relative Apollinaris to inform him about his troubled situation (so that Sidonius may be of service) in *Ep.* 5.6, and in *Ep.* 5.20 he calls upon Pastor not to miss another city council meeting, since it is clear he is avoiding his peers in order not to receive another assignment as ambassador.

Valetudinarian (Ep. 5.3)

In addition to epistolatory silence, *Ep.* 5.3 is also ascribable to the genre of valetudinarian letters, given that Sidonius, unprompted, informs the addressee about his health. This is a type of letter often found in Symmachus' letter collection and, before him, in Fronto's.¹⁶⁶

Vituperative (Ep. 5.7; 5.13)

The informants of *Ep.* 5.7 and Seronatus of *Ep.* 5.13 are the object of personal attacks in letters addressed to others. *Epp.* 5.7 and 5.13 could also be ascribed to the broader category of *lettere d'arte* for the sophistication of language and for the undeniable intent to entertain. And yet, highly polemical content, masterful belittlement of enemies through rhetorical devices including absurd images, abusive language and uncommon expressions reminiscent of the ferocity of archaic comedy are the dominant features of these two letters.

¹⁶⁵ See the introduction to *Ep.* 5.5.

¹⁶⁶ Over eighty of the extant letters that Fronto exchanged with Marcus Aurelius revolve around the narrative of sickness and health, and notably Book 5 of Fronto's *Ad M. Caesarem* is dominated by the theme. See Freisenbruch 2007, 236 and *passim*.

BOOK 5, LETTERS 11–15
TEXT TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

LETTER 11

Content

Salutation and praise of the addressee, who is a model for the upbringing of Sidonius' son.

Addressee

Sidonius is the only source of information on Potentinus, an aristocratic landowner who presumably lived in Gaul.¹⁶⁷ According to Mathisen 2013, 245 this is the first of a cluster of letters sent to Clermont (5.11–16) while previous and following letters were sent to the Rhône region; note, however, that there is no indication in *Ep.* 5.11 about the location of Potentinus' household. From the letter, Loyen deduces that Apollinaris (Sidonius' son) was a guest at the addressee's estate and that this experience 'was meant to educate him by emulation of the master': as often happens, this assumption of Loyen's is without foundation. The text mentions Potentinus' way of living as exemplary for both Apollinaris and for Sidonius as a father, but it never refers to young Apollinaris being at Potentinus' home.¹⁶⁸ Sidonius' praise rather revolves around the social milieu to which the addressee belongs, with standard mentions of his being an exemplary aristocrat.

As La Penna effectively puts it, the description of Potentinus is generic and dull.¹⁶⁹ the letter lacks any kind of personal information to the point that one wonders if the two were only acquaintances and this was an owed salutation. The choice of an exemplary aristocrat as his friend also reflects positively on Sidonius in the way it tends to do for Symmachus; the underlying assumption is, borrowing Cicero's words, that friendship can only exist between good men, *amicitiam nisi inter bonos esse non posse*.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Stroheker 1948, 206 n. 310; *PLRE* 2, 903; *PCBE* 4, 1510; Heinzelmann 1982, 672.

¹⁶⁸ Loyen II, 238 'un grand seigneur chez qui le fils de Sidoine, Apollinaris, fait un séjour destiné à le former par l'exemple du maître (§3)'.

¹⁶⁹ La Penna 1995, 29 'i ritratti sono elogi, nell'insieme generici e scialbi. Cito, anche per dare un esempio del cumulo stilistico di Sidonio, il ritratto di Potentino'.

¹⁷⁰ Cic. *Amic.* 65; along the same lines are Symm. *Epp.* 2.82.2; 1.41.1; 5.4.

Genre

In Sidonius' letter collection, declarations of friendship, such as *Epp.* 2.11 and 5.9, and praises of addressees, like *Epp.* 5.18, 6.12 and 8.2, often appear to be an excuse to reconnect with a friend or a relative.¹⁷¹ Their presence in the letter collection is indicative of his *modus operandi* when it comes to weaving his network of contacts and to his social self-presentation within the collection.

Ep. 5.11 is both a declaration of friendship and an expression of praise for the addressee, two genres which occasionally intertwine in Sidonius' letter collection, as is the case of *Epp.* 4.1, 8.5 and 8.14. A comparison with these letters may prove useful in understanding the structure and possibly the meaning of *Ep.* 5.11. The declaration of the bond of kinship or friendship, for instance, stands at the beginning of the pieces: *Ep.* 4.1.1 opens with the mention of Sidonius' affection for Probus being purer and stronger than most because they are cousins and, similarly, in *Ep.* 8.5.1 Fortunalis is called 'pillar of friendship' (*amicitiae columen*); Sidonius thus declares his affection for him, while he also makes an interesting and somewhat immodest observation on enclosing this letter in the collection in order to grant his addressee fame and good repute among the future generations of readers.¹⁷² What follows is the praise of the friends for their merits, such as the literary prowess of Probus (*Ep.* 4.1.2) and the physical and moral superiority of Fortunalis.¹⁷³

And yet, if compared to *Epp.* 4.1 and 8.5, neither the declaration of friendship nor the praise of Potentinus in *Ep.* 5.11 seems particularly heartfelt. While it is apparent that Sidonius knows Probus and Fortunalis and is close to

¹⁷¹ On the broader category of declarations of friendship see Marolla 2023. Note that letters of praise are listed at n.10 (ἐπαινετικός) of Pseudo-Demetrius' Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί *Praefatio*.

¹⁷² *Ep.* 8.5.1–2 *ibis et tu in paginas nostras... uiuet ilicet, uiuet in posterum nominis tui gloria ... sciat aetas uolo postuma nihil tua fide firmitus forma pulchrius*. On this, see Kelly 2020, 181–5 and Giannotti 2021, 82–5.

¹⁷³ Praised, with overabundance of superlatives, for his *fides*, handsomeness, judgment, patience, counsel, company, and conversation.

them, the same cannot be said of Potentinus. A further comparison with *Ep.* 8.14 confirms this impression, given that, although Sidonius has never met the addressee Principius in person,¹⁷⁴ his declaration of friendship and his praise for this bishop is more detailed and personal than in the case of Potentinus and Sidonius lingers on the description of his eager request for information on the addressee's family and on his desire to correspond more frequently with him.¹⁷⁵ The flamboyant style, the studied lexical choice and rhythm of *Ep.* 5.11,¹⁷⁶ as well as the lack of personal content, in contrast with the thematically akin *Epp.* 4.1, 8.5 and 8.14, suggest the text was intended as a display piece. It seems likely that it was included in the collection either at Potentinus' request or to show regard to the addressee's social position and evident wealth.

As Sidonius explicitly says in *Ep.* 8.5, it was customary to include addressees in the collection as an act of homage to them. Although the author was evidently more self-conscious after the publication of Books 1 to 7, the same awareness of providing public recognition and fame to his peers prompted letters which were enclosed or created for the publication of the first seven books: *Ep.* 5.11 can reasonably be counted as one such letter.¹⁷⁷

Models

It is difficult to find parallels for such unspecific praise in Pliny and Symmachus, Sidonius' declared models, and yet there are some elements worthy of reflection. As is detailed in the commentary, the first line of *Ep.* 5.11.1 *multum te amamus* is strongly reminiscent of the opening lines of Pliny of the Younger's *Epp.* 1.16; 4.12 and 4.15, although, in all three, the expression of affection does not directly

¹⁷⁴ *Ep.* 8.14.1 *etsi necdum uester uultus aspectus, tamen actus inspectus est.*

¹⁷⁵ See *Ep.* 8.14.2 and 8.

¹⁷⁶ On which more below.

¹⁷⁷ On letters existing 'on a continuum between real documents and compositions for the collection' see Kelly 2020, 181–5; 191, For *Epp.* 7.12 and 9.15 as likely to have been written for the publication of the collection see also van Waarden 2016, 53–4.

concern the addressee but a third party who is a shared friend.¹⁷⁸ For its structure Plin. *Ep.* 1.16, addressed to Erucius Clarus, could be a model for Sidonius' letter: Pliny first declares his friendship (*amabam Pompeium Saturninum*) and then praises the learned friend. And yet, if compared to the qualities listed by Pliny — i.e. Pompeius Saturninus' talent as a writer of oratory, history, and poetry — Potentinus' mastery of aristocratic duties and leisure is rather dull and uninteresting. The same can be said for Plin. *Ep.* 9.22.2, likely to be exemplary for style, since it is cluttered with superlatives,¹⁷⁹ but equally distant for content because it concerns the poetry of Passennus Paulus.

Amat ut qui uerissime, dolet ut qui impatientissime, laudat ut qui benignissime, ludit ut qui facetissime;

Plin. *Ep.* 9.22.2

‘He loves most truthfully, grieves most unwillingly, praises most generously and jests most wittily’.

As the commentary further explains, Sidonius' assertion that he made a decision to befriend Potentinus only after having assessed his worth (§ 1) is comparable to some passages of Syammachus, who, for instance, declares himself to have been the one who sought out Theodorus' friendship after hearing his peers praise him.

Bonorum frequens adstipulatio de sanctis moribus tuis in hoc me desiderium prouocauit, ut amicitias tuas impatienter exoptem.

Symm. *Ep.* 5.4.1

‘The frequent agreement of good men on the purity of your conduct produced in me this desire to long for your friendship’.

¹⁷⁸ For the occurrences in Cicero see commentary ad loc.

¹⁷⁹ As is § 2.

A similar statement is also in Symm. *Ep.* 9.68 *soleo amicitias optimorum primus expetere*, ‘I am accustomed to take the lead in seeking the friendship of the best people’.¹⁸⁰

The upbringing of Apollinaris

Sidonius’ son Apollinaris has already been mentioned in Book 5, in letter 9: a declaration of longstanding friendship between his family and that of the addressee Aquilinus. The letter, which ends with the wish that their sons Apollinaris and Rusticus would continue the friendly relations started by their namesake great-grandfathers (*Ep.* 5.9.4), appears to be an excuse to strengthen friendly ties for Apollinaris by introducing him to the addressee.¹⁸¹ In *Ep.* 5.11, the mention of his educating his son by following Potentinus’ example¹⁸² can also be interpreted as an excuse to mention his son and thus to strengthen Apollinaris’ social network, which might have been created at the time he put Book 5 together.¹⁸³ It would also be fitting, given that Sidonius follows Pliny’s *uarietas*, that two letters with a similar purpose were not consecutive but rather interspersed with a letter of different genre and topic.

Date

If it is not possible to date the letter *ad annum*, the mention of the upbringing of Apollinaris would lead one to date to late 460s-early 470s. Sidonius married Papianilla between 452 and 455,¹⁸⁴ while Apollinaris is believed to have been born

¹⁸⁰ On this custom of Symmachus see Roda 1981, 203.

¹⁸¹ On which see Marolla 2023.

¹⁸² See Condorelli 2015, 501 on Sidonius’ eagerness to educate his son in accordance with his *Weltanschauung*.

¹⁸³ Other mentions of Apollinaris in the collection cannot be ascribed to the same theme: *Ep.* 3.13 to Apollinaris is an excuse to write the portrait of a greedy parasite; in *Ep.* 4.12.1 father and son are pictured studying ancient Latin literature together; the cursory mention in *Ep.* 8.6.12 concerns Apollinaris’ hunting skills, while in *Ep.* 9.1.5 he is criticised for his lack of interest in reading.

¹⁸⁴ See van Waarden 2020a, 27.

in the 460s.¹⁸⁵ Loyen dates the letter between 467 and 470;¹⁸⁶ while *PCBE* 4, 1510 suggests a time-span between 460 and 469, the implied *terminus ante quem* being Sidonius' consecration as bishop.

¹⁸⁵ He died in 514, see Mathisen 2020a, 81. Apollinaris was born between 453 and 455 according to Loyen II, 189 n. 32; 256.

¹⁸⁶ Loyen II, 256.

Clausulation

Ep. 5.11 is heavily clausulated, which fits with the artistry and convoluted nature of the prose. Although there is a section of §2 where some endings do not represent regular Sidonian clausulae, note that the rhythm chosen in it is often the same (— — — — — x), which confers rhythmical coherence on the passage, see e.g. *qui sollertissime; qui exactissime; ut qui aequissime*. Note also the statistically high presence of the cretic iamb clausulae, which can be listed among Sidonius' favourite rhythms.¹⁸⁷

Key

ApC= Anapaest cretic — — — — — x

ChorC= choriamb cretic — — — — — x

ChorS = choriamb spondee — — — — — x

CI= cretic iamb — — — — — x

CS= cretic spondee — — — — — x

CT= cretic tribrach — — — — — x

DactC= dactyl cretic — — — — — x

CC= double cretic — — — — — x

P¹S= paeon I spondee — — — — — x

P⁴S= paeon IV spondee — — — — — x

¹⁸⁷ On the cretic iamb see Marolla 2023; on the rhythms Sidonius favours see van Waarden and Kelly 2020, 468–73. Exemplary for the detection of prose rhythm in Sidonius are also the tables on metrical and rhythmical patterns in Kelly 2021.

1. Multum te amamus; ... non est erroneus aut fortuitus affectus. Namque ut sodalis tibi deuinctior fierem, fierem iudicaui. Est enim consuetudinis meae, ut eligam ante, post diligam. «Quaenam», inquis, «in me tibi probanda placuere?» 2. Dicam libenter et breuiter, quorum unum fieri gratia, alterum charta conpellit. Veneror in actionibus tuis, quod multa bono cuique imitabilia geris. Colis ut qui sollertissime; aedificas ut qui dispositissime; uenaris ut qui efficacissime; pascis ut qui exactissime; iocaris ut qui facetissime; iudicas ut qui aequissime; suades ut qui sincerissime; commoueris ut qui tardissime; placaris ut qui celerrime; redamas ut qui fidelissime. 3. Haec omnia exempla ... Apollinaris si sequitur, gaudeo; certe ut sequatur, admoneo. In quo docendo instituendoque, modo sub ope Christi disposita succedant, ... de moribus tuis mutuaturum. Vale.	— — ∪ — x P⁴S CT Anapaest Ditrochee CI CC P¹S CT ChorC/ ApC CS CI Tribrach iamb — — — — ∪ x DactC DC — — — — ∪ x CC — — — — ∪ x — — — — ∪ x — — — — ∪ x CI CC ChorC/ApC CT ChorS P⁴S CS
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Table 1.

SIDONIUS POTENTINO SUO SALUTEM

1. Multum te amamus; et quidem huiusce dilectionis non est erroneus aut fortuitus affectus. Namque ut sodalis tibi deuinctior fierem iudicaui. Est enim consuetudinis meae, ut eligam ante, post diligam. ‘Quaenam’, inquis, ‘in me tibi probanda placuere?’

2. Dicam libenter et breuiter, quorum unum fieri gratia, alterum charta compellit. Veneror in actionibus tuis, quod multa bono cuique imitabilia geris. Colis ut qui sollertissime; aedificas ut qui dispositissime; uenaris ut qui efficacissime; pascis ut qui exactissime; iocaris ut qui facetissime; iudicas ut qui aequissime; suades ut qui sincerissime; commoueris ut qui tardissime; placaris ut qui celerrime; redamas ut qui fidelissime.

3. Haec omnia exempla uiuendi iam hinc ab annis puberibus meus Apollinaris si sequitur, gaudeo; certe ut sequatur, admoneo. In quo docendo instituendoque, modo sub ope Christi disposita succedant, plurimum laetor maximam me formulam uitae de moribus tuis mutuaturum. Vale.

Potentino *codd.* : Pontentino *F*

§ 1 deuinctior *codd.* : diuinctior *L* : deuintior *P*

quaenam *codd.* : et quaenam *T* : Lütjohann ‘i.e. ecquaenam *fort. recte*’
in me est *VatLat 1661*

§ 2 uenaris *aMPT* : ueneraris *L* : ueneris *M p.c. P p.c.*
aedifficacissime *P*

§ 3 puberibus *aLMP* : puerilibus *T*

SIDONIUS TO HIS DEAR POTENTINUS

1. We love you very much and this affection is indeed not wrong or fortuitous. For, truly, I made a decision that I would have become a more devoted companion to you. It is in fact my habit to choose first and to hold dear afterwards. “What were”, you ask, “the praiseworthy qualities in me that won your approval”? **2.** I shall answer this with pleasure and in a few words, the first of which gratitude demands should be done, the other, the paper. I revere among your actions the fact that you do many deeds that can be imitated by any good man; you cultivate most sagaciously, you build with the utmost order, you hunt most successfully, you put to pasture most scrupulously, you jest most wittily, you pass judgement most fairly, you advise most honestly, you enrage most slowly, you appease most swiftly, you love in return most loyally. **3.** Hence, I rejoice if from his adolescent years my Apollinaris follows all these paradigms of living. I certainly admonish him to follow you. In teaching and educating him, provided that plans go well with the help of Christ, I am very much delighted that I am going to borrow a life rule from your habits. Farewell.

Multum te amamus: this is the only time in the letter Sidonius uses the 1st person plural, possibly to show deference to the addressee at the beginning of the letter, given his social position (on the alternative use of *ego/nos* in the collection see, extensively, van Waarden 2020b, 418–40). Alternatively, Sidonius could refer here to his whole family, given the mention of his son Apollinaris in § 3. The syntagma has five occurrences in letters to Atticus 1.1.5; 1.3.2; 5.21.5; 7.2.7 and is not known to occur in other collections. Shackleton Bailey (1965, 287) believes the expression to be the same as *gratias ago*, and consistently translates it with ‘I am most grateful to you’ *et similia*. Note, however, that in *Att.* 1.1.5 it seems to be a plain declaration of fondness (not being followed by *quod* or *de...*), as in Sidonius, and that the translation of *Att.* 1.1.5 in Robert (2021, 28) is coherent with this interpretation. On professions of *amor* featuring regularly in aristocratic correspondence, often as an expression of ‘polite fiction’ see Hall (2009, 64–71); for a survey on Cicero’s assertions of love for the addressee see *ibid.* 206–7. See also Hellogouarc’h (1972, 144–5) for *amor* designating strong ties of friendship and political relations. Compare the similar opening lines of Plin. *Epp.* 1.16.1 *amabam Pompeium Saturninum*; 4.12.1 *amas Egnatium Marcellinum* and 4.15.1 *Asinium Rufum singulariter amo*; Sidon. *Epp.* 2.10.1 *amo in te quod litteras amas*; 9.13.1 *si non ... multum me amares*.

et quidem huiusce dilectionis non est erroneus aut fortuitus affectus: expounding on the previous declaration of affection, Sidonius emphasises that the bond of friendship between the addressee and him is not fortuitous; on the choice of one’s friends cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 2.6.2. The expression *affectus dilectionis* (a *genetivus identitatis*) is postclassical. Leaving aside occurrences in doctrinal works, note the high number of occurrences (more than a dozen) in Augustine, in particular in *Conf.* 9.30 where it indicates Monica’s affection for Augustine, in the heading of *Ep.* 2*, addressed to Firmus *sincerae dilectionis affectu*. Compare also the later occurrence in Ruricius of Limoges *Ep.* 2.56. *Dilectio* is only attested from

the end of the second century and Sidonius employs it mostly with the meaning of ‘love of friends’ in *Epp.* 3.2.3; 3.3.1; 5.3.1; 5.9.3; 7.6.2; 7.17.2; 9.11.8 (see *TLL* 5.1. 1167, 35–54 by Gudeman; Marolla 2023). The adjective *erroneus* is seldomly referred to abstract concepts, see *TLL* 5.2.814. 58–60 (by Hey).

Namque ut sodalis tibi deuinctior fierem, iudicaui: Sidonius claims as his own the decision to strengthen his friendship with Potentinus. On the confusion *deuinctior/diuinctior* (reading of *L*) in manuscript tradition see *TLL* 5.1.858.58 (by Graeber). Geisler 1887, 366 signals a similarity with Seneca *Ep.* 3.2 *post amicitiam credendum est, ante amicitiam iudicandum*, a warning to pass judgement on a friendship before creating a bond and trusting it. Symmachus claims he chooses his friends on the basis of their intellectual appeal in *Ep.* 9.2 *me iuuat studiosos sapientiae uiros in amicitiae possessionem uocare*; he is also proud to have been the first to start a friendship with his addressees in *Symm. Epp.* 5.4; 9.68, on which see introduction. Compare Sidonius *Ep.* 2.11.1 on distance preventing him and Rusticus from building on the established foundations (*fundamenta*) of their friendship and his assertion that he strove to establish the bond with the addressee Apollinaris in *Ep.* 5.3.4. For an overview of the numerous occurrences of **sodalis**, ‘close friend’, in Sidonius’ works, see Marolla 2023 (commentary on *Ep.* 5.7.1). For *sodalitas* as defining bonds of intellectual brotherhood, see commentary on *Ep.* 5.10.4 in Marolla 2023. The *iunctura deuinctior sodalis* is unusual, comparable only to John Cassian, *Conl.* 16.3, titled *de amicitia, (flagrantissima ... sodalitate deuincti)* and to Sidon. *Ep.* 4.6.1 where Faustinus is *mihi ueteris contubernii sodalitate deuinctum*. Compare also Sidon. *Ep.* 2.6 where Menstruanus deserves being listed among *personas caras nobis ... deuinctasque*. The comparative **deuinctior** is in itself rare but significantly has its first occurrence in Horace *Sat.* 1.5.42 when the poet meets with Plotius, Varius and Vergil and says there is not anyone dearer to him (*neque quis me sit deuinctior alter*). For Hor. *Sat.* 1.5 notoriously being a model for Sidonius (especially for his *Ep.* 1.5) see Gualandri 1979, 50–2; Eigler 1997 *passim*; Mazzoli 2005–2006, 174. The only

other known occurrence of the comparative is in emperor Theodosius' praise of Stilicho in Claud. *Gild.* 290.

Est enim consuetudinis meae: the expression is rare and has its first occurrence in Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 1.1; then, similar phrases are later attested in Aug. *In euang. Ioh.* 28.3 (*erat consuetudinis... scripturarum*) and in Egeria *Peregr.* 10.7; 15.4; 30.1; 32.1 regarding collective activities.

ut eligam ante, post diligam: Sidonius' affection is bestowed after an evaluation of the worth of the potential friend. This polyptoton is a favourite of Augustine, who employs it in more than 20 passages, e.g. *In Io. Ep. tr.* 10.3 (*elige tibi quid diligas; sequuntur te cetera*) while most occurrences concern the choice of 'loving God' as e.g. *Ep.* 155.13. There are no occurrences worthy of mention in other authors. Proximity of compounds from the same verb is a device typical of Sidonius' prose, compare e.g. his *Ep.* 4.3.6–7 (*suadet ... dissuadet ... persuadet; instruit ... destruit ... adstruit*); *Ep.* 5.4 *imputo ... deputo* and the compounds of *fero* in *Ep.* 5.7.1. See Wolff 2020, 397; 410; Marolla 2023.

'Quaenam', inquis, 'in me tibi probanda placuere?': Lütjohann points out that the reading in *T*, *et quaenam*, that is *ecquaenam*, is probably genuine. Should that be the case, the question would be 'is there any praiseworthy quality in me that won your approval?'; note that, similarly, in Sidon. *Ep.* 3.7.1 *ecquid* occurs in a direct question. On stemmatic grounds I chose not to place the reading in the text. Sidonius is wont to anticipate the addressee's hypothetical reactions and questions to his opening statements, as e.g. in *Ep.* 2.1.1 *duo nunc pariter mala sustinent Arverni tui*. "*quaenam?*" *inquis* 'your Arverni are now bearing two misfortunes at once. "Which ones?" you ask' and, similarly, in *Epp.* 3.8.1; 6.12.1; 9.9.6. This rhetorical device, which allows Sidonius to further expound his argument, is recurrent in both Latin poetry and prose. Compare it, e.g., to Cic. *Att.* IX. 2A and to Shackleton Bailey's (ed. 1968, 360) comment on the passage '*inquis* is normally used with imaginary sayings' rather than being a quotation from a letter.

Dicam libenter et breuiter: the two adverbs are not known to occur in the same context elsewhere.

quorum unum fieri gratia, alterum charta compellit: the iunctura *charta compellit* is not known to have other occurrences. In this passage *charta* indicates the writing material (see *TLL* 3.997.42–998.27 by Wulff) and the limits of the page which imposes conciseness. The same image is in *Ep.* 2.9.10, when Sidonius says he would have kept describing the delights of his sojourn ‘had the page not put an end to his wordiness’ (*nisi terminum nostrae loquacitati ... charta posuisset*). Compare Pliny ‘still having space’ (*charta adhuc superest*) to add information to his *Ep.* 3.14.6.

Veneror in actionibus tuis: the choice of the verb *ueneror* enhances the studied tone of the passage. Comparable shows of devotion to the addressees’ interests are in Plin. *Ep.* 3.15.2 *poeticen ipsam ueneror et te ualdissime diligo* — with regards to Silius Proculus’ poetic production— and *Ep.* 6.17.5 *omnes qui aliquid in studiis faciunt uenerari etiam mirarique soleo*, a declaration of his reverence for writers.

quod multa bono cuique imitabilia geris: the use of the neuter of the adjective in place of the noun (*pro substantiuo*) is only attested in Sidonius, as stated in *TLL* 7.1.430.8–9 s.v. *imitabilis* (by Printz). Among the occurrences of *imitabilis*, see in particular Plin. *Ep.* 7.20.4 *maxime imitabilis, maxime imitandus uidebaris*, when, as a young man, Pliny felt that it was Tacitus the one he ‘could and should imitate’.

Colis ... fidelissime: compare the series of four verbs followed by the superlative of the adverb with Plin. *Ep.* 9.22.2 (*amat ut qui uerissime... ludit ut qui facetissime*) on which cf. Geisler (1887, 366). Superlatives of the adverb are typical of Pliny’s prose and rarely occur in Symmachus. On this kind of enumeration (*determinatio*), peculiar of descriptions in Sidonius (e.g. Sidon. *Epp.* 2.1.2–3; 4.13.2; 5.7.2–4;

5.9.3), see Wolff 2020, 410. Note that the first three activities (agriculture, construction and hunt) are standard aristocratic tasks Namatius might busy himself with, according to Sidon. *Ep.* 8.6.10 (*uenaris, aedificas, rusticarisne?*). Namatius is also praised as ‘a follower of Vitruvius or Columella’, but is mocked for his inadequacy when it comes to hunting (*Ep.* 8.6.10–12).

Colis ut qui sollertissime: a previous occurrence of *colo* with this adverb is only in Ov. *Met.* 14.624 (*nulla... coluit sollertius hortos*) where none of the hamadryads is said tend to the gardens more zealously than Pomona did; on *sollertius* see Ciccarelli 2018, 57–8. Since its first occurrence in Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.98 *sollertissime* is rare (13 occurrences in total); note, however, that it is attested three times in Apul. *Apol.* (2; 49; 87) a work much appreciated by Sidonius, see Gualandri 2020, 299; 305; Wolff 2020, 400; Marolla 2023.

aedificas ut qui dispositissime: the frame of the fixed construction (verb + *ut* + *qui* + superlative of the adverb) leads Sidonius to unusual lexical choices. *Dispositissime* appears to be an hapax and even the superlative of the adjective only has occurrences later in Boeth. *Cons.* 4.1.6 and *Arithm.* 1.27; see TLL 5.1.1430 46–7 s.v. *disposite* (by Hey).

uenaris ut qui efficacissime: there is no reason to doubt that *uenaris* (*αMPT*) is the archetypal reading; on the contrary, *ueneraris* (reading of *L*) appears to have been influenced by the occurrence of *ueneror* in the previous lines; similarly, *ueneris* (reading of *MP* both *post correctionem*) would not fit the text. The sintagma *uenari* + *efficaciter* is not known to have previous occurrences. On hunting being a cliché of aristocratic leisure compare e.g. Plin. *Ep.* 2.8.1 *studes an piscaris an uenaris an simul omnia?*; Symm. *Ep.* 1.53; and Sidonius’ detailed description of the hunting habits of king Theoderic II (*Ep.* 1.2.5) and of his peers, e.g. in *Epp.* 4.4.1 and 4.9.2, on which see Amherdt 2001, 175–6; 258–9. The superlative of the adverb *efficaciter* is rare: after its first occurrence in Sen. *De Ira* 3.27.4 it has an uncommonly high number of occurrences exclusively in Pliny the

Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (more than 35) — often with regards to the effectiveness of medicaments — it then occurs in Plin. *Ep.* 2.13.11 and in Sidonius (also in *Ep.* 8.13.4).

pascis ut qui exactissime: this is the last of the practical activities connected to aristocratic life mentioned. While its superlative is not known to have previous occurrences, the adverb is rare but is mostly attested in Sidonius, e.g. *Epp.* 4.22.6; 7.9.2; 9.16.1. See *TLL* 5.2.1468, 16–27 (by Meyer) and van Waarden 2010, 421.

iocaris ut qui facetissime: the first element of a subsection on intellectual activities. Since its first occurrences in Cicero, the superlative of the adverb is very rare (7 occurrences in total, Sidonius excluded). Compare, in particular Cic. *de Orat.* 2.223, where it concerns Crassus' witty banter against Brutus, and Plin. *Ep.* 9.22.2 in praise of Passennus Paulus' literary works. For similar mentions of 'jesting' as a feature of aristocratic interactions see Plin. *Epp.* 2.18.2; 4.14.3 (concerning hendecasyllables); Symm. *Ep.* 1.14.5; Sidon. *Epp.* 2.12.3; 4.4.1; 4.12.2 on which Amherdt 2001, 175–6; 313.

iudicas ut qui aequissime: the superlative of the adverb is rare (see *TLL* 1.1046 s.v. *aequus* 10–21 (by Ausfeld) and has its first occurrence in Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.147, a work Sidonius is most familiar with (see Marolla 2023).

suades ut qui sincerissime: note that the superlative of the adverb is only found from the fourth century and mainly in Augustine (in 9 instances).

commoueris ut qui tardissime: the only previous occurrence of this *iunctura* is in Tac. *Dial.* 22.3 *tarde commouetur*, where Cicero is said to have been 'slow to rouse himself' in his early speeches. On this criticism being 'odd' see Mayer 2001, 161; on the contrary, in Sidonius the expression concerns the addressee's calm disposition and is listed as a positive quality.

placaris ut qui celerrime: composure in adversities is praised by Sidonius, who on the contrary often mentions barbarians as being prone to anger (*iracundi*), see e.g. Marolla 2023 on *Ep.* 5.6.2.

redamas ut qui fidelissime: *redamare* is a Ciceronian coinage (*Lael.* 49) which translates the Greek ἀντιφιλεῖν (see Combès ed. 1971, 32, n.3). The verb resurfaces in Apuleius (*Plat.* 2.13) and has various occurrences in later Latin: see in particular Symmachus being content to know he is loved in return by the addressee despite his silence in *Ep.* 3.2 *satis est mihi ... quod me credo redamari*. The only other occurrence of the verb in Sidonius is in *Ep.* 5.20.4 (see commentary ad loc.); cf. *TLL* 11.2. 470.67–471.11 s.v. *redamo* (by Reineke).

§ 3

Haec omnia exempla uiuendi: with his exemplary behaviour, Potentinus is considered to be a model for the young Apollinaris; see introduction for Loyen's speculation on their relationship. The first known occurrence of this expression is in Seneca rhetor *Suas.* 6.2 where it concerns Cato, *solus maximum uiuendi moriendique exemplum*. It is later attested in Christian writings, where it mainly refers to examples of spiritual life as e.g. in Cypr. *Testim.* 3.39 (*CSEL* 3.1); Ambr. *Virg.* 2.2.6; and in more than ten *loci* in Augustine (e.g. *Doctr. Christ.* 1.11; *Serm.* 81.4).

iam hinc ab annis puberibus: a refined word choice. *Puberibus* is stemmatically preferable (being the reading of *αLMP*) and it is also a *lectio difficilior* if compared to *puerilibus* (reading of *T*). After its first occurrence in Lact. *Inst.* 3.25.12 *intra puberes annos* (referred to women) the iunctura only occurs in fifth-century authors: while in Sedulius *Op. Pasch.* 3.9 it concerns a young girl (as in Lactantius), in Merobaudes *Carm.* 4.42 (*uix puberibus ... sub annis*) the expression is referred to Aëtius being scarcely an adult when held hostage by Alaric (on this passage see Clover 1971, 29—30).

meus Apollinaris: Sidonius' son is also called *noster Apollinaris* in *Ep.* 8.6.12 to Namatius; while in *Ep.* 9.1.5 he is mentioned as *Apollinaris tuus*, when Sidonius laments him being *neglegentissimus*, 'extremely indifferent' to reading.

si sequitur, gaudeo; certe ut sequatur, admoneo: compare the paternal advice in *Ep.* 3.13.11, where Sidonius urges his son to act *ex uoto meo*, as he desires, by avoiding getting mixed up with bad companies; see also the unflattering comments on his son's scarce interest in literature in *Ep.* 9.1.5 (mentioned above).

In quo docendo instituendoque: the two gerunds in hendiadys (but also the two verbs together) only have occurrences in Cicero and in Rufinus. See the description of Apollonius Molon in Cic. *Brut.* 91.316 *Molonem ... instituendo docendoque prudentissimum* and also Cic. *Orat.* 143 on the scarce opportunities that orators had *instituendi aut docendi* 'for teaching or training'. In Rufinus' works and translations the expression concerns spiritual indoctrination, either good — e.g. Rufin. *Greg. Naz. Orat. praef.* on Gregory being sent *ad instituendam uel docendam ecclesiam* — or bad e.g. Rufin. *Orig. in Ios.* 8.7 on evil spirits teaching and training *ad peccatum*.

modo sub ope Christi disposita succedant: similar expressions are attested since Book 1 of Sidonius' *Letters*, which is set during his prefecture of Rome and thus contains his earlier correspondence. Therefore, *sub ope Christi* is not to be considered as internal evidence useful for dating the letter to the beginning of the bishopric as Loyen does (II, 256). On this see Marolla 2023, 82.

plurimum laetor the rare *iunctura*, which only occurs once in Julian of Aeclanum (*Tractatus Prophetarum Osee, Iohel et Amos* 1.2.11 *posuit nomina feriarum, in quibus plurimum laetabatur*), fits with the overall factitious style of the piece.

maximam me formulam uitae de moribus tuis mutuaturum: Potentinus' way of life is an example for Sidonius himself. Note, once more, the refined word choice: *formula uitae* has only one previous occurrence in Auson. *Parent.* 4.19 (Green) where the 'pattern of (Ausonius') life' was known to his grandfather, who practiced astrology. Note also that this is the first known occurrence of the rare future participle of *mutuor*, later attested in John of Salisbury (*Ep.* 36), an admirer of Sidonius' style and language; on him see Chronopoulos 2020, 645 and Hernández Lobato 2020, 669.

LETTER 12

Content

Sidonius and Calminius are on opposite factions: the latter is taking part in the seasonal sieges of Clermont. Since a truce appears in sight, Sidonius asks for a long letter from the addressee.

The addressee Calminius

In *Ep.* 5.12 Sidonius refers to Auvergne as Calminius' motherland (*patria*), therefore, this addressee is presumably an Auvergnat: at the time of writing he is living in Visigothic territory and, as king Euric's subject, he unwillingly takes part in the Visigothic sieges of Clermont (on which more below).¹⁸⁸ As Harries noted, Sidonius writes to Calminius because a truce is in prospect and he wants him to know that the Arverni would eagerly await his letters and that they do not resent him. This is, however, the only mention of this addressee in the corpus and he is not otherwise attested.

In his '*Addenda and Corrigenda to PLRE 2*', Mathisen offers the observation that Calminius may be related to or identical with the senator Calminius appointed *dux Aquitaniae* by Justinian in the early 530s.¹⁸⁹ Heinzelmann, however, points out that the source (V. Calminii 4–7; AASS Aug. 3, 760) is late and Mathisen himself reasonably does not go back to his former suggestion in his prosopography of Sidonius' people.¹⁹⁰ Even if the 530 date were undisputed, the identification would have been unsustainable, since it is impossible that the same man who is old enough to be in the military around the year 470 (the time Sidonius writes), would then get the appointment as *dux Aquitaniae* sixty years later. And yet, the hypothesis that Calminius could be living in Aquitania at

¹⁸⁸ See *PCBE* 4, 412. *PLRE* 2 omits to list Calminius.

¹⁸⁹ Mathisen 1982, 368–9 on the Calminius appointed *dux Aquitaniae*, said to be of senatorial descent (*ex senatorio ordine trahens originem*) see *BHL* 1898, 229; Stroheker 1948, 159 n. 81.

¹⁹⁰ Heinzelmann 1982, 573; Mathisen 2020a, 86.

the time Sidonius writes to him is certainly sustainable, since it is in Aquitania that the Visigothic kingdom was based and its capital was Toulouse.

Letters to inhabitants of the Visigothic kingdom

Calminius is not the only aristocrat who lives in the Visigothic kingdom to be mentioned in Sidonius' works: think, for instance of the wealthy Pontius Leontius (*Carm.* 22) who lives near Bordeaux,¹⁹¹ and in particular of Pontius' neighbour Rusticus, to whom Sidonius writes *Ep.* 2.11, a letter that can be fruitfully compared to *Ep.* 5.12 to Calminius.¹⁹² In both letters, Sidonius' opening remarks concern the rarity of his correspondence with the addressee, who is living under Visigothic rule, and Sidonius subsequently declares that their friendship is not affected by distance, whether it is physical or political.

*Si nobis pro situ spatiisque regionum vicinaremur nec a se praesentia
mutua vasti itineris longinquitate discriminaretur, nihil apicum raritati
licere in coeptae familiaritatis officia permitterem neque iam semel missa
fundamenta certantis amicitiae diversis honorum generibus exstruere
cessarem. sed animorum coniunctioni separata utrique porrectioribus
terminis obsistit habitatio, equidem semel devinctis parum nocitura
pectoribus.*

Sidon. *Ep.* 2.11.1

If we were neighbours as regards the location and distance of our regions, and if we were not kept apart from each other's presence by the length of a vast journey, I would not permit the rarity of letters fulfilling the duties of our newly started acquaintance to be possible ... But against the union of

¹⁹¹ In the letter preceding *Carm.* 22, Sidonius says to Pontius Leontius that 'their hearts are not distant' despite the physical distance separating their lands. See Green 2022, 233 and Santelia 2023, 204.

¹⁹² See also *Ep.* 8.11.3 (= *Carm.* 35 vv. 35–6).

our minds stands the fact that our habitations are far apart, with a lot of land in between – though this will do little harm to our hearts, which were once bound together. (transl. Hindermann 2022)

And yet, when Sidonius writes to Rusticus, he is presumably not a bishop and the situation with the Visigoths is stable, or, at least, it is certain that the letter precedes the situation of open hostility later described in *Ep.* 5.12. For this reason, for *Ep.* 2.11 I would argue in favour of a date in 467 or earlier, by taking the murder of Theoderic II at the hands of his brother Euric as a *terminus ante quem*.¹⁹³

While in *Ep.* 2.11 it is merely the physical distance that separates him and Rusticus and the Goths are yet to be perceived as a threat, in *Ep.* 5.12 Calminius and Sidonius are forced to be distant because they belong to two opposite and belligerent factions. His situation radically changes within a handful of years, as the tone and the content of the two letters indicate. There is, however, one passage of *Ep.* 2.11 which may lead to further speculation, since, at the end of the letter, Sidonius is suddenly vague when he says that he has ‘opportune received the bearers of the letter’ and that he has patiently listened to them and given a proper answer (*Ep.* 2.11.2 *gerulos ... opportune admisi, patienter audiui, competenter explicui*). It seems reasonable to suggest that a delicate matter might have been involved,¹⁹⁴ one which could not be entrusted to a written message but needed to be discussed in person with discretion, and, what is more, with more than one letter carrier: might one speculate that the choice to have this detail in the published collection suggests that the exchange was related to tensions preceding or immediately following Theoderic II’s murder?

Romans in the service of the Visigoths

By the time Sidonius writes, it is not that uncommon to find a Roman in the service of Visigoths. On the contrary, as Mathisen acutely observed, it does seem less and

¹⁹³ Loyen dates the letter to 467 or 469.

¹⁹⁴ Of this opinion is also Hindermann 2022, 349.

less common to find Roman soldiers serving in the *Roman* military service.¹⁹⁵ Calminius, who is described as an army officer, is not the only addressee who receives letters from Sidonius while serving under the Visigoths. Namatius, the addressee of *Ep.* 8.6, is said to be a commander of king Euric's fleet, actively engaged in fighting Saxons on the Atlantic. Sidonius' apprehension for him is tempered by the awareness that Namatius is following the banners of the Visigoths, a victorious people (*Ep.* 8.6.16 *uictoris populi signa comitaris*).

Intellectuals are also in the orbit of the Visigothic court. Take, for instance, Evodius: in *Ep.* 4.8.1 he is said to be on his way, at king Euric's request (*rege mandante*), to Toulouse, the capital of the Visigothic kingdom, and, since he wishes to be in the king's graces, Evodius has asked Sidonius to write an epigram that he intends to have engraved on a silver plate to honour the queen Ragnahilda.¹⁹⁶ One last example is Leo of Narbonne, a man close to king Euric, who presumably served as his legal draughtsman and spokesman.¹⁹⁷

Clermont under siege

The newly elected bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, Sidonius, is soon faced with a persistent and unpleasant menace. From 471 to 475, king Euric's troops of Visigoths (and Romans, apparently) periodically besiege the city and, as bishop, Sidonius is in charge of its defence. *Ep.* 5.12 is one of the letters supposedly delivered in a moment of temporary truce; therefore, it is worth offering the reader an overview of the mentions of the attacks and Sidonius' reaction to these dramatic

¹⁹⁵ See Mathisen 2020a, 48 and Marolla 2020 on social mobility under new rulers.

¹⁹⁶ Sidonius meets the request but exhorts the friend to conceal the authorship of the verses and ends the letter with a *pointe*. He suspects that, at court, Evodius' writing material (silver) will be praised more than Sidonius' writing.

¹⁹⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.22.3 and 8.3.3. See Amherdt 2001, 460–1; Marolla 2023a, 148.

events in his *Letters*.¹⁹⁸ A warning on the partiality and dramatization of events of our source seems, however, mandatory.¹⁹⁹

The impact of the sieges is first described in Book 3, where Sidonius recalls Constantius' visit to the besieged Clermont (in *Ep.* 3.2) and the mournful destruction brought by the besiegers: Clermont houses burned down and almost in ruin, and the horror the sight of the unburied bodies, piled up in the surrounding fields, produced in the onlookers (*Ep.* 3.2.1 *campos sepultos ossibus insepultis*). The following letter, *Ep.* 3.3, offers the description of his brother-in-law Ecdicius' heroic defence of the city. In Sidonius' unrealistic version of events, Ecdicius, at the head of a contingent of fewer than eighteen horsemen, forced his passage through a few thousand Goths (*Ep.* 3.3.2 *aliquot milia Gothorum ... transisti*) and repeatedly faced the enemy by putting together 'a public army with private resources', given the failure of the State to provide them with proper help. By the end of the letter, Sidonius says that Ecdicius is away on a mission at the insidious Burgundian court, and, as has been convincingly argued by Delaplace, it seems likely that the people of Clermont relied on Burgundian support to face the periodical sieges.²⁰⁰ Then, in *Ep.* 3.4, Sidonius expresses anxiety about the position of Clermont between two rival peoples, being too close to Visigoths on one side and suspected by the Burgundians on the other. Although in winter the Goths retreated to their quarters, in *Ep.* 3.7 Sidonius mentions the perpetual state of anxiety and *formido*, the paralysing terror reigning over the guards in Clermont, unable to leave their posts even on snowy days or moonless nights.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Given Sidonius' vagueness when it comes to dating elements, it would be impossible to date these letters to a specific year. For a tentative chronology of the sieges see Stevens 1933, 197–207, who is one of the first to date the bishopric to 469 and to argue against later dates, as much contemporary scholarship does, *pace* Loyen). On the attacks see Harries 1994, 226–9 and Delaplace 2015, 251–3. On Sidonius' deliberate omission of dating elements (presumably during revision for publication) see Marolla 2023, 25–7.

¹⁹⁹ For caution when reading Sidonius' letters as a reliable autobiographical source, see Marolla 2023, 3.

²⁰⁰ See Harries 1994, 229, Van Waarden 2010, 13 and Delaplace 2015, 249–50.

²⁰¹ It is thanks to Burgundian support that the city can endure a long period of sieges: see Harries 1994, 236.

The difficulties faced by Clermont are absent from Book 4, coherently with its nature as a ‘leisure Book’,²⁰² and, *Ep.* 5.12 aside, there are only passing references to it in other letters of Book 5: the mention of the institution of Rogations in Clermont in *Ep.* 5.14, and, in *Ep.* 5.16 to Papianilla, the news of Licinianus’ arrival (to negotiate with the Visigoths), the vague mention of great adversities, and Papianilla’s fear of the nearby siege.²⁰³

In *Ep.* 6.12, a thank-you letter to the bishop of Lyon Patiens, Sidonius ends the Book with good news: the devastations of the Visigoths had left Clermont (and many other territories) grain-less but the donations of the addressee had enabled his people to avoid starvation (*ad suam sufficientiam peruenire*).²⁰⁴

And yet, the hope that transpires from the last letter of Book 6 is abruptly followed by the gloomy opening of Book 7.²⁰⁵ Sidonius informs bishop Mamertus that the situation is dire, to the point that he believes their resistance cannot last much longer.²⁰⁶ In *Ep.* 7.7.3,²⁰⁷ the author recalls the most dramatic moments for the city, afflicted by fire, slaughter, pestilence and famine: in a desperate attempt to feed themselves, many had been poisoned from eating grass grown in walls cracks.²⁰⁸ His addressee is Graecus, an envoy of emperor Julius Nepos to king Euric, to whom he expresses his frustration at the (trustworthy) rumour that peace would cost Clermont its freedom. In *Ep.* 7.10 (11), written presumably soon after 7.7, the news of the peace treaty is confirmed and Sidonius is ‘shut in within half-

²⁰² Amherdt 2001, 30 highlights that letters in Book 4 are either written before Sidonius’ election as bishop (ante 469) or after the cession of Clermont to Visigoths (post 475). There are no letters written during the years of the attacks on the city.

²⁰³ See *Ep.* 5.16.3 *inter aduersa maxima* and *uicinae obsidionis terror*.

²⁰⁴ On Patiens see Mathisen 2020a, 112.

²⁰⁵ A deliberate choice of Sidonius the editor. On Euric’s advance resembling Caesar’s march on Rome in Lucan see Gualandri 2020, 309, on the passage see also van Waarden 2010, 90–2.

²⁰⁶ Although dating is not possible, it would seem that *Ep.* 5.12 predates *Ep.* 7.1, given the description of Clermont’s collapsing defences. See commentary on §1 *propugnacula*.

²⁰⁷ Sidonius writes harsh words to Graecus, since he heard that Auvergne has been offered to Euric and begs him not to ratify the cession.

²⁰⁸ See Van Waarden 2010, 357–61.

burned city walls' (*inter semiustas muri fragilis clausus angustias*) being aware that he soon will be removed from the region.²⁰⁹

If one looks exclusively at these mentions of the attacks on Clermont, there is a clear and coherent narrative of events which unfolds throughout the collection and, coherently with this thematic criterion, in the last two Books, which include letters from different times in Sidonius' life, the sieges of Clermont are not mentioned.²¹⁰ It is as if, with the publication of Books 3 to 7 (in 477), a chapter of Sidonius' life is over and, perhaps, this can tell us something more about the thematic structure of the collection: as I have argued before, although the order of the letters in the collection is not, strictly speaking, chronological,²¹¹ when it comes to the description of major events, Sidonius opts for thematic coherence.²¹²

Genre

In Part 1 of my commentary I ascribed *Ep.* 5.12 to the genre of letters on epistolary silence — Sidonius' silence, in this case, although the letter is very different from the others in the Book where this theme is detectable (*Epp.* 5.3 and 5.4). *Ep.* 5.12 is not a complaint for the silence of the addressee, as much as it is an acknowledgement that silence is preferable when there is a risk correspondence may be intercepted. Similar fears are expressed in Sidonius' *Ep.* 9.3, a letter written presumably after the cession of Clermont.²¹³ Sidonius tells Faustus that it would be wise for them to limit their epistolary exchanges, and in *Ep.* 9.3.2 he details why:

‘A courier can by no means pass the guards of the public highroads without a strict scrutiny; he may indeed incur no danger, being free from guilt, but he

²⁰⁹ *Ep.* 7.10(11).1.

²¹⁰ Coherently with the detection of a macro-chronology in the collection by Hanaghan 2019, 74–7.

²¹¹ As is demonstrated by Gibson 2012, 68–70 and Gibson 2020, 378 n. 39.

²¹² See my similar conclusions concerning Mamertus Claudianus' death in Marolla 2023a, 80.

²¹³ See commentary on § 1 *segreges* for further similarities.

usually experiences a great deal of difficulty, as the watchful searcher pries into every secret of the letter-carriers, and if their answers to his questions should happen to show the least nervousness, they are believed to carry verbally in their heads the messages not committed to writing; thus the man sent often suffers ill-treatment and the sender acquires an ill name' (transl. Anderson).

Moreover, in *Ep.* 9.5.1, Sidonius says that he and the addressee Julianus are living in enemy territories (the Burgundian and Visigoth kingdoms), and he has hope in the negotiations for peace: he believes that once a deal 'based on trust' is struck (*fidelibus animis foederabuntur*), they will exchange letters more often without fear of interception.

Dating elements

In 5.12.2 Sidonius says that although the negotiation of a treaty is still a remote possibility, at least Calminius can profit from 'the shade of a truce' and visit Clermont. Loyen has conjectured that the letter was written in the last months of 474, during the interruption of hostilities preceding the negotiation attempt of Licinianus.²¹⁴ As *quaestor sacri palatii* of Julius Nepos, in 474 Licinianus was sent from the imperial court in Ravenna to the court of Euric, king of the Visigoths. Sidonius has hope for the success of this diplomatic mission and, in *Ep.* 3.7.2, he asks the addressee Felix, who lives in Visigoth territory, to inform him if Licinianus 'has opened any door of safety' (*ianuam securitatis aperuerit*) to their state of anxiety. As the commentary further explains, this expression is mirrored by the 'window to freedom' (*libertatis fenestra*) in *Ep.* 5.12.2. The lexical similarity might indicate that the letters refer to the same episode, although, against this theory, Stevens, believes the expression *non per foederum ueritatem* in *Ep.* 5.12.2 excludes the mission of Licinianus, 'who, as an accredited envoy of the

²¹⁴ Licinianus also delivered the codicils appointing Sidonius' brother-in-law Ecdicius *patricius* and *magister militum*; see Sidon. *Ep.* 5.16.

Empire, would have been responsible for making a *foedus*'.²¹⁵ Stevens' cautious approach seems preferable to Loyen's: ultimately, as Stevens points out, 'the hopes of a truce may have existed at any time between 471 and 474'.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Stevens 1933, 205.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Clausulation

Despite the context and setting of the letter, which would suggest that the occasion of a truce is enabling Sidonius to write but that he does not have much time for fineries, the text is consistently clausulated and much thought has gone into it, both in terms of style and of lexical choices.

Key

ApC= Anapaest cretic $\cup\cup - -\cup x$

ApDitroch= Anapaest ditrochee $\cup\cup - -\cup - x$

CC= double cretic $- \cup - -\cup x$

ChorC= choriamb cretic $- \cup \cup - -\cup x$

ChorS = choriamb spondee $- \cup \cup - - x$

CI= cretic iamb $- \cup - \cup x$

CS= cretic spondee $- \cup - - x$

CT= cretic tribrach $- \cup - \cup \cup x$

DactC= dactyl cretic $- \cup \cup - \cup x$

DactI= dactyl iamb $- \cup \cup \cup x$

P¹S= paeon I spondee $- \cup \cup \cup - x$

P⁴S= paeon IV spondee $\cup \cup \cup - - x$

1. a nobis pagina meat,	DactI
impotentia facit.	DactI
quicquam planius quaeras,	CS
uos metus interpretetur.	ApDitroch
-lum tamen libere gemo,	CI
partium segreges facti	CS
mi-ni-me fru-i-mu-r as-pec-tu	P4S
is offerris obtutibus,	CC
terroris alieni	P1S
nos propugnacula tegunt.	DactI
solum captius adduceri,	CC
(-as sagittis uacuare,)	- u - - u u - x
-culos implere cogaris,	CS
quoque non recusantibus,	CC
-untur uota quam iacula.	CT
(per foe-de-rum ue-ri-ta-tem,)	Cditroch
-tatis fenestra resplendet,	CS
uti nos, cum maxime potes,	CI
frequentis impertias,	CC
illam manere gratiam,	CI
obsidentis inuidiam.	CT

SIDONIUS CALMINIO SUO SALUTEM

1. Quod rarius ad uos a nobis pagina meat, non nostra superbia sed aliena impotentia facit. Neque super his quicquam planius quaeras, quippe cum silentii huius necessitatem par apud uos metus interpretetur. Hoc solum tamen libere gemo, quod turbine dissidentium partium segreges facti mutuo minime fruimur aspectu, neque umquam patriae sollicitis offerris obtutibus, nisi forsitan cum ad arbitrium terroris alieni uos loricae, nos propugnacula tegunt. Ubi ipse in hoc solum captius adduceris, ut pharetras sagittis uacuare, lacrimis oculos implere cogaris, nobis quoque non recusantibus, quod tua satis aliud moliuntur uota quam iacula.

2. Sed quia interdum etsi non per foederum ueritatem, saltem per indutiarum imaginem quaedam spei nostrae libertatis fenestra resplendet, impense flagito, uti nos, cum maxime potes, affatu paginae frequentis impertias, sciens tibi in animis obsessorum ciuium illam manere gratiam, quae obliuiscatur obsidentis inuidiam. Vale.

Calminio *AC* : Calrainio *S* (Calminio in the margin for the illuminator): Chalminio *T*

1

ubi α *LMP* : tibi *T*

Pharetras sagittis Ω : sagittis pharetras Kelly

lacrimis *omisit Vat1661*

uota *omisit C addidit super lineam A*

2 inducicarum (*A?*) : induciarum *CSMPT* : indutiarum *Vat1661L*

SIDONIUS TO HIS FRIEND CALMINIUS

1. The fact that a letter travels from us to you very rarely nowadays is not due to our pride but to the violence of others. Do not seek for any clearer information about them, since indeed a similar fear among your people can interpret the need for this silence. Nevertheless, this is the only thing I lament freely, that we, separated by a whirl of divided factions, hardly enjoy each other's presence. You never show yourself to the anxious eyes of your country, except, perhaps, when at the whim of another's terror, cuirasses protect you as bulwarks protect us. Then you yourself are brought in as prisoner to this land — so that you are forced to empty your quiver of arrows, to fill your eyes with tears, while we do not object either, because your prayers strive for something quite different from your spears.
2. But since, meanwhile, albeit not through the reality of a treaty but at least through the shade of a truce, a sort of window to freedom is shining on our hopes, I vehemently solicit you to bestow us, when you are very much able to, with the greeting of a long letter, knowing that in the souls of the besieged citizens there resides a fondness for you that eclipses the ill-will towards the besieger. Farewell.

Quod rarius ad uos a nobis pagina meat: The letter starts with an apology for not writing to Calminius often. Compare the opening line of Symm. *Ep.* 8.35.1 *quod sero ad te scribo, amicitiae tenacis indicium est* ('my lateness in writing to you is proof of the persistence of our friendship'), see also Symm. *Ep.* 5.85.1 and, on letters received by Symmachus, 1.95.1 and 9.152.1. For the rarity of epistolary exchanges see also Symm. *Ep.* 7.61 *denuntiaueram tibi quod rarior in scribendo essem futurum*, 'I had informed you that I would have written more seldomly' and the mentions of *raritas* of epistolary exchanges in Symm. *Epp.* 1.59, 4.59, 5.55, 8.11 (*si tibi in scribendo rarior uideor...*), 8.42, 8.51, 9.101. Cf. the similar *Quod...* at the beginning of Sidon. *Ep.* 5.4.1 on Simplicius' epistolary silence (commentary by Marolla 2023 134). For the use of *pagina* to indicate a letter, particularly in Cicero, Symmachus and Sidonius, see Marolla 2023, 186. The figurative meaning of *meare* with reference to letter exchanges occurs in Sidon. *Ep.* 7.7.4, where it concerns legations.

non nostra superbia sed aliena impotentia facit: It is not Sidonius' fault if they cannot communicate regularly. For being branded of *superbia* when failing to write back see e.g. Cic. *Fam.* 7.16.3 (=32 SB) *superbiam tuam accusant quod negent te ... respondere* ('they brand you with rudeness because they say you don't respond to them'), and the similar Symm. *Ep.* 8.49, and Sidon. *Ep.* 5.4.2 (on which Marolla 2023, 139). See *TLL* 7.1.672.60–673.7 (by Rehm) and *OLD* 935 for *impotentia* meaning 'violence or immoderate behaviour' and, with the meaning of 'despotism', see Apul. *Met.* 10.6, where it is said to be typical of tyrants (*tyrannica*). The identification of *alieni* as the Visigoths is confirmed by the mention of *terror alienus* in the following lines.

Neque super his quicquam planius quaeras: This direct and informal address introduces a remark on the impossibility of speaking frankly because of interception of correspondence. Among the numerous occurrences of *ne quaeras*, meaning ‘do not ask’ see Cic. *Att.* 2.18.2 (=38 SB), where Cicero expresses hopelessness for the loss of freedom, and the equally pathetic tone of Ps. Quint. *Decl.* 19.6.2 and 9.15.7: in both occurrences preceded by *miserere* (‘for pity’s sake’) and with the adverb *amplius* (‘further’), similar to *planius* here. See also Aug. *Ep.* 14.1 about being too busy to write a long letter.

quippe cum silentii huius necessitatem: The need for silence and the similar fear at Calminius’ home (see *par metus* below) are signals that Sidonius is not at liberty to speak because of the Gothic presence in the area, on which see the introduction to this letter. The syntagma *silentii necessitas* notably occurs in Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.1, where it concerns school exercises: in an oratory piece against a tyrant one should avoid being openly insulting but, Quintilian says, in real life, so far, there has never been a similar ‘necessity for silence’. Sidonius might be openly alluding to this passage (see Schwitter 2015, 237 ff., Fascione 2019, 66–7); see also Hillary of Poitiers *In Matt.* 21.13. Among the —almost ninety— mentions of epistolary silence (i.e. interruption or delay in communications) in Symmachus, see Symm. *Ep.* 1.49 about his concern for the protracted silence on ‘a disturbing matter’ (the defeat at Adrianople, according to Seeck 1883, lxxxix n. 49, but for a different opinion see Salzman and Roberts 2011, 106), Symm. *Ep.* 1.80 *mora necessarii silentii*, Symm. *Ep.* 1.100.1 *silentium ... praestare debemus* about the necessity not to speak of one’s disgraces and the wry remark on his being exhorted to stay silent despite being a victim of injustice in Symm. *Ep.* 2.28. On epistolary silence in Pliny the Younger, Symmachus and Sidonius see Marolla 2023, 94–7.

par apud uos metus interpretetur: The reasons to reduce the frequency of epistolary exchanges must be apparent to Calminius, who experiences a ‘similar fear’ of interception since he lives under Visigoth rule at the time of writing (see the introduction to the letter). Among the occurrences of the iunctura *par metus*

see Plin. *Pan.* 48.4, where it concerns the dread for Domitian, called *immanissima belua*. Is Sidonius here comparing the Visigoth king Euric to Domitian? For the beastly features of Euric ‘the wolf’ in Sidonius’ letters see Fo 1999 and, on Domitian in Sidon. *Ep.* 5.7.6, see Marolla 2023, 234–6. For the topos of the *metus barbarorum* see Ov. *Trist.* 5.10.28 *facit ... barbara turba metum* (‘the barbarian ... throng strikes fear’) on which more below; compare also the fear of Visigoths’ attacks in Sidon. *Ep.* 3.7.2 (*metus noster*) and the *formido* in *Ep.* 3.7.4: the terror rooted in Clermont’s sentinels. For the verb *interpretor* meaning ‘to comprehend’ see *OLD* s.v. 1042,2.

Hoc solum tamen libere gemo: Note the abrupt transition from the first-person plural (*apud uos* meaning ‘with you and yours’) to the first-person singular, which coincides with the passage from introductory pleasantries to the core of the letter. Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 2.64 *cum omnia metu tenerentur, gemitus tamen populi Romani liber fuit*. (‘though fear dominated everything, nevertheless the groan of the Roman people was free’) expressing the horror and the spontaneous expression of popular discontent at the news that Pompey’s properties had been auctioned. This famous passage is quoted in Sen. rhet. *Con.* 7.2.5 (where it refers to popular reaction at the sight of Cicero’s head displayed on the Rostra) and *Suas.* 6.4. Cf in particular Hier. *Ep.* 123.16 for the similarity of context: after having described the devastations of barbarians in Gaul, Jerome laments that the information he presented is dangerous (*periculosa sunt*) and the situation is so dire that he can’t even freely express his pain, on this passage see Marolla 2019, 100–101; Marolla 2024, 126.

quod turbine: *Turbo* here means ‘whirlwind’ (as in *OLD* 2196, 2b) an image that effectively conveys the confusion warfare brought upon Sidonius and the addressee, who find themselves in opposite factions. Among the numerous occurrences of *turbo* with a figurative meaning, see e.g. Ov. *Met.* 7.614 and Claud. *In Ruf.* 2.90 (*rerum*), Sil. 4.370 (*pugnae*), Flor. 2.9.18 (*civilis insaniae*), Cypr. *Ad Donat.* 14, Hier. *In Is.* 15.7, Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 44.4, Prud. C. Symm. 1 *Praef.* 49 (all concerning the *turbo saeculi*). Other occurrences of *turbo* in Sidonius include *Epp.*

4.12.1 (*nuntiourum aduersis*), 5.6 (*barbaricus*) i.e. Burgundians, 6.10 (*depredationis Gothicae*), 7.9.8 (*uos infamare conantum*), 8.11.1 (*Bigerricus*). For a similar image cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 7.11(10).1 *conflictantium procella regnorum* and see Van Waarden 2010, 463 and 553; Marolla 2023, 181–2.

dissidentium partium segreges facti: The iunctura *pars dissidens* is rarely attested: see Cic. *Rep.* 1.31 (19) concerning two separate factions colliding in the Senate and, in particular, Rufin. *Hist.* 7.32.9 regarding a siege, while, in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.12.3, the participle concerns doctors fighting each other about a cure, see Hindermann 2022, 358. *Segrex* is rare and post-Augustan: in Sen. *Benef.* 4.18.2 it concerns living an isolated life and in Auson *Parent.* 8.10, Prud. *Cath.* 7.28 and Serv. *auct. Aen.* 2.11 *ad v.* 432, it means ‘to live in seclusion’. The meaning in Sidonius, however, seems to refer in particular to people living in territories belonging to opposite factions, as is the case with Sidon. *Ep.* 9.3.1 *ciuitates ... segreges agunt*, in the similar context of voluntary interruption of communications due to political tensions.

mutuo minime fruimur aspectu, the iunctura *mutuus aspectus* does not appear to be attested before Florus 2.9.14 (where the elder and the younger Crassus are slain in the sight of one another), it then has occurrences in this passage and in Sedatus of Nîmes *Ep.* 4 to Ruricius of Limoges (ed. Demeulenaere 1985 *CCSL* 64, p. 400) *optaui ut ... desiderium commune mutuo satiaretur aspectu*. ‘I hoped that our desire to meet would have been satiated by reciprocal sight’). For the verb *fruo*+*aspectu* with the meaning of ‘enjoying one’s presence’ see Aug. *Ep.* 257 *ut tuo prius affatu quam aspectu frueremur*, where Augustine thanks the addressee whose visit had been preceded by a letter (‘so that we had the pleasure to read you before seeing you’) and Rur. *Ep.* 1.15 *etsi exterioris hominis non fruebar aspectu* (‘even though I never had the pleasure to see him in person’).

neque umquam patriae sollicitis offerri obtutibus: While the expression *obtutus patriae* is not otherwise attested, a previous occurrence of the iunctura

solicit+obtus** is in Tertullian *Anim.* 52, although in the singular. The plural of *obtus* meaning ‘eyes’ or ‘sight’ is post-classical, see *TLL* 9.2.306.49–307.8 (by Paschoud) and Van Waarden 2010, 539. Among the 7 occurrences in Sidonius, compare for its similarity *Ep.* 3.11.1 *nostris inuidearis obtutibus* (‘you are still denied to my sight’). The syntagma *obtusibus offerre* is previously attested in Serv. *auct. Aen.* 1.3 *ad v.* 407 and Claud. Don. *Aen.* 1.2.

nisi forsitan cum ad arbitrium terroris alieni: The only occasions to see one another are when the Visigoth king Euric moves against the city of Clermont, the see of Sidonius’ bishopric (see the introduction on these seasonal sieges). *Terror alienus* is an uncommon expression, only attested in Curtius Rufus 7.2.4 (in a different context). Cf. *aliena impotentia* at the beginning of the letter: *terror* and *impotentia* both recall the same situation of violence and *terror alienus* appears to be used for its ambiguity, in order not to mention king Euric by name but also to stress his being non-Roman, compare the Burgundians as a *gens aliena* in *Ep.* 5.5.2 and in *Ep.* 8.2.2 (on which Marolla 2023, 159).

uos loricae, nos propugnacula tegunt: When Calminius goes to Clermont he does so as a besieger, therefore Sidonius says that the addressee is protected by his cuirass, while he is protected by bulwarks. The use of the plural *uos/nos* here refers to the two factions: ‘you with the Goths/we in Clermont’. See Serv. *Aen. auct.* 2.7 *ad v.* 633 *loricae pectora ... tegebant*. Sidonius in *Ep.* 7.1.2 describes the precarious defences of Clermont: city walls consumed by fire (*ambustam murorum faciem*), rotting palisades, and ‘bulwarks worn out by the chests of sentinels’ (*propugnacula uigilum trita pectoribus*); see the introduction on the phases of the siege.

Ubi ipse in hoc solum captiuus adduceris: Calminius is brought to Clermont as a besieger against his will, as a prisoner would be. It seems unlikely he is an *actual* prisoner: see the introduction for Romans in the service of the Visigoths. The expression *captiuum adduci* has several occurrences in texts concerning warfare,

where it indicates prisoners taken as spoils of war; in this context, it rather has the meaning of being dragged to Clermont to fight fellow Romans, as a captive would be; cf. Curt. 6.2.9 (*in regiam*) and Val. Max. 5.1.8 (*ad se*).

ut pharetras sagittis uacuare: The image is poetic and has few occurrences. The wording appears to be a variation of the more often attested form *vacua ... pharetra*, which concerns Partians retreating with emptied quivers in Lucan 8.387, Sil. *Pun.* 3.613 and Tac. *Ann.* 12.13 and, in Sidon. *Carm.* 2.154–5, it refers to Apollo’s quiver, almost empty after the slaying of Python; see Green 2022, 45. The inversion of the nouns ‘*sagittis pharetras*’ suggested to me by Kelly would give a syntagma matching the following ‘*lacrimis oculos*’ and a *cursus velox*.

lacrimis oculos implere cogaris: Calminius is described as being forced to besiege Clermont, with his eyes full of tears. Cf. the similar hyperbole in Verg. *Aen.* 4.30 *sinum lacrimis impleuit obortis* ‘(Dido) filled her bosom with upwelling tears’ (Fratantuono and Alden Smith 2022, 140–1). See also Serv. *auct.* 1.4 *ad v.* 30 about *sinum* in Vergil’s passage meaning ‘eyelids’, as in Sidon. *Ep.* 5.12. It was normal for noble Roman men (mythical heroes included) to weep, even profusely, to express a feeling of helplessness in the face of adversities, on this see MacMullen 1980, 254–5; Horsfall 2003, 67 (on Aeneas’ tears) and, for a comprehensive study on tears in the Graeco-Roman world, see Fögen (ed.) 2009.

nobis quoque non recusantibus, quod tua satis aliud moliuntur uota quam iacula: The people of Clermont do not condemn Calminius for his role as a besieger, being aware that it is imposed on him by the Visigoths. Sidonius plays on the polysemy of the verb *molior* used here both with the metaphorical meaning of ‘striving to achieve something’ and with the technical meaning of ‘shooting’ as in Ov. *Met.* 5.367 (*sagittas*); see *TLL* 8.1358.65–8 and 1362.4–19 by Lumpe. Similar examples of Sidonius’ fondness for word games are listed in Marolla 2023, 285. There are no comparable examples of the contraposition *uota / iacula*.

Sed quia interdum etsi non per foederum ueritatem: This is still an interlocutory phase of the siege, but hostilities are far from being over. Note that the expression *ueritas foederum* is not known to have other occurrences and that this syntagma gives a cretic ditrochee clausula (not one of those most favoured by Sidonius).

saltim per indutiarum imaginem: There are no comparable occurrences of the expression *imago indutiarum*: in this passage, the noun *indutiae* has the widely attested meaning of ‘agreed truce’ (*cessatio pugnae pacticia* in TLL 7.1.1278.16 by Gumpoltsberger), unlike Sidon. *Epp.* 4.24.2, 4.24.5 and 5.7.3, where it means ‘delay in paying debts or taxes’ (see Amherdt 2001, 490 and Marolla 2023, 223).

quaedam spei nostrae libertatis fenestra resplendet: The ‘window to freedom’ shining on Clermont’s hope is the interlocutory phase between Romans and Visigoths. According to Loyen 1970, 256 this would coincide with the quaestor Licinianus’ embassy in 474 (see the Dating section in the introduction). Cf. Hier. *Adu. Iouin.* 2.8 *per oculorum fenestras animae capta libertas est* (‘through the windows of the eyes the freedom of the soul is made captive’) and in particular Sidon *Ep.* 3.7.2 *ianuam securitatis aperuerit* (Licinianus may ‘have opened a door of safety’), also concerning the sieges of Clermont. On the evocative power of ‘realistic metaphors’ in Sidonius and on the influence Biblical imagery has on his style see Gualandri 1979, 116–17 and Giannotti 2016, 184; on this author’s preference for the noun *libertas* in contexts relating to Auvergne being under threat see Postel 2011, 173–9.

impense flagito: The expression *impense flagito* does not have previous attestations. Cf. occurrences of the adverb *impense* with similar verbs of urging and demanding: Quint. *Inst.* 10.5.18 *petierit*, Plin. *Epp.* 6.23.1 *petis*, 7.14.1 *et rogas et exigis*, 10.12 *rogo*, Fronto *Ep.* 1.7.2 *istud a te peto*, Paul. Nol. *Epp.* 36.2

rogamus and 38.11 *peto et rogo*, and, lastly, Sidon. *Epp.* 2.7.2 and 8.14.8 *obsecro* (the former is listed in Geisler 1887, 366).

uti nos ... affatu paginae frequentis impertias: *Affatu paginae* can be interpreted as a *genitiuus identitatis*, since, as is explained in *TLL* 1.1175.6–59 (by Zimmermann), in late Latin prose *affatus* (originally ‘address’) is used as a synonym for ‘correspondence’, e.g. in Symm. *Epp.* 1.3.5, 3.70, 4.23.1, 7.13 (see Cecconi 2002, 419 and Geisler 1887, 366). Sidonius uses it with this meaning also in *Ep.* 5.4.2, on which see Marolla 2023, 141. Anderson 1965, 211 has ‘many a massive sheet’. I disagree with Loyen 1970, 193, who translates ‘lettres nombreuses’ (similarly, Mascoli 2021, 207: ‘frequenti lettere’). My translation, ‘bestow us with the greeting of a long letter’ is based on a comparison with Mart. 7.45.3–4 (the only previous occurrence of the *iunctura* in the singular) where *frequens pagina* indicates a letter by Seneca packed with information. With this meaning the expression is attested in the plural in Symm. *Epp.* 4.22 and 4.58 on which see Marcone 1987, 139 and 150. Besides, since in §1 Sidonius mentions the shared fear of interception and the consequent need for epistolary silence, it would not be coherent then to ask for ‘frequent correspondence’ only a few lines later. Sidonius often uses the noun *pagina* for ‘letter’, for its occurrence with this meaning in Cicero, Symmachus and Sidonius, among others, see Marolla 2023, 186. For *impertire* in a context of epistolary writing, cf. Fronto *Ep.* 1.15.2 (180 van den Hout 2.88 Haines), Symm. *Ep.* 1.3.5 *uos munere salutationis impertio* (‘I bestow on you the duty of greeting’) and, similarly, 1.35, 3.76, 6.23, 7.29 and Sidon. *Epp.* 4.2.2 (by Mamertus Claudianus), 4.3.1, 6.10.2, 9.11.10. See *TLL* 7.1.593.67–84 (by Rehm) and Pellizzari 1998, 221.

sciens tibi in animis obsessorum ciuium illam manere gratiam: Calminius is still loved by the besieged people of Clermont. Sidonius is wont to use rare or new expressions to describe the exceptionality and novelty of the situations he witnesses before him, *obsessi ciues* ‘citizens under siege’ is not attested before (in

Rufin. *Hist.* 1.13.18 the *iunctura* concerns healing), unlike the expression *obsessa ciuitas*.

quae obliuiscatur obsidentis inuidiam: This highly rhetorical sentence (note the polyptoton *obsessorum ... obsidentis* and the repetition *ob-liuiscatur ... obsidentis*) does not have other known parallels. In this passage, *inuidia* should be intended as the people of Clermont's spontaneous 'resentment' at their besieger, who happens to be Calminius. In Sidonius, *inuidia* is a feature typical of barbarians, however, in *Ep.* 5.12 such extreme circumstances justify the outpouring of strong emotions, which would have normally been unsuitable for Romans. Being Romans, the people of Clermont can temper the anger they legitimately feel through their love for Calminius. This is something that Visigoths or Burgundians would not have been able to do, according to Sidonius' stereotyped descriptions of their irascibility and impulsiveness. For the *inuidia* of Visigoths see *Ep.* 3.1.4 (they are so envious of Clermont's 'corner of land' that they are willing to lay it waste just to take possession of it). *Inuidia* is also referred to Burgundians (*Epp.* 3.4.1 and 7.11.1) or Romans behaving as barbarians like Seronatus (*Ep.* 2.1.2) and the spies in *Ep.* 5.7.3, see Marolla 2023, 220.

LETTER 13

Content

A satirical text, announcing the impending arrival of the tax-exactor Seronatus. Sidonius describes his difficult journey through the rocky valley of the river Tarn and the sadistic tactics he uses to extort money and terrorise the locals.

Addressee

Pannychius, the addressee of *Ep.* 5.13, is believed to be the same as the namesake *vir inlustris* who was an unsuccessful candidate for the Bourges episcopal seat in *Ep.* 7.9.18 (disqualified because he had been married twice).²¹⁷ Mathisen believes Pannychius may have had an official role, presumably as *comes ciuitatis* in Aquitania I, ‘perhaps Bourges’ because of ‘the recommendation that he deal effectively with lawsuits and taxation’ in *Ep.* 5.13.4 (see below).²¹⁸ I think, however, that this interpretation is distant from the original meaning of the passage: the suggestion of making deals with potential accusers or taking guarantees against taxes is not an invitation to act in an official capacity against Seronatus as much as it is a suggestion to take precautions to protect himself and people close to him.

Models and genre

At first, the letter would appear to be a standard informative epistle, warning the addressee of the imminent arrival of the cunning Seronatus. As Cugusi pointed out, informative letters are the most common letter type in Antiquity, answering a

²¹⁷ See Stroheker 1948, 198, Heinzelmann 1982, 661–2, *PLRE* 2, 829 and *PCBE* 4, 1410–11. According to Mathisen (1982, 380) Pannychius may have gained his rank of *inlustris* after his office, ‘when Visigoths overran most of the province (*Ep.* 7.5.3)’.

²¹⁸ Mathisen 1982, 380 and 2020, 111.

primary need to share news, either personal or political.²¹⁹ And yet, the text soon reveals its complex and layered nature as a vituperative piece, which avails itself of masterful use of rare or unattested expressions and consistent prose rhythm (on which more below) also matching Cugusi's definition of a *lettera d'arte* and *vituperatio*: a highly rhetorically-refined text, conceived for early circulation and as a stand-alone piece insulting the author's enemy.²²⁰

The 'usual suspects' when it comes to Sidonius' models,²²¹ *i.e.* Pliny the Younger and Symmachus, are not absent from *Ep.* 5.13 but, at the same time, they do not appear to have influenced the vituperative sections of the text much. In addition to my observations in Part 1 on the models of insulting exchanges in Sidonius, I would like to offer here further context concerning vituperative letters, a popular and appreciated genre in Antiquity. Following Cugusi's lead once more, one could take examples from the rich tradition of the *Epistolographi Latini Minores*.²²² Although we only know these corpora through indirect tradition, there are testimonies of particularly incandescent exchanges; like the one between Metellus and Pompeius (*Ep. Lat. Min.* 2, n. I fr. 1 = *Liv. Per.* 99) and the epistolary skirmishes between Mark Antony and Octavian: the former made fun of the latter with a mean nickname (*Suet. Aug.* 7.1 = *Ep. Lat. Min.* 2, n. XCV,6) and was in turn ridiculed for his adhesion to Asianism (*Suet. Aug.* 86.2 = *Ep. Lat. Min.* 2, n. CLI fr. 38).²²³ Unlike these texts, however, in *Ep.* 5.13 (and also 2.1 and 5.7), the object of scorn is not the addressee but rather a third party.

As the commentary further explains, several unusual expressions and witty boutades in Sidonius' letter would appear to have been inspired by Ciceronian oratory. It is, however, worth pointing out that some images are already famously

²¹⁹ Cugusi 1983, 106.

²²⁰ On vituperative letters see Cugusi 1983, 123, and on *lettere d'arte* see *ibid.*, 127. Abusive language, satirical topoi, a complex and studied prose enriched with echoes of Cicero's language are all features also of *Ep.* 5.7. The reader may turn to Marolla 2023a, 16 and 189—91 and 193.

²²¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.1.1.

²²² I refer here in particular to Cugusi's 1979 work (vol. 2, part 2)

²²³ See also *Ep. Lat. Min.* 2, n. I fr. 6, 66–9 and n. CLI fr. 35. On Suetonius see Wardle 2014.

attested in Greek orations, from which Cicero presumably borrowed them. To take just one example, Demosthenes' *Against Aristogeiton*: his political enemy, guilty of extortion, among other things, 'was born to be the bane to all men' (25.50) like Seronatus in §4, and he is compared to a viper and a scorpion with its sting erect, looking for victims he will damage in any possible way, with slander or evil deeds of any kind (25.52).²²⁴

One may, however, also wonder about the influence later Latin polemical works and epistolary pamphlets had on this author's prose. Although not quoted verbatim, other texts may have contributed to normalising violent attacks on others in letters. Take, for instance, the peculiar combination of insults of all sorts in both polemical works and epistles of Jerome: a repertoire which may have inspired the beastly portrait of Seronatus. Accusations of stupidity, word games with the name of the adversary (like *Vigilantius/Dormitantius*) and nicknames (like *Rufinus/Grunnius*, 'Grunter'),²²⁵ words of abuse,²²⁶ mentions of deviousness or madness (*Vigilantius* is the 'deviser of a new sin' and 'out of his mind'),²²⁷ abundance of animal metaphors of Ciceronian memory (like 'crooked snake')²²⁸, monstrosity as an expression of moral abjection,²²⁹ and denigration of physical appearance²³⁰ are all elements Jerome inherits from oratory and satire and turns into his satire in prose, even in his letters. The same features listed here are *all* in Sidonius' description of Seronatus, in both *Epp.* 2.1 and *Ep.* 5.13.²³¹

²²⁴ Cf. also 25.96 *πικρὸν καὶ ἔχιν τὴν φύσιν* on the 'viper nature' of sycophants.

²²⁵ On 'Dormitantius' see *Ep.* 109.1, *C. Vigil.* 1; on Grunnius see e.g. *Ep.* 125.18, *In Ier. Praef.* 4 and 4.40.4. Cf. Seronatus' telling name in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.

²²⁶ See Hier. *C. Helv.* 10 (*ridiculus*);

²²⁷ See Hier. *C. Vigil.* 8 *repertor noui sceleris* and *C. Vigil.* 5 *insanum caput*.

²²⁸ Hier. *C. Ioh.* 3 *tortuosus coluber*. See also *C. Ioh.* 8 *rabidus canis* 'rabid dog', or the catalogue of Jovinian's followers in *C. Iov.* 2.36: 'pigs, dogs, vultures, eagles, hawks...'

²²⁹ *Vigilantius* is the first 'monster of Gaul' in Hier. *C. Vigil.* 1.

²³⁰ Like Rufinus' *rugosa frons* in *Adu. Rufin.* 1.13.

²³¹ For a detailed survey of Jerome's words of abuse see Opelt 1973, 172–80, Kahlos, M. 2010, *passim*, Milazzo 2011, 390 ff. For the evolution of the satirical genre in Late Antiquity and its presence in Sidonius see Koster 1980, 166–8, Mazzoli 2005–2006, 181–2, Marolla 2021, *passim*.

Seronatus, or how to ridicule a villain

Seronatus was presumably *vicarius septem provinciarum*,²³² or as van Waarden put it, a ‘senior finance official of the region’.²³³ Sidonius is the only source on this man and his portrait of him is unflattering since the first mention in *Ep.* 2.1, a letter of highly satirical content, in which Seronatus features as ‘an evil’ the Arverni have to endure. Seronatus took advantage of the administrative void and he profited from it, though Delaplace warns against attributing to him any important role other than that of a local figure terrorising communities in the Visigoths’ orbit.²³⁴ Presumably conceived for immediate circulation within Pannychius’ circle, *Ep.* 5.13, would appear to predate *Ep.* 2.1 and, in a way, it introduces satirical elements and prompts which will later be developed in the letter at the beginning of Book 2. Like in *Ep.* 5.13, in *Ep.* 2.1.1 the hated tax exactor is introduced by the mention of his ‘coming back to Arvernia’, in that case from Aire-sur-L’Adour, at the core of Visigoth territories (while in *Ep.* 5.13 he is coming back from Toulouse, the capital of their kingdom).

*Rediit ipse Catilina saeculi nostri nuper Aturribus, ut sanguinem
fortunasque miserorum, quas ibi ex parte propinauerat, hic ex asse
misceret. (Ep. 2.1.1)*

The very Catilina of our age has recently made his return from Aire-sur-L’Adour, so that he can stir things up here with the blood and fortune of the wretched, which he had only had a slight taste of there.

²³² See Mathisen 2020a, 120.

²³³ Van Waarden 2010, 355; see also Van Waarden 2020a, 22.

²³⁴ For a comparison with Arvandus and his superior influence and support in Rome see Jones 1964, 1059, Yver 1975, 23–5 and Delaplace 2015, 248.

In the opening passage of *Ep.* 2.1 Seronatus is notoriously compared to Catilina, the most emblematic enemy of the state and traitor to his people.²³⁵ Sidonius indulges in a quip on Seronatus' name: he was born (*natus*) too late (*serus*) for the age most fitting for him, the time of the Catilinarian conspiracy.²³⁶ What makes him so despicable in the eyes of the author is his collaborationism with the Visigoth court at Toulouse (a leitmotif also in *Ep.* 5.13): being in close contact with barbarians, Seronatus is portrayed like a barbarian. He is unable to refrain from anger, he is greedy and thievish, tyrannical in command and barbaric in his lies. Seronatus is also gauche, unsuited to social events (*Ep.* 2.1.3), consistently showing no respect for the sacrality of places or the rituality of social conventions; most notably, he is loud in church and falls asleep in court, and his laughable conduct betrays his being a *parvenu*.

Seronatus' descriptions in *Epp.* 2.1 and 5.13 are remarkably similar to two other characterisations of 'villains' within the collection: *Ep.* 5.7 on the informants — presumably Romans — in the service of Burgundians (the *other* barbarian court in Roman Gaul) and *Ep.* 3.13 on an anonymous parasite dubbed 'our own Gnatho'.²³⁷ The social awkwardness, the rapacity and even the beastly features matching ferocious behaviours are recurring elements in all these pamphlets. Similar is also the overabundant use of accumulation and repetition of litanies of insults, as well as the mastery of rhetorical prowess typical of invective and in particular reminiscent of Cicero.²³⁸ Seronatus, the anonymous informants and Gnatho are all cunning and dangerous to others because they create and disseminate false and incriminating accusations.²³⁹ Given that the features of the informants of *Ep.* 5.7 are the object of a detailed survey in Part 1 of this

²³⁵ Much has been said on *Ep.* 2.1 and the parallel with Catilina, I will refer for brevity to Gualandri 1979, 122, Fascione 2016, 454–55, Egetenmeyr 2021, 158–9, and Hindermann 2022, 64–6.

²³⁶ See also, the word-game in *Ep.* 2.1.3 *leges Theodosianas calcans Theodoricianasque proponens*, 'he tramples on the Theodosian laws and issues the Theodorician laws'.

²³⁷ The parasite in Terentius' *Eunuchus*.

²³⁸ See Marolla 2023a, 190–3.

²³⁹ On slander cf. *Ep.* 3.13.2. For further models of *Ep.* 2.1 see Hindermann 2022, 58–60.

commentary, I will limit myself to signalling similarities with the description of Gnatho, starting with the biting opening of the invective section in *Ep.* 3.13.

*Est enim hic gurgis de sutoribus fabularum, de concinnatoribus criminum,
de sinistrarum opinionum duplicatoribus. (Ep. 3.13.2)*

This man here is an abyss of patchers of falsehoods, contrivers of crimes, magnifiers of bad opinions.

Socially, Seronatus, Gnatho and the informants are all parvenus and owe their riches to their cunning schemes; however, they are also Romans and, for that, they are described as worse than barbarians and abhorrent to Sidonius, who cannot tolerate, let alone forgive, their predatory attitude.²⁴⁰ It is as if, in all four letters, their wickedness also reverberates on the outside: monstrous looks, ridicule attitude, awful manners, and inappropriate clothing are an extension of the inner depravity of these men. In these letters, physical descriptions waver from ridicule to grotesque and are often complemented by *Realien* and metaphors drawn from the animal world. Let us compare the mention of Seronatus ‘the enormous whale’ with the parasite of *Ep.* 3.13: he too is a glutton, a ‘haunter of banquets’ (*Ep.* 3.13.3 *sectator epularum*), his body is fouler than a corpse on a funeral pile (*Ep.* 3.13.5 *sordidior est atque deformior cadauere rogali*), his heavy bulk is ‘constricted by gout and relaxed by fat’ (*Ep.* 3.13.7 *sui molem vinctam podagra pinguedine solutam*),²⁴¹ he has ulcerous and enormous ‘elephantine ears’ (*Ep.* 3.13.6 *aures immanitate barrinas*), a protruding mouth with beastly lips (*Ibid.* *rictu ferinum*) and rotten teeth caused by excessive eating (*Ibid.*).

²⁴⁰ For the possibility the informants in *Ep.* 5.7 are Romans see Marolla 2023a, 192; on the parasite of *Ep.* 3.13 being a Roman but also presumably a fictitious character see Giannotti 2016, 228–31 (also for the *status quaestionis*) and Mathisen 2020a, 99.

²⁴¹ Further shaming comments on Gnatho’s obesity (in particular his ‘flaccid breasts’ and ‘pendulous belly’ are also in *Ep.* 3.13.8 and 9. See Giannotti 2016, 245–55.

For a time, Sidonius strongly and openly opposes the cooperation with the Visigoth king Euric, strikingly different from his Romanised predecessor Theoderic II, and *Epp.* 2.1, 3.13, 5.7 and 5.13 can be dated to a timespan in which it was still possible for Sidonius to openly criticise and to mock as ‘contaminated’ anyone enriching himself thanks to Euric’s or the Burgundian court at the expense of fellow Romans. However, this uncompromising position would be short-lived and would only be limited to Sidonius’ earlier production: the political upheaval in the years following his election to bishop in 469, will inevitably lead him to a more conciliating view of the collaboration with barbarians: Sidonius will benefit from Burgundian help in defending Clermont (471–474), and, once in exile, only thanks to the influence of his friend Leo of Narbonne at Euric’s court will he be free again.

Seronatus’ itinerary

The first piece of information given on the road trip of Seronatus involves his leaving Tolosa (modern-day Toulouse), the capital of the Visigothic kingdom, and moving towards Clausetia, which is ‘unlocated’ in topographical tools.²⁴² It would seem that the spelling *Clausetia* is genuinely the archetypal reading, being the consensus of both the α and δ branches: the question is whether to accept it or to consider emendation. Further information in the text concerns the difficult road ‘full of chasms’ and the possibility that Evanthius will be busy clearing the path from leaves and ‘filling the ditches’ for Seronatus to proceed with the journey. Sidonius then mentions the valley of the river Tarn from which the two are proceeding.

In his notes to the text, Loyen believes *Clausetia* to be modern-day ‘Les Clauzeilles’ and adds that its location is in the Lozère department;²⁴³ and yet,

²⁴² *Clausetia* is listed as *oppidum* in *TLL* 2.481.45 (by Schwering, mentioning Ihm) and as *vicus* in Talbert ed. 2000, 215; Mathisen 2020a, 157; Sivan, Mathisen *et al.* 2024.

²⁴³ Loyen 1970, 238 n. 41.

although the area of the Lozère would be coincidental with my reconstruction, I fail to have located what Loyen calls ‘Les Clauzeilles’. The only similarly-called area ‘La Clauzeille’, is south of Toulouse, thus its location would not be coherent with Seronatus’ journey north or with Loyen’s mention of the Lozère region. Therefore, in what follows, I offer a tentative solution. Since Seronatus’ journey starts in Toulouse, *Clausetia* could be located in the area of modern-day Les Grands Causses, in the Aveyron and Lozère *départements* and not far from the capital of the Visigothic kingdom.

Les Grands Causses hosts one of the biggest regional parks in France, is crossed by the river Tarn (coherently with Sidonius’ description), and is still a wild territory, known for its limestone plateaus, steep gorges and caves carved by the Tarn. The hasty attempt to remove fallen leaves and fill the potholes on the road to ease Seronatus’ passage seems evocative of such scenery: the ‘bulky’ Seronatus would then be described tentatively and precariously trying to make his way through a landscape of karstic rock and this image would match the satirical tone of the letter.

The journey continues with Seronatus terrorising the ‘nearby Gabalitans’ (*e proximo*) and Sidonius points out that these people live scattered (*singulos sparsos*), in the Gévaudan area, once theirs. From Gregory of Tours, we learn that the territory of Gabalitans formally came under Visigothic jurisdiction with Euric, and it seems plausible that their being ‘city-less’ (*inoppidati*), as Sidonius says, refers to Visigoths effectively taking control over the area.²⁴⁴ As the commentary further explains, the former *Anderitum Gabalum*, modern-day Javols,²⁴⁵ was a small settlement chief city of Gabali, visible in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* mid-way between *Segodunum* (Rodez) and *Ruessio* (St. Paulien) on the road connecting Toulouse to Clermont/Lyon.

Note that this reconstruction is also coherent with part of the journey of Sidonius’ book in *Carm.* 24 (23-35): the itinerary would match Seronatus’, though

²⁴⁴ Cf. Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.20.

²⁴⁵ Ferdière *et al.* 2009; De Rose Evans *et al.* 2009.

in the opposite direction. In the *carmen*, the book moves south from the ‘snow-covered land of the Gabali’: it then visits Justinus and Ferreolus, whose houses were in the Causses area, and then crosses the river Tarn.²⁴⁶

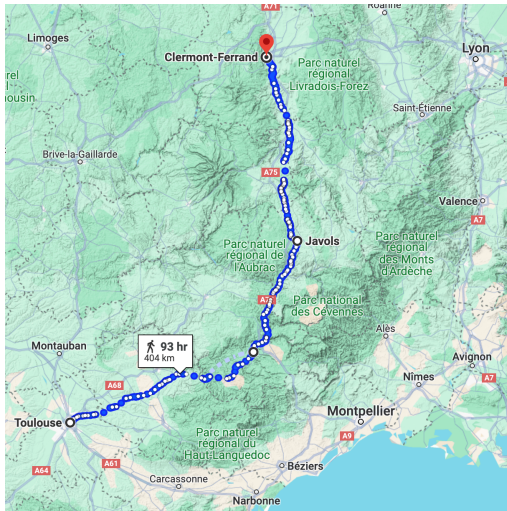


Figure xxx: Simulation of the itinerary from Toulouse to Clermont-Ferrand run with ©Google Maps.

Seronatus stays in the Gabali’s area hunting them down for taxes. Despite being particularly rough, the Gévaudain was crossed by a complex system of roads: not only did the famous Via Agrippa pass south of the capital Anderitum (now Javols) and connect the south of Gaul to the north (Lyon in particular),²⁴⁷ but these lands were also crossed by the road dubbed *la rocade sud du Massif Central*: a ‘beltway’ connecting Lyon to Toulouse (via Javols, Rodez and Cahors).²⁴⁸ Digital tools, such as *Omnes Viae*,²⁴⁹ allow one to check the feasibility of the journey Sidonius describes: if one runs a simulation of the journey from Toulouse to Clermont via

²⁴⁶ Demougeot 1972–1973, 44 Justinus’ house was located ‘près des frontières ruténo-gabales, vers les Causses, dans le sud-ouest de l’actuel département de la Lozère’. Similarly, Tonantius Ferreolus’ villa was located in Saint Laurent de Trèves, in the same area. On the journey of Sidonius’ book in *Carm.* 24, see Green 2022, 273–9, Santelia 2023, 265, 277–8.

²⁴⁷ On the archaeological findings related to Via Agrippa south of Javols and for the complex road system uncovered by excavations, different from previous reconstructions, see De Rose Evans et al. 2009, 257.

²⁴⁸ See Fedrière et al. 2009, 174 for this definition and for the inherent bibliography.

²⁴⁹ https://www.omnesviae.org/#TPPlace755_TPPlace730.

the major Roman roads (as are shown in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*), the result mostly matches the itinerary Sidonius describes, with a stop at Rodez (a little too north for this reconstruction, but still the easier way to go) and then, on the way up, at Anderitum. The itinerary would have then proceeded up north towards Clermont.

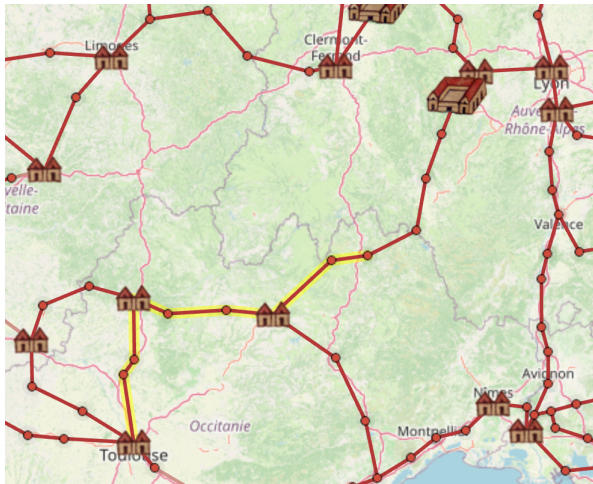


Figure xxx : Simulation of the itinerary from Toulouse to Anderitum/Javols via Roman roads as shown in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Clermont is also visible but the database does not give a direct itinerary from Javols to Clermont, passing by Brioude as one would expect. ©OmnesViae.

Date and internal chronology within the collection

According to Loyen's chronology, *Ep.* 5.13 was written at the end of 469 (same in *PLRE* 2, 403 on Evanthius), predating *Ep.* 2.1. Although Loyen does not offer any supporting evidence for his reasoning, his speculation, in this case, seems sustainable: the criticising but bantering tone of *Ep.* 5.13 turns into harshness in the rant of *Ep.* 2.1 and the parallel with Catilina, only hinted through insisting linguistic similarities in *Ep.* 5.13, takes form explicitly in *Ep.* 2.1. Thus, by the time Sidonius writes *Ep.* 2.1, Seronatus has finally become the 'enemy of the State' whose advent is only foreshadowed in *Ep.* 5.13. While in *Ep.* 5.13 Seronatus is a distant threat that is approaching Clermont, in *Ep.* 2.1 Sidonius has already experienced and suffered his presence. This reversal order is not surprising in terms of internal coherence and structure of the collection in books: *Ep.* 2.1 is a

caustic and political piece, which opens Book 2, right after the imperial authorisation to write satire in *Ep.* 1.11. Being more satirically charged than *Ep.* 5.13 it was right for *Ep.* 2.1 to be chosen to open the Book. At a later time, when Sidonius was putting together Book 5, he chose *Ep.* 5.13 for its spicy satirical content: this, however, does not disrupt the internal chronology of the collection, for three reasons: first, in both letters (as often in Sidonius) there are no explicit chronological elements; second, the internal chronological coherence only concerns major events and continued narratives (see *Ep.* 5.12 on the siege of Clermont) and last, the narratological timeframe of Book 5 is autumn and, in *Ep.* 5.13, the mention of the fallen leaves is coherent with its overall autumnal setting.²⁵⁰

Both *Epp.* 5.13 and 2.1 certainly pre-date *Ep.* 7.7: by the time Sidonius writes this letter, the situation is dramatically changed for all the political players involved. Sidonius first mentions Clermont's resistance to Visigothic sieges and the following defeat after emperor Julius Nepos' pact with them,²⁵¹ before turning to Seronatus' former active role in helping the Visigoth king Euric to annexe territories to his lands. However, his efforts and cunning schemes had been contrasted by the Arverni at whose hands, ultimately, Seronatus had been led to his downfall: first brought to trial in Rome, then condemned to death.²⁵²

Illi amore rei publicae Seronatum barbaris prouincias propinquantem non timuerunt legibus tradere, quem conuictum deinceps res publica uix praesumpsit occidere. (Ep. 7.7.2)

Out of love for the commonwealth, they did not fear to hand over Seronatus to justice when he was delivering entire provinces to the barbarians; while

²⁵⁰ On this see Marolla 2023a, 9–11.

²⁵¹ See the introduction to *Ep.* 5.12 for the seasonal sieges of Clermont.

²⁵² See van Waarden 2010, 355

the State itself barely dared to sentence him to death once he was found guilty.

As van Waarden highlighted, the passage revolves around criticism of the central government in Rome: though Sidonius uses the same word, *res publica*, in two consecutive lines, the ‘commonwealth’, which is the Arverni’s primary concern, is not the same as the ‘central government’ which takes its time before sentencing Seronatus, possibly because he had powerful connections in Rome. Evidently, by the time Sidonius writes *Ep.* 7.7.2, there is no place for banter or satire: the author was by then deeply discouraged and felt betrayed by his motherland for the cession of Clermont to Visigoths and he had turned profoundly bitter at the State for leaving him and his people to fend for themselves at first and then for having left them behind.

Language

It has long been established that Sidonius' mannerism is aimed at surprising the reader with linguistic prowess, nevertheless, *Ep.* 5.13 stands out, if compared to other letters, for the number of new coinages (§1 *ducaliter, praegubernantibus*, §2 *inoppidatos*),²⁵³ rarely-attested words conveying realism to his description (§1 *insorduit, uoraginosum, eruderare*, §2 *circumretit*, §4 *iurgiosorum*) or new/uncommon expressions (§1 *humo aduecta, scrobibus oppletis*). Moreover, as the commentary further explains, when writing invective, as already in *Ep.* 5.7, Sidonius draws on the Ciceronian language of the Verrines, the *Pro Cluentio* and the *Catilinarians* in particular.

Clausulation

The letter is consistently clausulated and this attention to rhythm and the overall careful composition would be somewhat expected, given the satirical nature of the piece and its presumable circulation at the time of writing, before the formal publication of the collection in 477. The regularity of rhythm and the repetition of the same clausulae in sequence are also reminiscent of invective; for Sidonian clausulation in slander and its models cf. the similar remarks concerning *Ep.* 5.7 and its model: Apuleian invective and its incantation-like formulaic language.²⁵⁴

ApC= Anapaest cretic ˘˘ – –˘˘ x

ApDitroch= Anapaest ditrochee ˘˘ – –˘˘ – x

CC= double cretic –˘ – –˘˘ x

CDitroch= cretic ditrochee –˘ – –˘˘ – x

ChorC= choriamb cretic –˘˘ – –˘˘ x

ChorS = choriamb spondee –˘˘ – – x

CI= cretic iamb –˘ – ˘˘ x

²⁵⁴ Marolla 2023a, 36-8 and 191.

CS= cretic spondee $\bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$
 CT= cretic tribrach $\bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \cup \cup x$
 DactC= dactyl cretic $\bar{\cup} \cup \cup \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$
 DactI= dactyl iamb $\bar{\cup} \cup \cup \cup x$
 P¹C = paeon I cretic $\bar{\cup} \cup \cup \cup \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$
 P¹S= paeon I spondee $\bar{\cup} \cup \cup \cup \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$
 P⁴S= paeon IV spondee $\cup \cup \cup \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$
 P⁴C = Paeon IV cretic $\cup \cup \cup \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{x}$

1. nosti redire?	- - u - (cursus planus)
credo quod nondum	CS
uel per haec disce.	CS
pergit Euanthius	CC
cogit eruderare,	CDitroch
agger insorduit.	CC
si quid uoraginosum est,	- u - u - x
scrobibus oppletis	P ⁴ S
trepidus exaequat,	P ⁴ S
antecessurus,	CS
musculis similis	CT
saxosa uel breuia	CT
corpu-lentiam praegubernantibus.	CCC
2. quod piger mole	CS
proximo infertur;	CS
ge-neribus exhaurit,	P ⁴ S
fraude circumretit,	-U- -- X
re-dire permittens,	CS
annu-um datauere.	CS

3. immi-nentis aduentus,	CS
quod cateruatim,	CS
cumque conuerterit,	CC
uincula trahentes;	P ¹ S
do-lore laetatur,	CS
pascitur fame,	CI
pu-nire damnandos;	CS
cri-nem uiris nutrit,	CS
mul-eribus incidit;	P ⁴ S
uenia respexerit,	P ⁴ C
ue-nalitas soluit,	CS
uanitas illos,	CS
nul-los misericordia.	P ¹ C
Marcus Arpinas	CS
Publius Mantuanus	CD
sufficere possunt.	P ¹ S
4. appropinquare,	CS
Proditioni-bus deus obuiet,	DactC
iurgiosorum,	CS
(si quae mouentur,	- - u - x (cursus planus)
pacti-onibus consule,	CC
contra tributa securitatibus,	CI
uel quod praestet inueniat.	CT
is accipere quid sentiam?	P ⁴ C
suprascriptum damno uerentur;	- - u - x (cursus planus)
beneficia suspecta sunt.	P ⁴ C

SIDONIUS PANNYCHIO SUO

1. Seronatum Tolosa nosti redire? Si nondum, et credo quod nondum, uel per haec disce. Iam Clausetiam pergit Euanthius iamque contractas operas cogit eruderare, si quid forte deiectu caducae frondis agger insorduit. Certe si quid uoraginosum est, ipse humo aduecta scrobibus oppletis trepidus exaequat, utpote beluam suam de ualle Tarnis ducaliter antecessurus, musculis similis inter saxosa uel breuia ballenarum corpulentiam praegubernantibus.

2. At ille sic ira celer, quod piger mole, ceu draco e specu uix euolutus iam metu exanguibus Gabalitanis e proximo infertur; quos singulos sparsos inoppidatos nunc inauditis indictionum generibus exhaurit, nunc flexuosa calumniarum fraude circumretit, ne tum quidem domum laboriosos redire permittens, cum tributum annuum datauere.

3. Signum et hoc certum est imminentis aduentus, quod cateruatim, quo se cumque conuerterit, uincti trahuntur uincula trahentes; quorum dolore laetatur, pascitur fame, praecipue pulchrum arbitratus ante turpare quam punire damnandos; crinem uiris nutrit, mulieribus incidit; e quibus tamen si rara quosdam uenia respexerit, hos uenalitas soluit, uanitas illos, nullos misericordia. Sed explicandae bestiae tali nec oratorum princeps Marcus Arpinas nec poetarum Publius Mantuanus sufficere possunt.

PAMNITHIO ACMNP : (PANNITIO Vat1661 : PAMNITHESIO S : PAMNITIO F : PANNITHIO RT) PANNYCHIO
L Leip (modern hand) Anderson Loyen

1

Euantius α (Euuantius Vat1661) : Euuanthius L Leip T : Euuantius MP

Operas cogit contractas Vat1661 : contractos operam L

Tarnis αMPT : Tarnis L

ballenarum αLM : ballaenarum Lütjohann

2

mole piger α : piger mole δ

super lineam vel circumvenit M

demum α : domum δ

4. Proinde quia dicitur haec ipsa perniciēs appropinquare, cuius proditiōibus deus obuiet, praeueni morbum prouidentiae salubritate contraque lites iurgiosorum, si quae mouentur, pactionibus consule, contra tributa securitatibus, ne malus homo rebus bonorum uel quod noceat uel quod praestet inueniat. In summa, de Seronato uis accipere quid sentiam? Ceteri affligi per suprascriptum damno uerentur; mihi latronis et beneficia suspecta sunt. Vale.

3

misericordia nullos α

Harpinas ACVat1661LMP (also signalled in *TLL* 2.631.44 by Vollmer)

4

dampno CVat1661M (P *ante correctionem*)

SIDONIUS TO HIS DEAR PAMNICHIOUS

1. Did you know that Seronatus is coming back from Toulouse? If you didn't know it yet, and I believe you didn't, well, you learn it hereby. Now Evanthius is heading for Clausetia and now he's urging the recruited labourers to clear up, in case the road has by chance become dirty because of the fall of the shed leaves. Certainly, if there's a road full of ruts, he himself, having conveyed the soil and filled the potholes, is nervously levelling them, seeing that he intends to precede that wild beast of his in leaderly fashion from the valley of the river Tarn, resembling the little fishes that lead the way for the corpulence of whales through rocky or shallow waters.

2. And yet that man, on the other hand, as quick to anger as he is sluggish from bulk, like a dragon that can barely slither out of his den, rides from nearby to the Gabalitans, already pale with fear; separated, scattered, townless as they are, he is now exhausting them with kinds of taxes never heard of, he is now ensnaring them in tortuous deceit of false accusations, and he does not allow the industrious ones to go back home even at the time when they have paid the yearly tribute.

3. This too is a certain sign of his impending arrival: that in large numbers, wherever he turns, chained men are dragged, dragging their chains. In their pain he rejoices, he thrives on their hunger, believing that it is extremely enjoyable to make those that are to be condemned unsightly before punishing them. He has men growing their hair and he cuts that of women; however, if he looks upon some of them with rare indulgence, it is venality that releases some, deception others, compassion no one. But not even Marcus of Arpinum, the most distinguished of orators, nor Publius of Mantua, the most eminent of poets, would be adequate to describing such a beast.

4. Therefore, since it is said that this very calamity (whose betrayals may God prevent) is approaching, do forestall the disease with the healthiness of foresight, and in the face of the accusations of litigious men, if they accuse you, take care of them with deals, in the faces of taxes, with guarantees, so that this wicked man does not find in the affairs of good men either something that he can harm or that

he can borrow. To sum up, do you wish to hear what I think of Seronatus? The others fear to suffer loss at the above-mentioned man's hands, to me, even this bandit's benefactions are suspicious. Farewell.

PANNYCHIO SUO: *Pamnithio* is the stemmatically demanded reading, but traditionally editors, since the *editio princeps*, have chosen *Pannychio*, the reading peculiar to *L*, presumably out of respect for its antiquity and because the addressee is deemed to be identical with *Pannichius*, one of the candidates for the Bourges bishopric in *Ep.* 7.9.18. Why is the reading in *L* different from the rest of the archetype as we can reconstruct it? Either *L* had access to a superior manuscript or the choice fits into a Carolingian concern about orthography which leads scribes to correct (at time hypercorrect) spellings. Mathisen 1982, 380 (updating *PLRE*), interprets *Ep.* 5.13.4 *contra lites ... securitatibus* as evidence that the addressee could be *comes civitatis*, but see the Introduction for a different view. See also Kaufmann 1995, 328 and van Waarden 2010, 499.

Seronatum Tolosa nosti redire?: The beginning of the letter is straightforward and informal. Asking the addressee if he is aware of some piece of news is a commonplace of epistolary writing; cf. the opening sentences of Cic. *Att.* 1.15.1 *Asiam Quinto, suauissimo fratri, obtigisse audisti*, and in particular Plin. *Ep.* 8.8.1 *Vidistine aliquando Clitumnum fontem? Si nondum (et puto nondum: alioqui narrasses mihi), uide*, ‘Have you ever seen the source of the Clitumnus? If not, and I think not or you would have told me, go see it’ as well as Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.1 and 8.22.1, on which see Geisler 1887, 366–7, Cugusi 1983, 79–80 and Bellès 1998, 120 n. 94. The syncopated form *nost* is coherent with an informal stylistic register; on the revitalization of syncope in late Latin and for the grammarian Consentius’ definition, see Mari 2021, 141. Sidonius despised Seronatus for his role as a tax collector and his collusion with the Visigoths: by signalling that he is coming back from Toulouse —the capital of the Visigothic kingdom of Aquitania— the author is malevolently alluding to his role at court there and pointing to his strong connection with the headquarters of the Visigothic government. Cf. *Ep.* 2.1.1 (about Seronatus) *redii ... nuper Aturibus*, *Ep.* 7.7.2 (on his role in handing down territories to Visigoths), and see the Introduction.

Si nondum, et credo quod nondum, uel per haec disce: The imperative conveys familiarity with the addressee and, just like in the opening sentence, the explicit mention that the letter provides the recipient with some piece of news (in case it is not already known) is commonplace in epistolary writing. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* 8.8.1 (on which see *supra*) and, although specifically concerning a *commendatus*, Symm. *Ep.* 9.56 *si nondum tibi cognitus est, praestet clientelae aditum, si iam notus, augmentum*; ‘if you do not know him already, he will benefit from your protection, if you do know him, he’ll benefit from it even more’ and in particular Hier. *Ep.* 3.3 to Rufinus: *indicamus tibi, ut, si nescis, discas, si ante cognouisti, pariter gaudeamus*; ‘I tell you this so that if you are not aware of it, you may learn it, and, if you already know, we may rejoice together’. Cf. also Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.7 *propter quod discite cito* ‘let me tell you briefly’, on which see van Waarden 2010, 314.

Iam Clausetiam pergit Euanthius: *Clausetia* is still unlocated, and there are no alternative readings in the mss. which may suggest a different toponym; though I would not exclude corruption. Loyer’s proposed location, *Les Clauzeilles* (often cited by scholars), is geographically inconsistent with the journey, therefore I suggest the area could match modern-day Clauselles, a village in Les Grands Causses area, see the Introduction. In *PLRE* 2, 403 Euanthius is described as ‘either an official responsible for maintaining roads or the governor of the province’ (of Aquitania Prima): note that the latter would be coherent with Seronatus being the vicarius. This man is not listed in *PCBE* and would not appear to be otherwise attested.

iamque contractas operas cogit eruderare: Euanthius would have recruited labourers to clear the way for Seronatus’ passage. Note the use of the verb *eruderare*, only attested in Varro *Rust.* 2.2.7, Vitruvius 7.1.1, and Ambrose (*Epist.* 77(22).2, *In Luc.* 9.30, *Nab.* 1.2, *Obit. Theod.* 44). The verb is a favourite of Sidonius, who uses it both with the technical meaning of ‘cleaning the soil’, as in

this passage, and with a metaphorical sense, as in *Epp.* 5.7.7, 5.15.1 and 7.6.3; on which see Gualandri 1979, 113 and Marolla 2023, 238.

si ... deiectu caducae frondis agger insorduit: The expression *caduca frons* to indicate fallen leaves is poetic and is first attested in Verg. *Georg.* 1.368 *frondes volitare caducas*, with few occurrences in Ov. *Met.* 7.840 and 9.651, *Trist.* 3.1.45, and Calp. *Ecl.* 5.116. Note that in all five passages, *caduc** is chosen as hexameter-ending, unlike Sidon. *Ep.* 5.13, coherently with his tendency to avoid the heroic clausula (cf. also the iambic Sen. *Oed.* 600 and Solinus 30.11). The lyric and decadent scenery evoked by fallen leaves —incidentally suggesting an autumnal setting— contrasts with the following *agger insorduit*, coherently with the satirical tone of the passage. *Insordesco* is rare and only attested in Rut. Nam. 1.617 *cum subitis tectus nimbis insorduit aether*, where it concerns clouds, suddenly blackening the sky, ‘filthying the ether’ (as in Petron. Bonon. *Serm.* 1.13) and in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.2.16 *si turbo ... insorduit, immane turgescit pelagus* (on wind darkening and swelling the waves of the lake) and with a metaphorical meaning in *Ep.* 4.12.3 *serenitas laetitiae ... nubilo superducti maeroris insorduit*. The occurrence in *Ep.* 5.13 is the only one concerning a sullied soil. On the allusion to Rutilius Namatianus see Kelly 2020, 154–5, on the other Sidonian occurrences see *TLL* 7.1.1942.7381 (by Szantyr), Amherdt 2001, 315, and Hindermann 2022, 162.

uoraginosum: Just like *insordesco*, the adjective *uoraginosus* is rarely attested, with its first occurrence in Caes. *Hisp.* 29 *palustri et uoraginoso solo*, where it concerns the troops’ difficulty in walking the boggy soil near a river — note that Seronatus too is crossing the valley of a river, on which more below. Among other occurrences, cf. Frontin. *Strat.* 2.5.7 (on a rough and steep location) and in particular the description of the difficult journey amidst swamp-water and slippery mud in Apul. *Met.* 9.9 (*uiam*) *lacunosis incilibus voraginosam*, ‘(a road) ruined by water-filled ditches’. See Sidon. *Ep.* 2.2.16 where the adjective refers to the marshy soil surrounding the lake, *Carm.* 23.421 on the deeps of the Sea of Marmara and cf. the similar ‘path rugged for the mud’ in Ruric. *Ep.* 1.17.2 *semitam*

... *caeno voraginosam*. On this adjective in Sidonius, see Onorato 2016, 193 Hindermann 2022, 160 and Santelia 2023, 261.

ipse humo aduecta scrobibus oppletis trepidus exaequat: The use of heavily-clausulated and rare expressions in the same passage, like *humo aduecta* (previously attested exclusively in Columella 2.15) or *scrobis oppletus*, first attested here, enhance the artificiality of the hasty and clumsy attempts to make way for Seronatus' passage.

utpote beluam suam: *Belua* can be used in particular for a sea animal of big dimensions like a whale (see *infra*) and is here ironically referred to Seronatus. The noun occurs in numerous contexts as an abusive and denigrating way of referring to one's adversaries since Plautus (with 9 occurrences): an insult targeting a character's foulness or greed. Cf. in particular the use of the metaphor in Cicero to belittle his political enemies and label them as morally abject: e.g. in *Verr.* 2.5.42.109 (*immanis*), *Pis.* 1.1 and 4.8 (*importuna*), *Mil.* 32 (*nefaria*), and, among the numerous mentions of Mark Antony as 'the beast', see *Phil.* 3.11.28 (*taeterrima*), 4.5.12 (*immanis tetraquae*), 6.8.7 (*importunissima*), 7.9.27 (*pestifera*). Cf. also *Sull.* 76 on Catilinarians as *beluae ... immanes ac ferae forma hominum indutae*, '... enormous and ferocious beasts clothed in human form'. In Sidon. *Ep.* 4.1.4, *secundum beluas* defines barbaric ferocity and dullness; cf. in particular *Carm.* 16.25 and 30, where the *monstrum* and *belua* is the whale which had eaten Jonah in the Bible (*Jon.* 1.11) on this Santelia 2023, 141. On *belua* see *TLL* 2.1861.75–1862.35, Cossarini 1983, 51–99 and 161–163, Opelt 1965, 143–4, Traina 1984, Fascione 2016, 458 and cf. below for the similar mentions of *bestiae* in Sidonius.

de ualle Tarnis: note that the reading *Tarnis* is unusually correct only in *L.* Seronatus is described as proceeding from Toulouse crossing the valley of the Tarn, a river rising in the Massif Central (Mount Lozère) and flowing West where

it becomes a tributary of the Garonne (see the Introduction for the geographical features of the valley).

ducaliter antecessurus: The adverb, meaning ‘in leaderly fashion’, is only attested in Sidonius, here and in *Ep.* 8.6.1 *Caesarem ... nullum rem militarem ducalius administrasse*, ‘Caesar ... unsurpassed in his generalship’ (see Gualandri 1979, 179 n. 115 for a list of adverbial hapax legomena in Sidonius). Note also that the future participle *antecessur** only has 3 other occurrences in total: Petr. 17.4.2 and Plin. *Ep.* 10.67 (both concerning the arrival of writings), and also Sidon. *Ep.* 8.12.6, a mild reproach to the addressee, because even a snail would get there before he does.

musculis similis inter saxosa uel breuia ballenarum corpulentiam praegubernantibus: Euanthius’ escorting Seronatus is compared to a tiny pilotfish guiding a big and bulky whale in shallow waters. The peculiar bond between whales and *musculi* is mentioned in Plut. *De sollertia animalium* 31.4–5, describing how the little fish ‘always precedes the whale’ and guides its trajectory avoiding shallows, lagoons and straits which may be difficult to exit. The whale and the pilotfish are examples of friendship in the animal world in Plin. *Nat.* 9.186 *infestantia magnitudinem vada praenatans demonstrat oculorumque vice fungitur*, ‘swimming in front of the whale, it shows her the shallows harmful to her bulk and performs for her the function of the sight’ (see also 11.165). The metaphor indicates lack of military guidance in Claudian *In Eutrop.* 2.425–31 (see Charlet 2017, 93 n. 112). For similar shaming images cf. Juv. 4.107 *Montani quoque uenter adest abdomine tardus*, ‘there is also the belly of Montanus, sluggish for his paunch’ or Juv. 8.147 on the ‘fat Lateranus’. Cf. the mention of the *corpulentia* of fishes, impeding them from proceeding and thus ‘entrapping them’ in the lake in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.2.17, and the number of spiteful remarks on Gnatho’s misshaped body in *Ep.* 3.13 (on which see the Introduction), Giannotti 2016, 254–5, van Waarden 2016, 132, and Hindermann 2022, 166. Note also that *praeguberno* is another Sidonian hapax,

attested exclusively in this letter, as noted in *TLL* 10.2.668.47–50 by Breimeier; on neologisms in this author see Gualandri 1979, 180, Wolff 2020, 398–9.

§2

At ille sic ira celer, quod piger mole: Anger and ferociousness are topical features of the representation of tyrants (like in Sen. *De ira* 1.2.3 fr. 1 and 2.19.5), barbarians, barbarian leaders or Romans acting like barbarians (as in Sidon. *Epp.* 5.6 and 5.7). Cf. *Ep.* 8.11.4: the departed and much-loved Lampridius is not immune to a dry remark on his irascibility and, unsurprisingly, he is a citizen of Euric's Visigothic kingdom. See Gualandri 2000, 111, Fascione 2019, 49 and Marolla 2023, 172, 186–7 and 228. Sidonius also insists on the bulkiness of Seronatus: making fun of the adversary for his appearance, as if the outer physical appearance is an extension of the inner moral corruption, is a standard oratorical expedient: see, on Cicero, Tondo 2003.

ceu draco e specu uix euolutus: Seronatus is dangerous, like a dragon slithering out of its den. The noun *draco* indicates the mythological and monstrous anguiform beast living in a cave in numerous Latin contexts, e.g. Phaed. 4.21.3–4 (the fable of the fox and the dragon), Aug. *Gen. ad litt.* 3.9.13 (on dragons being winged) and *in psalm.* 148.9 (on their being real creatures, also mentioned in the Bible), see *TLL* 5.1.2063.9–26 (by Wulff). Among the numerous mentions of Romans fighting enormous snakes see e.g. Val. Max. 1.8. *ext.* 19 and Gell. 7.3 on the — one hundred and twenty feet long — ‘Bagrada dragon’. See the Introduction on the image of the political enemy as a snake already in Demosthenes, though, as Gualandri 1979, 123 points out, Seronatus is not only a monster but his features evoke the canonical image of the devil, as in numerous attacks of Jerome (on which more in the above). For an overview of the Graeco-Roman tradition and their following Christianisation, i.e. a manifestation of the devil, see Ogden 2013 and Ogden 2021, *passim*. Cf. the image of serpents in *Ep.* 5.6.2 and 5.7.4, 6 and 7 (presumably Roman) spies in the service of Burgundians (on which Marolla 2023,

184, 228, 233, 237); other mentions of ‘dragons’ in Sidonius are in *Carm.* 2.80 *draconigena*, ‘dragon-born’, 2.232–3 (the Ostrogothic *dracones* opposed to the imperial *aquilas* of Anthemius, see Oppedisano forthcoming), and 9.70 (on Jason and dragon’s teeth, see Santelia 2023, 32–3).

metu exanguibus: A rare expression, effectively conveying the image of petrifying terror, previously attested in disturbing contexts in Bell. *Afr.* 90.2, Ov. *Met.* 9.224, Curt. 4.14.2, 7.2.13, 9.5.26, Stat. *Theb.* 3.361 and 7.49 Sen. *Phaedr.* 1053 and Prud. *Psych.* 709. Note that the snake image might have inspired Sidonius’ lexical choice and prompted a word-game (*ex anguis* ‘from the snake’).

Gabalitanis ... quos singulos sparsos inoppidatos: This variant of the ethnic name Gabali is only attested in Sidonius, also in *Carm.* 24.20–25 and in *Ep.* 7.6.7 — in a list of cities with vacant episcopal sees — and later in Gregory of Tours. These peoples, whom Caesar had subdued, were settled in modern-day Lozère, south of the Arverni and north of the Ruteni: see Ihm 1910, Demougeot 1972–1973, *passim*, Green 2022, 275, Santelia 2023, 277–8. This is the only known occurrence of *inoppidatus*, meaning ‘deprived of a city’. The Gabalitans’ being scattered and ‘city-less’ may be the consequence of the Visigoths taking possession of their area with the support of Seronatus, as Loyen (1970, xviii) believes, but this may also be an exaggeration: they are voluntarily fleeing their homes to escape Seronatus, who is hunting them down to extort taxes. Cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.3 *implet cotidie silvas fugientibus, villas hospitibus ... carceres clericis*. ‘(Seronatus) daily fills woods with fugitives, villas with barbarians ... prisons with priests’ on which Hindermann 2022, 74–5.

nunc inauditis indictionum generibus exaurit: The expression *inauditum genus* + gen. occurs mostly in denigrating contexts, e.g. Plin. *Nat.* 36.114 (*luxuriae*), Ps. Quint. *Decl.* 17.1 (*discriminis*), Cypr. *Ep.* 55.9.2 (*poenarum*, in a Christian sense) and Sidon. *Ep.* 4.23.2 (*poenarum*, with a juridical meaning). On *indictio* meaning metonymically a ‘tax’ see TLL 1161.37–47 (by Vetter). See Gualandri 1979, 122–

3 on ‘*exhaurit*’ recalling and ‘prolonging’ the previous metaphor of the *draco*, being elsewhere used for anguiform monsters e.g. Claud. *Ruf. Praef.* 3–4 (*Python*) *hauriret hiatu/flumina*. Cf. *Ep.* 2.1.1 on Seronatus-Catilina enjoying drinking the blood of his victims —an echo of Catilina’s drinking human blood mixed with wine in Sall. *Cat.* 22.1— on this, see Gualandri 1979, 122, Fascione 2016, 454 and Hindermann 2022, 66.

nunc flexuosa calumniarum fraude circumretit: *flexuositas* is a distinctive feature of slithering animals (e.g. Plin. *Nat.* 9.73, Ambr. *Tob.* 11.12.41, Macr. *Sat.* 1.17.67, and in particular Prud. *Cath.* 6.140 where it concerns the devil), but Sidonius here plays on the ambivalence of the noun also indicating an ‘intricate’ web of slander entrapping the Gabalitans, see *TLL* 6.1.908.15–6 (by Klee). Note also the rarely-attested *circumretio*, previously attested with this meaning in Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.150 on Verres being ‘entrapped’, and Lucr. 5.1152 on violence and injustice ensnaring people. On the protracted dragon metaphor, see Gualandri 1979, 122–3. For Seronatus’ thievishness and cruelty cf. *Ep.* 2.1.2, on its Ciceronian and Sallustian models see Montone 2017, 25 and Hindermann 2022, 69.

cum tributum annuum datauere: Seronatus is vexing the Gabalitans, even after they pay him taxes. *Dato* is rendered by Loyen 1970, 195 into ‘ils ont largement acquitté’ while Anderson 1965, 213 had previously pointed out that property tax was paid in three instalments: 1 Sept., 1 Jan., 1 May, which may explain the use of the frequentative. I would also add that, in general, Sidonius shows a preference for frequentative forms, see *lectito* in *Epp.* 5.1.1 and 5.8.1, and comments in Marolla 2023, 56 and 258.

§3

Signum et hoc certum est imminentis aduentus: The arrival of Seronatus is an apocalyptic event and, as stated before, the passage is evocative of biblical

language, cf. Cypr. *Ep.* 58.7.1 where it is the Antichrist's arrival to be imminent. Cf. also Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.1 on Seronatus' wreaking havoc return.

quod cateruatim ... uincti trahuntur uincula trahentes: Savaron rightly spotted similarities with Sulp. *Dial.* 3.4 on the ill-tempered and blood-thirsty Avitianus, a *bestia*, who entered Tours *sequentibus eum miserabili facie ordinibus catenatis*, 'followed by ranks of pitiful captives in chains'. The chains were the canonical symbol of submission and were the typical punishment of slaves (see for instance Harper 2011, 219–48), and yet, it should be emphasised that, despite being described as a subjugated foreign tribe (like their ancestors), the Gabalitanus are Romans, this is happening on Roman soil, and Seronatus himself—and this is the worst part—is a Roman vexing Romans. As Fascione 2016 pointed out, his behaviour is even more feral and shocking than his looks. The polyptoton *trahuntur ... trahentes* allows Sidonius to achieve a rhetorically effective passage and a P1S clausula (on which more *supra*).

quorum dolore laetatur, pascitur fame: according to Sen. *Tranqu.* 15.5 *alienis delectari malis voluptas inhumana*, it is un-human to take delight in the misfortunes of others, coherently with Seronatus' beastly behaviour. This attitude is typical of tyrants: cf. Sen. *Thy.* 907 *miserum uidere nolo, sed dum fit miser*, on Atrius, who is not content 'to see his brother broken', he wants to witness to his 'being broken'. See also Ambr. *Tob.* 14.50 (against usury) *de aerumnis ditaris, de lacrimis lucrum quaeris, de fame aliena pascaris*, 'you are enriched by miseries, you seek to gain from tears, you feed on the hunger of others', and cf. also *Ep.* 2.1.1 on the chaos caused by Seronatus' arrival.

praecipue ... ante turpare quam punire damnandos: Seronatus takes the utmost pleasure in disfiguring his prisoners, showing once more his beastly behaviour. It should be emphasised it is Roman citizens that he is shaming into submission.

crinem uiris nutrit, mulieribus incidit: the expression *crinem nutrire* is rarely attested, see Firm. *Err.* 4.2 on feminine *nutriti crines*. Seronatus' barbaric acts go against Roman social conventions, on which see Carcopino 1940, 157–60, and even against nature, according to 1 Cor. 11.14–15 *nec ipsa natura docet uos quod uir quidem, si comam nutriat, ignominia est illi; mulier uero, si comam nutriat, gloria est illi?* on 'nature teaching' that if men grow their hair they are shamed, while women are praised for it. *Crinem incidere* is only attested in Stat. *Silv.* 3.4.90, when Cupid cuts Earinus' locks. It is then significantly attested, after Sidonius, in Burgundian legislation: *LB Continuatio* 92 is entirely dedicated to the crime of cutting women's hair to shame them (with different compensations for the victim being a citizen, a freedwoman or a servant). See the Introduction on Seronatus' barbaric attitude.

hos uenalitas soluit, uanitas illos, nullos misericordia: in the rare event that Seronatus releases prisoners, it is never out of compassion but either for money or out of deception. The passage is heavily clausulated: this sentence alone has three clausulae, two cretic spondee and one paeon 1 cretic clausula.

explicandae bestiae tali: Cf. Cic. *Clu.* 41 *omnes ut aliquam immanem ac perniciosam bestiam pestemque fugiebant*, 'everyone avoided Oppianicus like an enormous, dangerous beast, like a plague' and see *Cat.* 2.2 where Catilina is a beast about to devour the city before it is snatched from his jaws. For a survey on *bestia* in Republican and Augustan Latin see Cossarini 1983, 176–7 and Traina 1984. See the predatory attitude of barbarians or Romans acting like barbarians in Sidon. *Epp.* 4.1.4 *bestialium rigidarumque nationum corda*, 'the hearts of those beastly and hardened peoples', 5.7.4 *in quaestionibus bestiae*, 'they are beasts in disputes' (but also *passsim* mentions to all sorts of animals the informants are compared to), see Marolla 2023, 191–3. On the beastly behaviour of Seronatus in *Ep.* 2.1.2, see Fascione 2016, 456–7, Hindermann 2022, 68–71.

nec oratorum princeps Marcus Arpinas nec poetarum Publius Mantuanus: Sidonius mentions both Cicero and Vergil with the toponyms of their birthplace, as he is accustomed to do, since there are 8 occurrences of *Arpinas* and 5 of *Mantuanus* in his corpus (on this see Marolla 2023, 161). The definition *princeps oratorum* is Ciceronian: in *Brut.* 141 *a doctis oratorum est princeps iudicatus* concerns the consensus on Demosthenes, while in 159 it refers to Crassus' oratorical prowess, cf. also Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.22 *eius schola principes oratorum dedit* (on Greek Atticism). The two authors are not simply canonical *exempla*: there are numerous allusions to them in *Ep.* 5.13: for Cicero see commentary on §1 (*belua*) §2 (*circumretit*), §3 (on *bestia*) §4 (on *perniciēs* and a *morbus*); for Vergil see commentary on §2 (*si ... deiectu...*), §4 (*mihi latronis et beneficia...*)

§4

Proinde quia dicitur haec ipsa perniciēs appropinquare: The last section recalls the opening of the letter, Seronatus is approaching and it is wise to be prepared. The ironic mention of someone as *perniciēs*, 'a disgrace' is common since comedy, see e.g. Plaut. *Most.* 3 (a servant, 'ruin' of his master), Ter. *Ad.* 188 (a *leno*), and many occurrences in Cicero, such e.g. *Verr.* 1.2 (on Verres being a *perniciēs prouinciae Siciliae*) *Cat.* 1.5, 1.8, 1.11, 2.1, 4.22 (on the Catilinarians as a *perniciēs rei publicae*) and *Clu.* 41 on which see §3 *explicandae bestiae tali*. On Seronatus as a new Catilina in *Ep.* 2.1.1, see Fascione 2016, *passim*, Montone 2017, 25–6, Hindermann 2022, 64–6.

praeueni morbum prouidentiae salubritate: This image, already attested in Demosthenes (25.50, see the Introduction), is canonical of representations of Catilina and his followers, see e.g. Cic. *Cat.* 1.31 *morbus, qui est in re publica*, a disease rooted in the State that needs to be eradicated, as in *Sull.* 76, (cf. also *pestis* in *Cat.* 2.2) and Sal. *Cat.* 36.5 *tanta uis morbi atque uti tabes plerosque ciuium animos inuaserat*, 'so strong was the force of the disease, and like a plague, it had

infected the minds of many citizens’. On medical imagery in late Republican political discourse, and Cicero in particular, see Walters 2020, 27–32. The only previous occurrence of *salubritas prouidentiae* is in Ruf. *Orig. In Num.* 3.1 in a similar medical metaphor; note, however, that in *Ep.* 5.13 *prouidentia* does not have a strictly Christian meaning but rather means ‘foresight’ (given the following indication to take precautions against Seronatus).

contraque lites iurgiosorum ... pactionibus consule: Desperate times justify desperate measures, thus the addressee is encouraged to outsmart potential quarrelers and come to terms with them, prioritising his safety. It is as if barbarising oneself is the only way to survive this ‘walking disease’ approaching them. Note the use of *iurgiosus*, which only refers to people in Apul. *Apol.* 16 *non sum iurgiosus*, ‘I am not a quarrelsome man’ (a work Sidonius knows well); see *TLL* 7.2.665.29–40 (by Baer). See the Introduction (section ‘addressee’) for an alternative interpretation of this passage.

contra tributa securitatibus: Sidonius is encouraging the addressee to take precautions against Seronatus and to demand that there will be a trace of his payments to him. In later Latin, *securitas* has rather technical meanings: either ‘guarantee’ or ‘receipt of a payment’. See Sirmond 1652, 60, who calls them ‘*apochae*’ and *L&S* s.v. IIb: ‘a guarantee, security for a debt or obligation (by hypothecation, mortgage; by receipt or acknowledgement)’. Similar occurrences are in *Amm.* 17.10.4, *Symm. Rel.* 30.4 and *Dig.* 27.4.1. Cf. *Sidon. Ep.* 3.13.2 on Gnatho as an *infitiator soluti* ‘denier of receipts of payment’ (and see the Introduction for his similarities with Seronatus).

In summa, de Seronato uis accipere quid sentiam? Like in the beginning, Sidonius ends with an informal question, introduced by the colloquial expression ‘*in summa*’, (still used in Italian, mostly unverbated in ‘*insomma*’) cf. *Plin. Ep.* 1.22.6 and 2.11.25 (at the end of the letter), see also *Sidon. Ep.* 1.11.17 and 7.4.3, where it conveys ‘the liveliness of spoken language’ as van Waarden 2010, 234

put it. Among the numerous occurrences of expressions on being asked one's opinion, (in the hundreds and more than 30 in Cicero alone), see Cic. *Or.* 119 *ac si quaeritis, plane quid sentiam enuntiabo*, *Fam.* 13.1.4, *Fin.* 3.3.11, Sen. *Ben.* 7.16.1, *Nat.* 42.2 and *Ep.* 16.2, and, for their importance for the author as models, Plin. 1.5.7, 2.18.3, 4.10, 9.19.1 and Symm. *Ep.* 2.57.

mihi latronis et beneficia suspecta sunt: As Geisler (1887, 367) pointed out, this sentence calls to mind the famous *sententia* in Verg. *Aen.* 2.49 *timeo Danaos et dona ferentis*, and, I believe, an even better parallel is the mention in *Aen.* 2.37 of the *suspecta dona* of the Greeks. On this see Horsfall 2008, 75 and 88. See in particular Sidon. *Ep.* 7.14.10 *barbaros uitas, quia mali putentur; ego, etiamsi boni* 'you avoid barbarians because they are considered evil, as for me, I avoid them even if they are considered good' and cf. *Ep.* 3.13.10 on Gnatho: when he fails to take down families by 'engines of open enmity' he resorts to *cuniculis clandestinae proditiōis* 'tunnels of hidden betrayal'. On this see Fascione 2016, 457 and van Waarden 2016, 160–1, also for further bibliography.

LETTER 14

Content

The invitation to Clermont sent to Aper is an occasion to promote the Rogations, a religious ceremonial instituted by bishop Mamertus, now about to be celebrated for the first time by Sidonius. By choosing this letter for the collection published in 477, Sidonius is not only providing contemporaries with a description of the activities which formed part of the celebration, but he is also leaving a permanent trace of his early adherence to the practice.

The addressee

Aper, the addressee of this letter, is usually believed to be identical to Asper, the addressee of *Ep.* 4.21. However, as I detailed in the general introduction on names in the manuscript tradition of Sidonius, this identification is not supported by the manuscript readings and the way Sidonius interacts with Aper in *Ep.* 5.14 seems incompatible with the address of *Ep.* 4.21.²⁵⁵

Invitations in letter collections

Ep. 5.14 can be ascribed to the category invitations, i.e. letters written to urge the correspondent to visit the sender's home or his city. The wooden tablet birthday invitation of Claudia Severa to her friend Lepidina (*Tab. Vindol.* 291 v. 4–6 *rogo ... facias ut uenias/ad nos*) is a well-known but no less effective example of how an epistolary invitation to a family celebration would have been written (by a woman) around the year 100. It is notably similar to the invitation to his birthday party Emperor Hadrian sends to his mother on the day: if she hurries, they can all dine together: Ps. Dosit. 3.14.1944 *uide ergo, ut celerius ueniat*. Sidonius himself invites Ommatius to dinner for a birthday celebration in *Carm.* 17, while in *Carm.* 20 it is to Sidonius' own birthday party that Ecdicius and his wife are invited. But

²⁵⁵ Further observations on this letter and on other similar cases are in Marolla 2024, *passim*.

if birthday celebrations would rightly constitute a separate section of the ‘invitations’ epistolary theme, requests to visit the sender on a number of occasions, either private or public, are well attested also in literary collections.

Similar requests to visit the sender are well attested also in literary collections. Consider, for instance, Cic. *Fam.* 1.10 *fac ut quam primum uenias neque in Apuliam tuam accedas* ‘see that you come back as soon as possible and don’t go to that Apulia of yours’, or the similar appeal in *Fam.* 16.7 *ad nos amantissimos tui ueni* ‘come to us, who love you so dearly’. Moreover, in *ad Brut.* 1.10.4 Cicero begs the addressee to ‘fly to him’ (*aduola*), and the same sense of need for a visit is expressed in Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 11.14 *ueni ad nos et si potes, aduola* (‘come to us, on wings if you can). Since it would be impossible to produce here a complete survey of this epistolary topos, in what follows I will limit myself to looking more closely at letters from Pliny and Symmachus which may have been a model for Sidon. *Ep.* 5.14. Together with the examples listed above, I believe these passages give a sense of how common it was to request somebody’s presence, whether for political, religious or personal reasons, and explain the social and literary *milieu* in which Sidonius’ letter was written.

First, let us consider the invitation in Plin. *Ep.* 6.6.1, which conveys a sense of urgency: *si quando, nunc praecipue cuperem esse te Romae, et sis rogo*, ‘If ever I wished for you to be in Rome, now I do and I beg you come’. In this letter, Pliny asks for Minucius Fundanus’ presence because he needs his political endorsement in an election where his own candidate is running.

More to the point, as Roy Gibson has rightly signalled,²⁵⁶ there are many similarities between Sidonius’ *Ep.* 5.14 and Plin. *Ep.* 7.3 to Bruttius Praesens; thus is worth looking at the Plinian context more closely.

Tantane perseuerantia tu modo in Lucania, modo in Campania? ‘Ipse enim’ inquis ‘Lucanus, uxor Campana’. Iusta causa longioris absentiae, non perpetuae tamen. Quin ergo aliquando in urbem redis? Ubi dignitas,

²⁵⁶ Gibson 2013b, 350 n. 35.

honor, amicitiae tam superiores quam minores? Quousque regnabis? Quousque uigilabis cum uoles, dormies quamdiu uoles? Quousque calcei nusquam, toga feriata, liber totus dies? Tempus est te reuisere molestias nostras... (Plin. *Ep.* 7.3.1–3)

How long will you persevere in spending your time at one moment in Lucania, then in Campania? You say «I am from Lucania and my wife is from Campania». That can be a good cause for a prolonged absence, but not a perpetual one. Do you have any intention of coming back to Rome at some point? Back to your status, duties, and friends, more or less influential as they may be? How long will you be your own master, stay up whenever you feel like it and sleep for as long as you like? How long will your shoes stay unworn and your toga disused, while you are free all day long? It is time for you to get back to our annoyances...

The direct question at the beginning of the letter, the banter on the addressee's dedication to leisure and his prolonged absence from Rome to reside in family estates, while Pliny calls him back to his duty, are all elements that recur in Sidonius' letter to Aper.

As at the beginning of Sidon. *Ep.* 5.14, already in Symm. *Ep.* 1.47.1 Baiae is deemed responsible for the disappearance of Praetextatus from public life, since 'it claims him entirely' (*sibi uindicat*). Its enticing amenities are the reason the addressee keeps ignoring Symmachus and his civic duty, to the point that the author asks him, in *Ep.* 1.47.2, *quis tibi has indutias publici muneris dedit?* 'who gave you the right to take a break from your civic obligations?'

If the invitations discussed so far concerned the involvement in the political life of the city, the invitation to visit Symmachus in his *Ep.* 5.85 rather revolves around a religious festivity. Symmachus wishes Helpidius to attend the celebration

of the *Quinquartus*, a festival sacred to the goddess Minerva and a celebration of her patronage of schoolchildren and artisans.²⁵⁷

Oro iam uenias et praesentia tua augeas honorem festorum dierum. Nempe Minervae tibi sollemne de scholis notum est ... Ad eum diem tibi conuictum paramus agrestibus holusculis partum, quia luxuries offendit deam sobriam. (Symm. Ep. 5.85.3)

I pray that you come and that with your presence you bring further reason to celebrate these feast days. Certainly, you have been familiar with the festival of Minerva since you were in school ... On this day we prepare you a humble meal of vegetables because opulence displeases the frugal goddess.

In Symmachus' letter, the religious festivity of the *Quinquartus* is an occasion for inviting a friend back, like in Sidon. Ep. 5.14, and the visit would offer a twofold reason to celebrate. The preference for continence and simplicity to appease the Goddess (Symmachus warns Helpidius that he should expect a frugal meal) is similar to the rigour expected from those attending the Rogations. Also worthy of mention is the invitation to join Sidonius and others in Bordeaux.

Tantumne te Vasatium ciuitas ... et uolatiles ... harenae sibi possident ut te ... attrahere Burdigalam non potestates, non amicitiae, non opimata uiuariis ostrea queant? ... An temporibus hibernis uiarum te dubia suspendunt ... (Sidon. Ep. 8.12.1)

Do the town of Bazas ... and the flying sands ... hold you so firmly that neither the mighty, nor your friends, nor oysters fattened in fish farms can

²⁵⁷ See see Rivolta Tiberger 1992, 198.

lure you to Bordeaux? ... Or is it the uncertainty of the roads in the winter season that holds you back ...?

The letter opens with a direct question which is reminiscent of the opening of *Ep.* 5.14: Sidonius asks Trygetius if it is the city of Bazas that is keeping him from his friends waiting for him in Bordeaux, where many await his visit and would welcome him lavishly. As in *Ep.* 5.14, in *Ep.* 8.12 Sidonius playfully asks the addressee to hurry.

Quid moraris? Ipsae mihi tuum uidentur aduentum reptiles cocleae cum domibus natiuis antecessurae. (Ep. 8.12.6)

Why do you tarry? It looks to me as if creeping snails with their incorporated houses would precede you.

Sidonius' *Epp.* 5.14 and 8.12, therefore, answer the features of this epistolary topos in both documentary testimonies and previous authors since the Republic; however, *Ep.* 5.14 is also informative, offering details on the religious festival not only to the addressee but also to other contemporary readers, presumably with the further aim of publicising the endeavour at the time and to glorify his deeds in the time, when the collection is published, after the cession of Clermont to the Visigoths.²⁵⁸

Dating elements

In the first paragraph, the possibility that the addressee may be facing difficulties due to the multitude of fortifications in the area abruptly interrupts the idyllic description of leisure and relaxation typical of spas, evoked by the allusion to

²⁵⁸ The other notably informative letter in Book 5 is *Ep.* 16 to Papianilla; even though it is a family matter that is discussed, one gets the impression that the information in the letter is directed to peers and to future readers of the published collection rather than to Papianilla alone.

Baiae. The brief mention of the military tension in the region (Sidonius imagines the addressee surrounded by strongholds and facing difficulty in finding refuge), still gives a sense of the political climate of the time. The following description of the rogation ritual in Clermont then offers a timeframe for the redaction of this invitation to Aper: the *terminus post quem* is bishop Mamertus' first institution of Rogations in Vienne, for which the consensus is the early 470s.²⁵⁹ Sidonius chose to adopt the practice, following its success in Vienne, during the seasonal sieges of Clermont, thus from 471 to 475 (as is detailed in §2 and 3). Given that when it comes to major events in the collection Sidonius opts for chronological coherence (and the siege answers this non-written rule, as I argued before), I would suggest that this letter is chronologically close to *Ep.* 5.12, or is written soon after it. The introduction of the practice during an advanced stage of the siege, say, ca. 473, would also be coherent with the idea that this was a desperate measure because the situation had become unsustainable. Similar observations were made by Stevens, who suggested late 472 or more likely beginnings of 473 as a plausible date for *Ep.* 5.14, when Euric was both entering Spain to complete the conquest of Tarraconensis and, with another army, occupying Ares and Marseille overrunning Provence.²⁶⁰ The same time-span, and precisely winter 472–473, is also chosen by Loyen in his chronology.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ See the commentary on § 1 *in urbem tamen* for the bibliography on Rogations.

²⁶⁰ Stevens 1933, 152 and 202–3, followed by Anderson 1965, 217 n. 4.

²⁶¹ Loyen 1970, xix and 238 n. 44.

Clausulation

Clausulation is consistent in the letter: this attention to rhythm, coherent with the previous epistles in the second half of Book 5, suits the content of the piece and the formal description of the rituality of Rogations; moreover, such compositional care would have been appropriate for the first mention of the ceremony in the Books.

ApDitroch= Anapaest ditrochee $\sim \sim - - \sim - x$

CC= double cretic $\begin{matrix} - & \cup & - & - & \cup & x \end{matrix}$

CDitroch= cretic ditrochee $\overline{\cup} \text{ --- } \overline{\cup} \text{ --- } \times$

CI= cretic iamb $\text{---} \cup \text{---} \cup \text{x}$

CS= cretic spondee $\text{---} \cup \text{---} \text{---} \text{---}$

DactC= dactyl cretic $\text{---} \cup \cup \text{---} \cup \text{x}$

DactI= dactyl iamb $\text{—} \cup \cup \cup \times$

$P^1C = \text{paeon I cretic} - \cup - \cup - \cup x$

P⁴S= paeon IV spondee ~ ~ ~ - - x

$P^4C = \text{Paeon IV cretic}$ $\sim \sim \sim - - \sim x$

1 -scina delectat?	CS
difficultatem?	CS
-gotio uacas,	CI
-one reuocabere	P ¹ C
2. -dissimo exemplo	CS
-stituit, inuexit.	P ⁴ S
pace sit dictum,	CS
infrequentesque	CS
utque sic dixerim	CC
-bundae supplicationes	- - - u - u - x

-bus hebetabantur, deprecaturae amplius dicam -portuit conuenire.	P ⁴ S CS CI CDitroch
3. pariter et contulit -atur, oratur psallitur, fletur. humiliatarum -bernia peto -um bene metior, lacrimas euocaris.	P ⁴ C CS CS P4S DactI DactC ApDitroch

SIDONIUS APRO SUO SALUTEM

1. Calentes nunc te Baiae et scabris cauernatim ructata pumicibus aqua sulphuris atque iecorosis ac pthisiscentibus languidis medicabilis piscina delectat? An fortasse montana sedes circum castella et in eligenda sede perfugii quandam pateris ex munitionum frequentia difficultatem? Quicquid illud est, quod uel otio uel negotio uacas, in urbem tamen, nisi fallimur, rogationum contemplatione reuocabere.

2. Quarum nobis sollemnitatem primus Mamertus pater et pontifex reuerendissimo exemplo, utilissimo experimento inuenit, instituit, inuexit. Erant quidem prius, quod salua fidei pace sit dictum, uagae tepentes infrequentesque utque sic dixerim oscitabundae supplicationes, quae saepe interpellantum prandiorum obicibus hebetabantur, maxime aut imbres aut serenitatem deprecaturae; ad quas, ut nil amplius dicam, figulo pariter atque hortuloni non oportuit conuenire.

3. In his autem, quas suprafatus summus sacerdos nobis et protulit pariter et contulit, ieiunatur, oratur, psallitur, fletur. Ad haec te festa ceruicum humiliatarum et sternacium ciuium suspiriosa contubernia peto; et, si spiritalem animum tuum bene metior, modo citius uenies, quando non ad epulas sed ad lacrimas euocaris. Vale.

1

Gaienses α (in the margin in Vat1661) : Caienses δ : Calentes *Sirmond* 1609, 353 'hic habet Ms. Fran Pithoei V.C. ut postea vidi' (is it Montpellier, BU Méd., H 4?) *Lütjohann Anderson Loyen*

sulphuris αMPRT: sulphuris L

adque L

iecorosis αM(*epaticis* super lineam)PT : iecurosis L : gecorosis A

ptidiscentibus (marginalia) A: ptisiscentibus CVat1661MPT : ptiscentibus S : ptysitiscentibus L : phthisiscentibus *Lütjohann*

2

reuerentissimo Ω : reuerendissimo *Lütjohann*

sed salua α : quod salua δ

ortuloni ACSR : fulloni Vat1661 : hortuloni L : ortolano MP : hortolano T

3

citus α : citius δ

dum non α : quando non LT : quod non MPR

SIDONIUS TO HIS DEAR APER

1. Is it a warm spa and the sulphurous water belched through cavities from rough porous rocks, and the pool, curative for those sick with liver or lung problems, is *this* what is currently keeping you away? Or perhaps you are surrounding mountain strongholds and in choosing a place to withdraw you experience some difficulty because of the multitude of fortifications? Yet, whatever the reason may be — whether you are devoted to leisure or duty — if I am not deceiving myself, you will be drawn back to the city by the prospect of Rogations.

2. It was the father and bishop Mamertus who first invented, instituted and introduced this celebration to us, with an example of the highest regard, an extremely beneficial experiment. Certainly, there were before — let this be said without insulting the faith in any way — irregular, tepid and infrequent and, so to say, yawning prayers, which were often made dull by the obstacle of meals interrupting them; mostly to intercede for rain or clear weather, and at which, to say the least, it was not proper for a potter and a gardener to meet.

3. Conversely, during those prayers that the aforesaid bishop has both brought forth and bestowed upon us, people fast, pray, sing the Psalms and weep. I beg you come to these celebrations of heads bowed and to the sighing companionship of the suppliant citizens and, if I am a good judge of your spiritual disposition, you will come all the more quickly since it is not to feasts that you are summoned, but tears. Farewell.

Calentes ... Baiae: The reading *calentes*, chosen by Savaron 1598, 120 — who read it in a manuscript belonging to Pithou (see Savaron 1609, 353)—, is preferred by editors to the transmitted and problematic *gaienses* (the reading of α) and *caienses* (attested in δ). Before Savaron, Pio 1498 had *ualentes* and Vinet 1552 had *calenses*. Baiae in Campania was the Roman spa place *par excellence* and it became a generic term for a spa (see Anderson 1965, 216 n.1 and D’Arms 1970, 120). The name still conjured imagery of idleness and luxury in Late Antiquity (as in Squillante 2021): see Sidon. *Carm.* 5.344 *inter delicias mollirent corpora Baiae*, and *Carm.* 18.3 and 12 where the villa at Avitacum is compared to Baiae for splendour (see Hindermann 2022, 107–8 and Santelia 2023, 166; on Cuma see Paladini 2023). Baiae is also mentioned to designate a thermal location in Gaul in *Carm.* 23.12, where *Sestiasque Baias* refers to *Aquae Sextiae* (Aix, on which Green 2022, 251 n. 4, Santelia 2023, 251). Thus it seems probable that in *Ep.* 5.14 Sidonius is alluding to thermal baths in Gaul: ‘tout fait penser à Vichy’, says Corrocher 1981, 70, commenting on this passage. Located northeast of Clermont, *Aquae Calidae* (modern-day Vichy) was already a renowned thermal centre for Romans, also signalled on the Peutinger map. The word game *Calentes Baiae* (for *Aquae Calidae*) would mirror *Sextiae Baiae* (for *Aquae Sextiae*) in *Carm.* 23. Another suggestion made by Savaron 1609, 353 (and later Sirmond 1652, 60) is modern-day Chaudes-Aigues in Auvergne (south of Clermont). See Mathisen 2020a, 80 and his geographical appendix (2020, 155) for further bibliography. See the introduction for Baiae keeping the addressee away from civic duty in Symm. *Ep.* 1.47.1. Perhaps worthy of mention is the existence of Cala, called *uilla Calensis* twice in Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 6.46 and 10.19: a village matching modern-day Chelles, close to Paris, where Chilperic I (the Frankish king) took residence and later a monastic community and an eighth-century scriptorium flourished (Bischoff 1966). A word game with *uilla Calensis* would allow us to retain the transmitted reading *calenses Baiae* but there is no evidence that this

place was known for a spa, unlike the famous baths of Vichy. A scribe's confusion with *uilla Calensis*, an important monastic community, may, however, explain the mistake in the archetype as we can reconstruct it.

et scabris ... pumicibus: *Scabra pumex* is an unattested *iunctura*, note the convoluted construction of the sentence.

cauernatim: A Sidonian hapax, as in *TLL* 3.646.79–81 by Hoppe. On this author's preference for adverbs in *-tim* of his coinage out of their archaicizing tone, see Gualandri 1979, 177 n.11, Amherdt 2001, 368 and Hindermann 2022, 164. On archaism in Sidonius see Monni 1999 and Wolff 2020, 400. Cf. in particular Sidon. *Epp.* 2.2.17 *salebratim* 'ruggedly', 4.15.3 *cocleatim* 'in a spiral' and 5.17.8 *trochleatim* 'by means of a pulley'.

ructata aqua sulphuris: The archetypal reading as we can reconstruct it is *sulphuris*, a genitive dependent on *aqua*; though the *facilior* reading *aqua sulphurea* would create a *cursus*. Much has been said on Sidonius' preference for the verb *ructare* and the vividness and realism it conveys, see *Ep.* 4.17.1 on Arbogastes 'belching the water of the Tiber' on which Amherdt 2001, 385–6. Compared to other occurrences in Sidonius, *Ep.* 5.14 refers to the eruption of water typical of thermal baths cf. on sea water *Carm.* 11.5 and 9,167 (on which Santelia 2023, 60). A similar technical use in Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 13.13 *cantharum ministra manibus et oribus nostris fluenta ructantem*, 'a fountain belching streams of water for our hands and faces' at the entrance of the Constantinian basilica of St Peter's and Pallad. 9.8.7 *fumum ructauerit* (on the emission of smoke).

iecorosis ac pthisiscentibus languidis medicabilis piscina delectat?: This scientific language designates specific pathologies involving the liver and the lungs. *Iecorosus* has several occurrences exclusively in Cael. Aur. *Chron.*, a medical work on chronic diseases, on which see *TLL* 7.1.244.12–18 by Rubenbauer. The graecism *p(h)thisisco* is a neologism, see *TLL* 10.2.2427.67–70

by Grossardt and Gualandri 1979, 162 n.65. This is also the only occurrence of *medicabilis piscina*, an expression concerning the salubriousness of thermal waters in curing diseases. *Medicabilis* is attested also in Sidon. *Ep.* 3.10.2, though with the metaphorical meaning of ‘soul-soothing’. Similar mentions of the regenerative pools in spas are in Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.11 and in Sidon. *Carm.* 19.1–3 (on which Green 2022, 229, Santelia 2023, 166), *Ep.* 2.2.5 and 8 (see Hindermann 2022, 85–6, 107, 122). The bibliography on Roman water culture and the physical and mental well-being associated with it is extensive, see e.g. Carcopino 1943, 254–63, and for Late Antiquity *ODLA* s.v. ‘baths and bathing’ (by Pickett), Santelia and Mastrocinque 2023, Santelia 2024. The beginning of the letter is strongly reminiscent of Plin. *Ep.* 7.3 and cf. also Sidon. *Ep.* 8.12.1, both discussed in the introduction. For other locations keeping the addressee away from Rome cf. also Symm. *Epp.* 3.45 and 7.19.

An fortasse montana sedes circum castella: *Imitatio cum uariatione* of Verg. *Aen.* 5.440 *aut montana sedet circum castella sub armis*, describing Dares as someone lying in wait, see Fratantuono and Alden Smith 2015, 457. Anderson believes that, differently from the original context, the expression here means ‘from stronghold to stronghold’ and he adds: ‘apparently (Sidonius) means a round of visits to friends in fortified dwellings like the Burgus of Pontius Leontius (*Carm.* 22)’. However, the following mention of the need to find a place to withdraw (see *perfugium* below), leads me to relate this to the original military context rather than to courtesy visits to friends who happen to live in fortified mansions. Sidonius would thus picture his addressee in two possible and opposite situations (as it was usual in epistolary exchanges): Aper may be enjoying himself in a spa or he could be facing trouble. For similar preoccupations cf. *Ep.* 5.3 on which Marolla 2023, 109–16.

et in eligenda sede perfugii quandam pateris ex munitionum frequentia difficultatem?: Alternatively, Sidonius imagines the addressee may be troubled by military action, facing difficulty finding a place to retreat because of the number

of fortifications surrounding the area. The *iunctura eligere sedem* occurs in comparable military contexts in Curt. 4.4.20, 7.6.13, Flor. *Epit.* 2.13.35 and Amm. 31.3.8. Both *sedes perfugii* and *munitionum frequentia* are unattested expressions. The letter is written when Clermont is under siege, on which see the introduction to *Ep.* 5.12.

quod uel otio uel negotio uacas: For similar occurrences of *uaco* + *otio/negotio* to indicate ‘devoting oneself to leisure/work’ see Val. Max. 7.7 *uacemus nunc negotio* (introducing a section of the work), Tac. *Ann.* 16.22.1 *priuatis potius clientium negotiis uacauisse* on Thræsea’s preference for ‘attending to his clients’ private business’, Plin. *Ep.* 10.81 *cum ...publicis negotiis ... uacarem* ‘while I was attending to public business’ (and cf. Plin. *Ep.* 3.5.15 *ceteris curis huic uni uacabat*, where it concerns the Elder Pliny’s devotion to studying, even when travelling). See also Symm. *Ep.* 9.123 *cur ...torpori atque otio uaces...?*, a reproach to the addressee who lingers in apathy and idleness, and Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 10.33–35 *uacare uanis, otio aut negotio/... uetat* ‘(God) forbids spending time on idle things, whether for leisure or work’.

in urbem tamen ... rogationum contemplatione reuocabere: The rare alternative second person singular of the future passive indicative *reuocabere*, is only attested in Ov. *Rem.* 519 and Stat. *Theb.* 4.338, it is chosen here for its rarity (in terms of rhythm both *reuocabĕre* and *reuocabĕris* would give a P¹C (see paragraph on clausulation)). Sidonius is confident that Rogations in Clermont will be a good incentive for the addressee to return. This passage is the earliest source on the practice of Rogations: three days of prayer and fasting to invoke divine help, first invented by Mamertus, bishop of Vienne (on which more below). On Sidonius’ introduction of Rogations in Clermont, dated by scholars to winter 472/473 during the seasonal sieges of Euric’s Visigoths, see the ‘dating’ section in the introduction. The bibliography on Rogations is overabundant: but see e.g. Harries 1994, 114, 139, 191 (on the innovation of religious ceremonies and the creation of new holy sites to attract attendance), Nathan 1998, Ristuccia 2018, van

Waarden 2010, 77–80 and van Waarden 2020c, Wolff 2021, Van Waarden forthcoming. See the introduction for a similar invitation to the festival of Minerva in Symm. *Ep.* 5.85.3.

§2

sollemnitate: Attested with various spellings since Gellius 2.24.15 (on the Isthmian games), this noun designates celebrations already in pagan authors (like Symm. *Epp.* 2.47 and 7.4 on an imperial anniversary and the consular games) but it occurs most often in Christian contexts, with e.g. more than twenty occurrences in Tertullian, ca. thirty in Ambrose and over a hundred and fifty in Augustine. See Sidon. *Epp.* 1.5.11 (the marriage of Ricimer and Alypia), 4.6.2 (on pilgrimage), 4.15.3 (no solemnities in prospect, but the addressee is a sufficient reason to visit), 5.17.3 (the annual procession at the tomb of St. Justus).

primus Mamertus pater et pontifex: Mamertus, bishop of Vienne and brother of Mamertus Claudianus (on their bond see Sidon. *Ep.* 4.11.4–5) is here first presented as the inventor (*primus*) of the religious practice of Rogations. On bishop Mamertus being the founder of the practice see Sidon. *Ep.* 7.1.2 *te auctore*. See also Alc. Avit. *Hom.* 6 calling Mamertus *spiritalis ... pater ... sacerdos*, and, explicitly depending on the latter, Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.34 (on which Furbetta 2015a, 6–9). Like many of his predecessors, to Sidonius *pontifex* means ‘bishop’ and does not refer to the bishop of Rome in particular; see *TLL* 2680.72–2681.12. On Mamertus see also *PCBE* 4, 1231–3, Heinzelmann 1982, 644. The alliterated syntagma *pater et pontifex* is elsewhere attested three times (all concerning bishop Patiens) in Sidon. *Epp.* 2.10.4 v.1, 4.25.1 and 6.12.9. Note also that ‘-tus pater et pontifex’ creates a choriamb cretic and cursus tardus.

reuerendissimo exemplo, utilissimo experimento inuenit, instituit, inuexit: The syntagmata *reuerend** (or *reverent**) *exempl** and *util** *experiment** do not have other occurrences. I chose the reading *reuerendissimo*, Lütjohann’s

conjecture, in place of the unanimously transmitted *reuerentissimo* (chosen by Anderson and Loyen). The superlative *reuerendiss** is only attested here and in Salvian *Ep.* 4 (where it concerns people) and is later attested in Iunilius Africanus, Cassiodorus and Isidorus. The same can be said for the unparalleled tricolon *inuenit, instituit, inuexit*: building a climax also through the repetition of the prefix. The first two elements of the syntagma, *inuenio* and *instituo*, are found together famously at the beginning of Cic. *Dom.* 1.1 *multa diuinitus ... a maioribus nostris inuenta atque instituta sunt* ‘many divinely-inspired things ... were devised and established by our ancestors’ (cf. also Cic. *Rep.* 1.13 and Aug. *Serm.* 374 *auct.* 5). On Mamertus as the inventor of the practice cf. Alc. Avit. *Hom.* 6 (*Mamertus concepit animo rogationes* and Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.34 *a Mamerto ... instatutas fuisse*).

quod salua fidei pace sit dictum: Cf. Aug. *Ep. rerum humanarum salua pace* ‘with no offence to the peace of humankind’. Similar circumlocutory expressions are often used by Sidonius with the meaning of ‘without offence’: see *Epp.* 1.7.3 (*salua fidei reuerentia*), 1.9.2 (*seruata pace reliquorum*), 4.3.10 (*salua pace potiorum*). Köhler 1995, 235 compares them to legal formulas like Dig. 7.1.1 *salua rerum substantia*, see also Amherdt 2001, 164.

uagae tepentes infrequentesque ... oscitabundae supplicationes: Previous attempts at similar public displays of collective atonement were unsuccessful. The public prayers were at best ‘tepid’ and ‘desultory’ and Sidonius builds a climax culminating with *oscitabundae*: the participants were yawning, evidently bored. As Gualandri (1979, 139) rightly pointed out, through personification, since all the adjectives refer to the prayers (*supplicationes*) and not to people attending them, Sidonius creates vivid, ‘violent’ and ‘audacious’ images. *Oscitabundus* is a rare derivative form of the verb *oscitare* ‘to yawn’, previously attested only in Gell. 4.20 *tit* (on a man yawning in front of the censors) and Sidon. *Ep.* 2.2.2 where it is probably a teacher who is ‘yawning’ (see Hindermann 2022, 95). Sidonius enjoys creating new coinages in *-bundus*, as was highlighted by Gualandri 1979, 179; see

also *TLL* 9.2.1103.31–7 (by Heus). Note that Sidonius will later admit that despite his enthusiasm, his Rogations were not as successful as Mamertus’: see *Ep.* 7.1.2 *etsi non effectum pari* ‘not with equal efficacy’, on which van Waarden 2021, 108.

quae saepe interpellantum prandiorum obicibus hebetabantur: The banquets devoided religious celebrations of solemnity and impeded the continuity of the prayers they so often interrupted. Incidentally, this was also a remnant of pagan ceremonies, where it was usual to accompany the religious celebrations with food and wine. Cf. the criticism of the Burgundian ruler who enjoyed bishop Patiens’ feasts while his wife enjoyed the bishop’s fasts in *Ep.* 6.12.3.

maxime aut imbres aut serenitatem deprecaturae: Criticism of the trivial requests, mainly concerning the weather, which prompted collective prayers in the past. On the contrary, Mamertus’ Rogations were an answer to address the many serious calamitous events happening in Vienne (earthquakes, fires and unprecedented animal behaviour, according to Sidon. *Ep.* 7.1.3). This is also a way to stress that Sidonius, like his precursor, introduced the practice in response to a serious threat, *i.e.* the continued siege of Clermont. Proof that the origin of Rogations in Gaul may be traced back to *Ambarvalia*, *Robigalia* or *Suovetaurilia* or the traditional lustration days to propitiate the gods and have a good harvest and fertility is lacking in this area, see Luiselli 1992, 574 and Grig 2024, 161.

figulo pariter atque hortuloni non oportuit conuenire: Sidonius criticises the triviality of popular requests at former public prayers and explains why they had not attracted attendance. It was impossible, for instance, to please both the potter and the farmer, the former would plead for sunny days to dry out his pottery, and the latter would wish rain to water his fields (see Shanzer and Wood 2002, 381). Like previous editors (Lütjohann, Anderson and Loyen) I chose to have in the text the *difficilior* reading (*h*)*ortuloni*, the consensus of both α and L, which is an otherwise unattested variant of the spelling *hortulano*. (*H*)*ortolano* (MPT) was discarded as *lectio faciliior*, see *TLL* 6.3.3014–16 (by Ehlers).

suprafatus summus sacerdos: Note the alliteration in this tricolon on bishop Mamertus, matching §2 (*primus ... pater et pontifex*). *Suprafatus* is a Sidonian hapax and a variant of the more often attested *supradictus* or *praefatus*. It is also in Sidon. *Ep.* 8.14.7 *agnosco antistem suprafatum...* ‘I see that the bishop mentioned above...’. Compounds formed with *supra* are rare but occasionally attested in late Latin, see *L&S* s.v. *supra*, III. The expression *summus sacerdos*, previously attested with the meaning of *pontifex maximus* in Lucan 8.850 (see Mancini 2022, 518), or highest priest of Isis in Apul. *Met.* 11.16 and 20 (see Keulen et als. 2015, 302 and 340), became popular from Tertullian onwards to indicate a bishop. See for instance Tert. *Bapt.* 17.1 *summum habet ius summus sacerdos, si qui est, episcopus*, ‘the supreme right to administer baptism goes to the highest priest, if the bishop is there’ (see Luiselli 1960, 57). It is also attested with this meaning in Sidon. *Epp.* 7.6.7, 7.9.12 and 25.

nobis et protulit pariter et contulit: Mamertus introduced Sidonius to Rogations before transmitting the ritual to him and his community. Having two compounds of the same verb together is typical of Sidonius, here it also has the effect of creating a paeon 4 cretic. In Alc. Avit. *Hom.* 6 *orando ... perorando*, Mamertus convinced the people of Vienne with prayer and rhetorical prowess; thus (*ibid.*) *auditur a cunctis, confirmatur, attollitur*, ‘he was heard, supported and exalted by all’.

ieiunatur oratur, psallitur fletur: The tetracolon concisely describes fasting, praying, chanting the Psalms and lamenting as the main activities of rogation days. Weeping performances of the Psalms, fasting and public repentance were also the highlights of Rogations according to Alc. Avit. *Hom.* 6 and Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.34. In Christian authors, *psallere* means ‘to sing the Psalms of David’, see *L&S* s.v. *psallo* II, and cf. Hier. *Ep.* 107.10 and Aug. *in Ps.* 46.8.

festā ceruicū humiliatarū: An effective contrast between *festā* ‘celebrations’ and the anticlimactic ‘of heads bowed’, a gesture evocative of prayer and submission to the divinity. *Ceruix humiliata* occurs in the description of a rite of renunciation to the devil in Quodv. *Symb.* 1.1 *ibique ceruice humiliata quae male fuerat antea exaltata*, where the suppliant is standing barefoot and ‘with his head — once proudly upright — now bowed’. Similar descriptions of the humbling gesture of the penitent are in Ambr. *In Psalm.* 11.1 *ceruicem suam curuat, dum humiliatur ad dominum* (and where *ceruix* also stands for ‘mind’) and *In Psalm.* 37.35.3 *incuruabat se in oratione David ceruicem ... flectens et humiliabat in precibus*, another realistic description of a curved praying posture. Cf. the humble celebrations in honour of Minerva in Symm. *Ep.* 5.85.3 (on which see the introduction).

sternacium ciuium: Previously concerning skittish animals (horses in Verg. *Aen.* 12.364 and Sil. 1.261; a heifer in Avien. *Orb. Terr.* 203–4), the rare adjective *sternax* refers to people with the meaning of ‘falling prostrate’ exclusively here and in *Ep.* 4.12.4, where it concerns a deferential letter carrier; see *L&S* s.v. *sternax* and Amherdt 2001, 319.

suspiriosa contubernia: Yet another unprecedented *iunctura* in this elaborate passage. *Suspiriosus* is a technical adjective, mostly found in medical contexts with the meaning of ‘breathing with difficulty, panting’ like in Sidon. *Epp.* 1.2.6 and 5.17.7. Here, however, it means ‘sighing’, like in Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.4 and 7.9.6; these three passages are all focused on repentance and prayer, as van Waarden 2010, 303, 452 pointed out. The same idea is expressed in *Ep.* 8.14.5 *culpas suas anima poenaliter recordata suspirat*, ‘the soul, once painfully reminded of its faults, heaves a sight’. On Sidonius’ preference for the colloquial adjectives ending in *-osus*, see Hindermann 2022, 166–7. *Contubernium*, originally meaning the sharing of a tent of soldier, is also attested with the meaning of ‘dwelling together’ in non-military contexts: see *TLL* 4.791.62–78 and 792.50 (by Poeschel). One wonders, however, if Sidonius, who often uses the word with ca. 20 occurrences

(cf. *TLL ibid.* 793.21–5), is here also alluding to the siege causing the Rogations, and thus to a state of a somewhat forced companionship.

si spiritalem animum tuum bene metior: The similar tautological expression *spiritalis anima* ‘spiritual soul’ is also found in Sidon. *Ep.* 6.2.2 (already signalled by Savaron 1609, 355). Among occurrences in other authors cf. in particular Mam. Claud. *Anim.* 2.10 p.140 *spiritalis est anima nostra* (a passage on the nature of the soul). The syntagma *metiri animum* is first attested in Quint. *Decl.* 289.6 and is similarly found in the closing remarks of Symm. *Epp.* 3.28, 4.39, 7.5 and 8.12: declarations of friendship and appeals to intensify the correspondence (see also his *Ep.* 3.61). For Symmachus as a model for Sidonius in Book 5 see Marolla 2023, 7,11–13, 27–8. This expression is also interestingly attested in Mam. Claud. *Anim.* 2.3 pp. 108 and 110 (on the impossibility of measuring the size of the soul by comparing it to the size of the body containing it). Mamertus Claudianus’ work was well known to his friend Sidonius (Claudianus was bishop Mamertus’ brother) and the two often chose rare or unattested expressions echoing each other’s works, see Marolla 2023, 65–79 and *passim*.

modo citius uenies: The tradition is split between the adjective *citius* (the reading of α) and superlative of the adverb *citius* (the reading of δ) though the meaning is clear either way. I believe the latter may be a lectio *difficilior* and this choice is supported by the similar *modo*+superlative of the adverb in Sidon. *Ep.* 4.22 *modo uerius Tacitus esset*. It is natural to ask the addressee to ‘make haste’ in returning, see Penelope’s beseeching appeal to Ulysses in Ov. *Ep.* 1.110 *tu citius uenias...*! ‘make haste to come!’. See also Ausonius letters to Paulus: *Ep.* 8.21–2 (Green) *attamen ut citius uenias leuiusque uehare/ historiam mimos carmina linque domi* ‘so that you may haste yourself back all the more quickly and travel the lighter, leave your history, mimes and poetry at home!’ and *Ep.* 4.12 (Green) *citius ueni remo aut rota* ‘come quickly now, by boat or carriage’ and *ibid.* 35–6 *tota cum merce tuarum ueni Camenarum citus*. ‘hurry up and come with all the

wares of your Camenae'. See the introduction for further appeals the addressee would haste to visit the sender.

quando non ad epulas sed ad lacrimas euocaris: I believe that the reading *quando non*, attested in *LT* (and generally preferred by editors) would explain palaeographically both the reading *dum non* (peculiar to α) and *quod non* (*MPR*). Sidonius is confident that the contemplative nature of the Rogations will appeal to his addressee and bring him to visit Clermont all the sooner, attracted by the prospect of the days of prayer and meditation. With this sharp final sentence, not elsewhere paralleled, Sidonius is flattering Aper, describing him as someone who values introspection more than a feast. Cf. Sidon *Ep.* 6.12.3: the praise of the wise (Catholic) Burgundian 'queen' enjoying bishop Patiens' fasts while her uncouth husband enjoys his feasts.

LETTER 15

Content

The *bibliopola*, a paid copyist, transcribes the Heptateuch for Ruricius and, since he is diligent and versed in the subject, he amends the text, collating of his own will. Then, Sidonius himself checks the text of the Heptateuch before it is sent to Ruricius, and approves of its quality. He is, however, absent when the copyist finishes transcribing the second book requested, the Book of the Prophets, for which, a third person should have been involved with the specific task of proofreading. In his absence, the *bibliopola* checked the apograph and Sidonius can only commend the quality of his work.

The addressee

A descendent of the prestigious *gens Anicia*, Ruricius of Limoges was through marriage also related to Avitus and Sidonius,²⁶² who lavishly celebrated his wedding with Hiberia with a jewelled epithalamium (*Carm.* 10 and 11).²⁶³ As will be detailed in what follows, Sidonius also addressed him in *Ep.* 4.16 and 8.10.²⁶⁴ Ruricius himself is the author of an extant collection of 83 letters preserved in only one manuscript, *Sangallensis* 190, and his corpus also comprises three surviving letters addressed to Sidonius which we will briefly discuss here: Ruricius' *Epp.* 1.8, 1.9 and 1.16.²⁶⁵

In **Ruric. *Ep.* 1.8**, as in Sidon *Ep.* 5.15, the activity of book copying is discussed: Ruricius had been tasked with recovering a book of Sidonius (whether

²⁶²For a detailed biographical profile of Ruricius see Stroheker 1948, 209–10, Heinzelmann 683, *PLRE* 2, 960, *PCBE* 4, 1635–49, Mathisen 2020a, 118.

²⁶³For the rich mythological apparatus of the two *carmina*, see Santelia 2011, Filosi 2014, and Santelia 2023, 45–64.

²⁶⁴The two are familiar with each other and, as is detailed below, Ruricius likes to banter with Sidonius. For the wavering *ego/nos-tu/uos* in this letter, see van Waarden 2020, 421.

²⁶⁵On *Sangallensis* 190 and for the letter collection of Ruricius, see Mathisen 1998 *passim*, 2011, 63–78 and 2020, 632–3. For a different theory on the division into books of this collection, see Alciati 2008.

in his possession or penned by him is hard to determine) from Leontius but,²⁶⁶ in the letter, he discloses having copied the book without asking him for permission and ‘confesses to this sin’ by relating the effective apostrophe of a *loquens* personified book, tempting him to make a copy and reassuring him of the hypothetical approval of their ‘shared master’ (*communis dominus*).²⁶⁷ Ruricius’ *Ep.* 1.8.1 is also a unique testimony to Sidonius’ preaching activity. In this letter, he ‘remembers having heard’ (*audisse me recolo*) Sidonius the bishop say that a sincere confession of one’s sins was the only way to relinquish adversities (*ab iniquitatibus purgari*). This contemporary testimony is particularly valuable since, Gregory of Tours aside (*Hist.* 2.22–25), not much is known of Sidonius’ preaching: he does share details related to his pastoral life, and his *Sermons* are lost to us, together with Gregory of Tours’ book dedicated to them.²⁶⁸ To this letter, Sidonius answers with *Ep.* 4.16 (which can thus be dated to his years as bishop), in which he compliments Ruricius for the wittiness and charm of his epistle to him.²⁶⁹

Ruric. *Ep.* 1.9, on the other hand, is quite different from the previous letter and testifies rather to Ruricius’ keen interest in the religious life, which would lead him to take vows, together with his wife, and ultimately to his becoming bishop of Limoges by ca. 485. As Mathisen rightly pointed out, Ruricius’ interest in having personal copies of biblical texts in *Ep.* 5.15 is coherent with his desire to learn from Sidonius ‘the bishop’ and with the religious zeal shown in his *Ep.* 1.9; although Sidon. *Ep.* 5.15 does not appear to be an answer to Ruric. *Ep.* 1.9.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Presumably a brother by blood.

²⁶⁷ Cf. the commentary on §1 *circa dominum ... communem*.

²⁶⁸ Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.22 in *praefatione libri*, *quem de missis ab eo compositis coniunximus* ‘in the preface of the book I arranged on the masses he composed. On Sidonius’ pastoral activity see Bailey 2020, 261–3.

²⁶⁹ *Ep.* 4.16.1 *accepi ... paginam uestram, quae plus mellis an salis habeat incertum est*. On this letter, and for the possibility Ruricius had copied one of Sidonius’ writings (a dossier of letters), see Amherdt 2001, 369–71; on the letter exchange with Ruricius and for the hypothesis the book copied was in Sidonius’ possession but was not written by him, see Mathisen 2011, 117–20.

²⁷⁰ Mathisen 2011, 119.

Dated later than the other two letters, **Ruric. Ep. 1.16** was written when the author was already bishop of Limoges, as is made clear also by the style and initial salutation formula to the addressee.²⁷¹ Ruricius pens a clever and witty letter, addressing Sidonius ‘the seer’ and ‘the bishop’ as two separate entities.²⁷² By dating Ruricius’ bishopric to 485, Mathisen infers that Sidonius must have been still alive by this date.²⁷³ Further, there are notable mentions of the author in this collection: he is quoted in Ruric. *Epp.* 1.4, while in 2.26 to Apollinaris, son of Sidonius, Ruricius recalls his affection for his father, as well as the obscurity of his prose.

In addition to the already mentioned *Ep.* 4.16 (and of course 5.15), Sidonius addresses Ruricius also in *Ep.* 8.10, which seems to be one of those old letters Sidonius takes out of his ‘Auvergat drawer’, at the request of Petronius, to put together Book 8.²⁷⁴ In this epistle, the addressee is praised for his literary studies (a quality which leads one to think of a young Ruricius), and Sidonius laments his being still convalescent, an indication which may imply a time soon after the election to the bishopric of Clermont (cf. *Ep.* 5.3.4). It seems worthy of mention that in *Ep.* 8.10 Sidonius mentions a sentence by Symmachus not transmitted through direct tradition, as well as two non-extant orations which he considers unsurpassed: Fronto’s *In Pelopem* and Pliny the Younger’s *Pro Attia Viriola*. And this is a useful reminder, I think, of how much is lost to us when it comes specifically to Sidonius’ models and reference works, let alone the entirety of the Latin tradition which was available to him.

²⁷¹ His calling Sidonius *frater* in the heading, unlike in previous letters, testifies to his already being bishop, according to Mathisen 2011, 128.

²⁷² See Mathisen 2011, 128–9 for comments on this clever text.

²⁷³ The date of Sidonius’ death is much debated (for an overview, see Kelly 2020, 189) in particular because of the *subscriptio* of the so-called ‘epitaph of Sidonius’, which I believe was written for his son, Apollinaris, as was demonstrated by Montzmir 2023; see also Marolla 2024, 799–801.

²⁷⁴ *Ep.* 8.1.1 *scrinia Aruerna petis euentilari*.

A trace of a pre-editing phase?

As the commentary further explains, the letter is opened by a remark on Sidonius ‘having paid the due compliments’, after which he can proceed with the rest of the letter. And yet, we *do not* have the salutations of courtesy mentioned at the beginning. Since there is no evidence in the manuscript tradition which would lead one to think that part of the letter is lost, I suggest the solution that this may be a slip in the editing for publication and a remnant of the original letter as it was before being reworked for the circulated version of the collection. This little, but nonetheless relevant, residual trace of the original letter to Ruricius incidentally constitutes evidence that the letter was not created entirely for the sake of publication.²⁷⁵

The pleasure of having books copied

This is not the first letter in Book 5 to discuss the practice of having personal copies made from the library holdings of intellectual friends. In *Ep.* 5.2, Sidonius laments having lent his copy of Mamertus Claudianus’ *De Statu Animae* to Nymphidius so that he could make a copy and demands the restitution of the book, fearing his friend might not give it back at all.²⁷⁶ Similar mentions are found in the entirety of the collection and offer details on a lively circle of *savants* interested in fostering the publication of each others’ works and discussing new publications.²⁷⁷

In *Ep.* 9.7, Sidonius stresses the importance of making copies to preserve collective knowledge: a scribe’s decision to subtract Remigius’ *Declamations* from the archive allows Sidonius to read them enthusiastically.²⁷⁸ Although, as Condorelli rightly pointed out, this did not result in the wide circulation of Remigius’ work (not extant nor known from other sources), the passage testifies

²⁷⁵ On the possibility that some letters may be created for the published collection, see Kelly 2020, 181–5.

²⁷⁶ See Marolla 2023, 64–92.

²⁷⁷ On the topic of book circulation in Sidonius’ *Letters*, see Santelia 2005, 18.

²⁷⁸ He is a *bibliopola* like the copyist in *Ep.* 5.15; see commentary on §1.

to Sidonius' effort and interest in preserving for posterity not only his own production but also contemporary literary production more generally.²⁷⁹

Writing *Ep.* 8.3.1 from exile, Sidonius describes having hurriedly transcribed for Leo a copy of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*: whether this was a transcription of the Greek text, a Latin translation or his own translation from the original Greek is debated (though I find the last option the most convincing),²⁸⁰ but, whatever the nature of the transcribed text was, it is the importance of the act of personally copying it to please the interlocutor that deserves attention in this context.²⁸¹

To the intense intellectual activity of Sidonius' literary circle can also be ascribed the mention, in *Sidon. Ep.* 8.6.18, of his sending a copy of Varro's *Libri logistorici* (non-extant) and Eusebius' *Chronicon* (presumably in Jerome's translation?) at Namatius' request. The addressee is on duty as an admiral of the Visigoth king Euric and as such is patrolling the coastline fighting Saxon pirates; nevertheless, he asked for the two books, and the fact Sidonius offers this detail at the end of the letter is coherent with the authorial design of highlighting for posterity, how cultured his companionship is.

Sidonius is also interested in presenting himself as a proud bibliophile: that is what emerges from the epic description of how he intercepted the bearer Riochatus, snatched a copy of Faustus' *De Spiritu Sancto*, and dictated it to his copyists in such a hurry that they resorted to tachygraphic symbols to keep the pace. The epic tale of *Ep.* 9.9.6–8 is surely complimentary towards Faustus of Riez, (also scolded for not sending the work to Sidonius) but it is, incidentally, a celebration of Sidonius the avid reader, ready to do the impossible to get his hands

²⁷⁹ Condorelli 2021, 299–301.

²⁸⁰ As Condorelli 2023, lxxv does.

²⁸¹ As Sidonius' knowledge of Greek is debated, for which and for a detailed overview of previous scholarship on the subject, I refer to the discussion in Condorelli 2023, lxix–lxxxvi; on the interpretation of *Ep.* 8.3.1, see in particular lxxii–lxxv.

on a new book, overwhelmed with excitement after his epic success (*triumphali gaudio*) in obtaining such ‘spiritual loot’.²⁸²

One last but inevitably cursory mention concerns *Ep.* 9.11.6, which offers valuable information on the early circulation of Sidonius’ earlier books of *Letters*. While he is not sure other addressees have even read his collection, he knows for a fact that the work circulates also thanks to Lupus, who promptly had it transcribed upon receiving it and had copies produced of the highest quality, free from copying errors of any kind.

²⁸² *Ep.* 9.9.8 *et spiritalis compotem predae me domum rettuli.*

Clausulation

The letter, being both a *commendaticia* and an occasion to present himself as an attentive book owner — personally overseeing the copying activity for his friends—, is written with attention to clausulation. Although the books discussed are Biblical, Sidonius here does not speak as a bishop and not even as pious man, but exclusively as a learned aristocrat, generously sharing his book possessions with friends and interested in the technical exactness of the copying activity.²⁸³

Key

ApC= Anapaest cretic $\sim \sim - - \sim x$

ApDitroch= Anapaest ditrochee $\sim \sim - - \sim - x$

CC= double cretic $- \sim - - \sim x$

ChorC= choriamb cretic $- \sim \sim - - \sim x$

ChorS = choriamb spondee $- \sim \sim - - x$

CI= cretic iamb $- \sim - \sim x$

CS= cretic spondee $- \sim - - x$

CT= cretic tribrach $- \sim - \sim \sim x$

DactC= dactyl cretic $- \sim \sim - \sim x$

DactI= dactyl iamb $- \sim \sim \sim x$

P¹S= paeon I spondee $- \sim \sim \sim - x$

P⁴S= paeon IV spondee $\sim \sim \sim - - x$

1 (ser)-mone praefato	CS
(ex)-pertus insinuo,	CT
ut fidem in pectore,	ApC
sibique communem	CS
(sa)-tis abunde probaui.	ApDitroch (cursus planus)
-se deportat heptateuchi,	u - - u - u-(or u?) x
-lectum et retractatum.	CS (and cursus velox)

²⁸³ For the various roles he plays in the letters, and on Sidonius the ‘bibliophile’ in Book 5, see Marolla 2023, 8 and 64–80 on lending his copy of Mamertus Claudianus’ *De statu animae* (Ep. 5.2).

(uolumen) et prophetarum,	CS (and cursus velox)
(ab)-sente decursum,	CS
-tentiis eruderatum,	- u - - - u - x
-per illo contra legente,	- u - - - u - x
(ope)-ram suam, credo	CS
(fuerit) impedimento,	CS
(pol)-llicita compleret.	P ⁴ S
2. -petenti remuneretur;	u - - u - u - x (cursus tardus)
(la)-bore si soluitur,	CC
(res)-picere mercedem.	P ⁴ S
(de sola) gratia precer,	CI
(mere)-atur aspiciat	CT
(am)-bire quam praemium.	CC

SIDONIUS RURICIO SUO SALUTEM

1. Officii sermone praefato bibliopolam uestrum non gratiose sed iudicialiter expertus insinuo, cuius ut fidem in pectore, sic in opere celeritatem circa dominum te mihi sibiue communem satis abunde probaui. Librum igitur hic ipse deportat heptateuchi, scriptum uelocitate summa, summo nitore, quamquam et a nobis relectum et retractatum. Defert uolumen et prophetarum, licet me absente decursum, sua tamen cura manuque de superuacuis sentiis erudatum, nec semper illo contra legente, qui promiserat operam suam, credo quia infirmitas fuerit impedimento, quominus pollicita compleret.

2. Restat ut exhortatio uestra seu sponsio famulum sic uel studentem placere uel meritum gratia competenti remuneretur; quae utique pro tali labore si soluitur, incipiet ad uestram respicere mercedem. Sed cum hoc ego de sola gratia precer, uos quid mereatur aspiciate quem constat affectum domini magis ambire quam praemium. Vale.

1: bibliopolam uestrum α MP : bybliopolam (y littera incerta) nostrum L : bybliopolam (y littera incerta) uestrum *p.c.* N : bibliopolam nostrum RT

Sidonius to his dear Ruricius

1. Having paid first the due compliments, I recommend your book-copyist not as an act of favour but having tested him with a critical eye; his reliability of spirit as well as his swiftness in working in regard to you, master shared by him and me, I approved quite fully. He himself, then, is bringing you a copy of the Heptateuch, copied most quickly, with the utmost neatness, and for all that both reread and revised by me. He also brings a copy of the Book of the Prophets, which although completed in my absence, was still cleared of redundant sentences by his care and hand, since the person who had promised his assistance was not always available to read it as a check because sickness prevented him from fulfilling what he had promised.

2. It remains that your encouragement and promised wage shall reward a servant both eager and deserving to please you in this way with appropriate favour, and certainly, if favour is bestowed, paid for such an undertaking, it will begin to redound to your profit. But while I make a plea only for (your) favour, you should see to what a man deserves, the man who perseveres in canvassing the affection of his master more than rewards. Farewell.

Officii sermone praefato: The letter begins mentioning the already addressed *sermo officii*, ‘the due compliments’ after which Sidonius will proceed with the commendation (see *insinuo* below). And yet, there is no trace of a previous salutation in the text. Unless this expression means that salutations are implicit (something like ‘it goes without saying’), either a part of the letter was lost in the manuscript tradition or this is a remnant of the original version of the letter to Ruricius, later changed for the publication of the collection. The expression *sermo officii* is not attested elsewhere and appears to be a variation of the more common *sermonis officium*, on which see e.g. Symm. *Epp.* 2.56.1 and 9.83.2. The epistolary address is often an *officium* in Symmachus: see in particular *Ep.* 3.3.1 *sedulae salutationis officia* ‘the duty of a diligent salutation’ preceding the commendation (Pellizzari 1998, 68), like in Sidon. *Ep.* 5.15. For *sermonis officium* in the opening lines of letters see also Sidon. *Epp.* 3.7.1, 6.6.1, 7.12.1

bibliopolam uestrum: Differently from previous editors, in my text I have chosen the archetypal reading *bibliopolam* (the only ms. with *bybliopolam* is *L*, where, however, *y* is signalled as *littera incerta*). I believe *bybliopola* is a hypercorrection of the standard *bibliopola*, which is the spelling in previous authors and in all other Sidonian occurrences of the word (*Epp.* 2.8.2, 2.9.4 and 9.7.1, see *infra*) in both branches with the exception of *L* (out of 3 occurrences 2 with *y* signalled as *littera incerta*). The archetypal reading is also *uestrum*: *αMP* + *N p.c.* (chosen by Loyen) rather than *nostrum*, peculiar to *LRT*, a sub-branch of *δ* (chosen by Lütjohann and Anderson): although the following *insinuo* would lead one to think Sidonius is commending his own copyist to Ruricius, the rest of the letter makes clear the *bibliopola* is in the service of the addressee (hence, the preference for *uestrum*). As often in Sidonius, the meaning of *bibliopola* does not match previous contexts where the noun stands for ‘bookseller’, as e.g. in Mart. 4.72.2 and Plin. *Epp.* 1.2.6 and 9.11.2 on which see *TLL* 2.1955.32–51 (by Ihm). In this letter, the noun rather designates someone who is making copies of two books in Sidonius’ possession:

thus a copyist in the service of Ruricius (see *famulus* below). The meaning is similar in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.8.2, where the convoluted expression *mercennarius bibliopola*, a ‘remunerated copyist-secretary’, has the task of allocating, ‘next to the other scrolls’, Sidonius’ funerary carmen for Philimatia, presumably in the domestic *armaria*. For this interpretation of the noun see Santelia 2000, 221–2; Consolino 2020, 360 translating ‘a publishing secretary I will employ’, and Hindermann 2022, 235–6, — to which the reader may also turn for further bibliography on the alternative interpretation of *bibliopola* as ‘bookseller’ in Sidonius. The noun is then attested in Sidon. *Ep.* 2.9.4 *armaria extructa bibliopolarum*, on the ‘packed up with books chests’ of a librarian (according to Santelia 2000, 219–20) or professional bookseller (as in Hindermann 2022, 262–3), while the occurrence in Sidon. *Ep.* 9.7.1 *scribam tuum siue bibliopolam* ‘your copyist or your librarian’ is more decisively relatable to a private context, thus to a servant in charge of the domestic library and the family archive; on this see Condorelli 2021, 299 n. 18.

non gratiose sed iudicialiter expertus insinuo: Sidonius clarifies that this is not a standard commendation done out of courtesy and what he is about to say on the scribe is the result of an assessment (*expertus*) of his skills. The two adverbs are both rare: before Sidonius, *gratiose* only occurs in Christian exegetical contexts (Ps. Aug. *Quaest. Test.* 125.21; Aug. *Serm.* 130A. 4) and in a linguistic commentary (Porph. *Hor. Carm.* 4.5.24); while *iudicialiter* previously occurs in Aug. *C. Iul. op. imperf.* 6.28.23 (with a legislative meaning) and Mam. Claud. *Anim.* 1.3 p. 30 (on divine judgement) but in Sidonius it has the wider meaning of assessing someone with pondered judgement both here and in *Ep.* 7.14.4 *non tam iudicialiter quam oculariter intuentur* ‘they are looked upon not with judgment as much as with the outward eye’; see *TLL* 7.2.605.55–69 (by Hermans) and van Waarden 139–40. On Sidonius’ preference for adverbs in-*ter*, often coupled with their contrary as in this case, see Gualandri 1979, 178. *Insinuo* is the standard verb

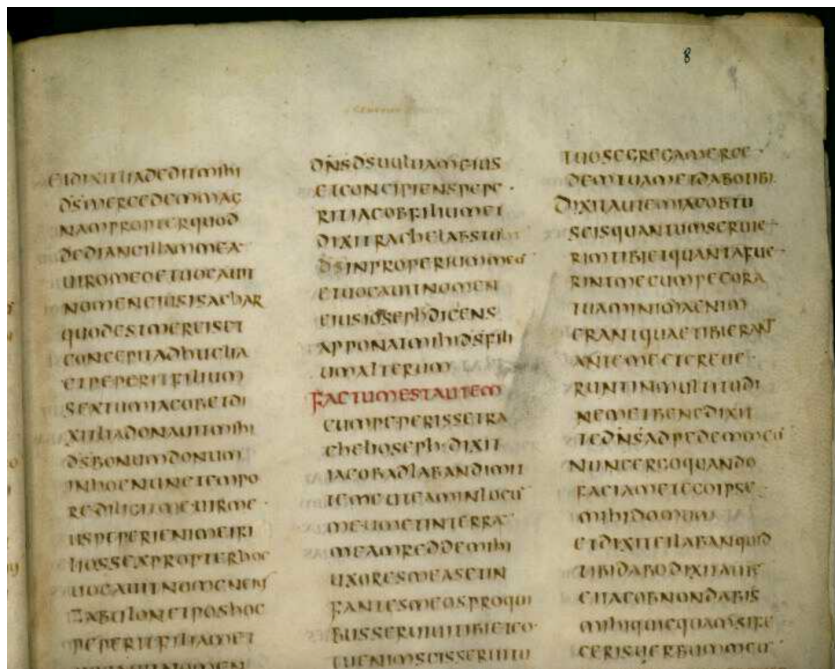
of commendations: for the Symmachian model in particular, see Marolla 2023, 27, 61–2.

cuius ut fidem in pectore, sic in opere celeritatem: the commendation concerns the copyist ‘reliability of spirit as well as his swiftness in working’ for Ruricius. It is noteworthy that the *celeritas* is considered as a good scribal quality, especially because it does not come with negligence towards the accuracy of the work. Cf. the mention the scribe’s ‘swiftness’ in copying what Jerome dictates (because *he* is in a hurry) in Hier. *Epp.* 57.2.2 and 74.6.1. See also the mention of his having hurriedly dictated passages of Faustus’ work he intercepted: Sidon. *Ep.* 9.9.8 *tribuit et quoddam dictare celeranti scribarum sequacitas saltuosa compendium, qui comprehendebant signis quod litteris non tenebant*, ‘I also secured saving time by the speed of the copyists in following my rapid dictation and using tachygraphic signs for what they did write in full’. On this passage, see the introduction to the letter.

circa dominum te mihi sibique communem: this expression makes clear that the *bibliopola* is in the service of Ruricius, since the addressee is a ‘master shared’ by the sender and him. The expression *dominus communis* does not have other occurrences in Sidonius; however, this is how in Ruric. *Ep.* 1.8, the personified book calls Sidonius himself (see the introduction). Bishops aside (addressed as *dominus papa*), it was normal for this author to call a close friend his *dominus*, see e.g. Sidon. *Epp.* 1.1.1, 2.9.1, 2.11.2, 4.3.1, 4.8.4, 4.10.1, 4.12.2, 4.17.1 (this is also how Mamertus Claudianus addresses him in Sidon. *Ep.* 4.2.1). Cf. also similar expressions in *Epp.* 4.12.1 (*filius communis*), 4.18.2 and 5.7.7 (*frater communis*), 4.25.5 (*communes patres et patroni*).

satis abunde probaui: like the previous *expertus*, Sidonius makes clear he has personally checked the valour of the scribe. *Satis abunde* is a well attested informal syntagma.

Librum igitur hic ipse deportat Heptateuchi: the syntagma *deportare*+*librum* is unattested; cf. however Sidon. *Ep.* 1.9.7 *carmen ipsum loquax in consequentibus charta deportat* ‘my chatty letter brings with it the carmen itself, in the attachments’, where it is the personified letter that carries the literary gift. In *Ep.* 5.15, the anonymous copyist is bringing to Ruricius a copy of the Heptateuch, *i.e.* the first seven Books of the Old Testament: the five ‘Books of Moses’ (*i.e.* the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) + Joshua and Judges. The expression *liber Heptateuchi* is unattested and, before Sidonius, this Biblical excerpt is simply mentioned as *Heptateuchum* in Ambr. *In Psalm.* 118 *serm.* 21.12 *inueni Heptateuchum, inueni Regnorum libros*, and in Hier. *Ep.* 107.12.2 *mandet memoriae Prophetas et Heptateuchum et Regum ac Paralipomenon libros*; and Augustine penned the exegetical work *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*. It is worthy of notice that in *Ep.* 5.15 the Heptateuch brought by the copyist constitutes a book unit on its own (hence, *liber*), and I wonder if the book was a version of the *Vetus Latina*, rather than Jerome’s translation. The famous *Codex Lugdunensis*, dated to ca. the fifth-century and produced in Lyon or nearby is a unique pre-Jerome rendering of the Heptateuch into Latin, and it might give the reader a sense of what an Heptateuch codex produced in that area would look like at the time (on the ms. see Robert 1900).



Lyon,

Bibliothèque

Municipale, Ms. 403 + Ms. 1964 section of f. 8r.²⁸⁴

scriptum uelocitate summa, summo nitore: Sidonius praises the swiftness of copying as well as the accuracy of the scribe, who appears to be a professional copyist (see *supra*). Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.28 *non est aliena res, quae fere ab honestis neglegi solet, cura bene ac uelociter scribendi* ‘attending to writing well and quickly, although generally neglected by people of standing, is not inconsequential’. *Nitor* here means specifically the neatness of the copied text, while it usually refers to authors’ style, as in Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.97, where Accius and Pacuvius are said to lack other authors’ *nitor*, their polish; and in particular Symm. *Epp.* 2.86 (where it concerns stylistic elegance) and *Ep.* 3.90 (on the ability of expressing one’s opinion in writing ‘with clarity’). On its occurrence in Symmachus, see Cecconi 2002, 419.

quamquam et a nobis relectum et retractatum: Sidonius has personally re-read and revised the copy made and can guarantee for its quality. This is a valuable witness to how the copying activity took place in fifth century Gaul: a trusted copyist went to a friend’s home to make a copy (in this case Sidonius’), with

²⁸⁴ <https://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/manuscripts/list.php>

supervision. Although the book at hand is Biblical, I would venture to suggest that this must have been the common practice for publishing at the time in the area. The two verbs previously occur together exclusively in Cic. *N.D.* 2.72, a definition of *religiosi* as a derivate of *relegere*: *qui ... omnia quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent*, ‘those ... who revised and retraced religious lore’; see also Lact. *Inst.* 4.28.4 depending on Cicero’s passage (while the occurrence in Ov. *Met.* 4.570 does not concern reading but memory).

Defert uolumen et prophetarum: The copyist is also bringing with him a copy of the Book of the Prophets. What is a *uolumen* here? The noun generally stands for ‘book’ and does not decisively point to the scroll format as late as the fifth century. For the occurrence of the verb in a similar context cf. Hier. *Ep.* 36.1, where Jerome says that, while he is dictating a letter for Damasus to a *notarius*, a Jew comes in: *deferens non pauca uolumina, quae de Synagoga quasi lecturus acceperat. Et ilico ‘habes’, inquit, ‘quod postulaueras’*, ‘bringing with him many books (here they may actually be scrolls) which he had taken from the Synagogue pretending he intended to read them. “Here is what you asked for” he says on the spot’. See also the news of the arrival of *schidae* (sheets) with the Latin translation of Origenes’ work: Hier. *Ep.* 83.1 (from Pammachius and Oceanus to him) *sanctus aliquis ex fratribus schidas ad nos cuiusdam detulit quae Origenis nomine uolumen, quod περὶ ἀρχῶν scribitur, in latinum sermonem conuersum tenerent*.

... sua tamen cura manumque de superuacuis sententiis eruderatum: The copy of the Book of the Prophets was finished when Sidonius was away (*me absente*), and yet it had been polished by the copyist. The mention of the text being ‘cleared of redundant sentences’ seems odd if it is indeed a Biblical book that has been copied, it would seem more appropriate if related to a commentary on the Prophets. Given the context, however, it seems relatable to an act of checking the copy upon completion and, as Gualandri 1979, 113 suggested, to have a copy free from interpolation. On the verb *erudere* see Marolla 2023, 238.

nec semper illo contra legente, qui promiserat operam suam ... quominus pollicita compleret: the copying process involved the assistance of a second hired figure, with the specific task of ‘counter reading’ the copy, that is a fifth-century proof-reader preventing mistakes from slipping into the new copy. This is a telling passage on how the private copying activity took place at Sidonius’ home (or episcopal palace): the proof reader, who happened to be absent because of an illness, had a prior agreement (*pollicita*) presumably with the copyist (the *bibliopola*) if not directly with Ruricius or Sidonius.

§2

Restat ut: this is an informal expression Sidonius is fond of and it is often found in his closing remarks. For a list of other occurrences in the *Letters* see Marolla 2023, 167.

exhortatio uestra seu sponsio ... remuneretur: the *bibliopola* is a copyist tasked by Ruricius to make copies of Biblical texts and Sidonius hopes for him to recompense the scribe with praises or with the *sponsio* (the agreed payment or reward). *Sponsio* generally indicates more generally ‘a promise’ in Sidon. *Ep.* 5.2.2 and 9.16.1 but here the verb *remuneror* points to an economic transaction or profit-making agreement of some sort.

famulum sic uel studentem placere uel meritum gratia competenti: the definition of the *bibliopola* as a *famulus*, therefore ‘in the service of Ruricius’, confirms his status as possibly household staff with high-quality training, serving as a private copyist of the addressee. Sidonius describes him as ‘eager to please his master’: the expression *studens+placere* has few occurrences in late Latin, see in particular Rufin. *Hist.* 5.20.5 *studentem placere Polycarpo*, when Florinus is said to have been ‘eager to please Polycarp’ while in his home; see also Arnob.

Iun. *Praedest.* 3.11 on Paul's zeal in persecution, out of his being 'a good servant' (*quia placere domino bonus famulus studebat*), and Aug. *C. Iul.* 2.3.5 (on pleasing God). The expression *gratia competens* is not elsewhere attested and it means here 'adequate favour', on the use of the participial adjective in relation to incorporeal things see *TLL* 3.2068.12–61 (by Jachmann) and cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 3.6.3 *exspectationem nostram competentibus dispositionibus munerari*, the newly-appointed Eutropius will reward people's expectations 'with fitting administrative management'.

... si soluitur, incipiet ad uestram respicere mercedem: the insistence on the opportunity of compensating the copyist, together with the commendatory content, leads one to think that Sidonius may have promised to write such a letter to the *bibliopola*, who was carrying it together with the two books. Note that the expression *ad mercedem respicere* — meaning that the reward may turn into an investment for the future — does not have occurrences before Sidonius, but is later attested in Gregory the Great (*Epp.* 9.11 and 9.214).

Sed cum hoc ego de sola gratia precer: The use of the verb *precari* is coherent with the context of commendation letter stated at the beginning (see §1 *insinuo*), cf. for instance the commendations in Symm. *Epp.* 2.41 (*precatio mea*), 2.80 (*precator insinuem*), and in particular 4.37 *ut ad debitos fructos me precatore, te auctore perueniat* — it is good that the *commendatus* is rewarded with the help of Symmachus' prayer but on the addressee's own initiative —, 7.122.2 (*precandi necessitatem*) and 9.122 (*precator*). Coherently with the model, similar expressions are also in other letters commendations or mundane appeals of Sidonius to his friends: see *Epp.* 4.1.5, 4.24.4, 7.8.2 7.11.2, 9.11.4 and 10.

uos quid mereatur aspicate: This constitutes further evidence that the *bibliopola* was hired by Ruricius alone: it is up to him to decide whether to reward the scribe with a bonus and Sidonius can only encourage him to do so but he does not mean to overstep. If Ruricius has a choice on whether to pay, it is unlikely that the

bybliopola is a free man (cf. *famulus* above). See the straightforwardness of this expression, the familiarity (and familiar ties) with Ruricius allow Sidonius to address him informally with the imperative. Cf. the occurrence of this syntagma in another *commendaticia*: Sidon. *Ep.* 6.5 *uos hoc potius aspicite, quid absentis causa, non quid praesentis persona mereatur*, ‘consider the merits of the absent’s cause rather than the demerits of the one who is before you’. On *aspicere* meaning ‘to see to something’ in particular in the imperative, see *TLL* 2.832.12–39 (by v. Mess).

quem constat affectum domini magis ambire quam praemium: a final point of praise for the *commendatus*, who is not interested in money as much as in the good opinion of his master. Similar expressions of devotion are e.g. in Sidon. *Ep.* 3.14.1 *uoluptatem non operis effectus excudit sed auctoris adfectus*: the love for Sidonius is the reason why Placidus reads his works, rather than the reaction they cause (as also in *Epp.* 7.1.2 and 9.2.2); see van Waarden 2010, 94, Giannotti 2016, 264.

ABBREVIATIONS

CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.

CTh Codex Theodosianus.

IRHT Institut de recherche et d’histoire des textes, Paris.

L&S Lewis, C. T. and Short, C., *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1879.

LLT Library of Latin Texts Series A.

MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

OCD Hornblower, S., Spawforth, A. and Eidinow, E. (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition), Oxford, 2012.

OLD Glare, A. P., et al., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (2nd edition), Oxford, 2012.

OPEL B. Lőrincz ed., *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum*, 4 vols., Vienna/Budapest, 1999–2005.

PCBE 4 Pietri, L. and Heijmans, M. (eds), *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire: 4 La Gaule Chrétienne (314–614)*, Paris, 2013.

PL *Patrologia Latina*.

PLRE 1 and 2 Jones, A. H. M., Martindale, J. R. and Morris, J. (eds), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. I, A.D. 260–395 (Cambridge, 1971); Martindale, J. R. (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. II, A.D. 395–527 (Cambridge, 1980).

RE Pauly, A. F., Wissowa, G., et al. (eds), *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart, 1893–1980.

TLL Vollmer, F., et al. (eds), *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1900–.

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