

SIDONIUS' SOCIAL WORLD

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Time present and time past
 are both perhaps present in time future,
 and time future contained in time past.

(T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

1 Time Present and Time Past: A Response to the Collapse of Roman Imperial Power?

IN THE POETIC autobiography included in the last letter of his collection, Sidonius Apollinaris referred with pride to the time-defying bronze statue (*statua perennis*) that was dedicated to him in 456 in Trajan's Forum in Rome: his statue, together with Claudian's and Merobaudes', were the last three to be erected in the writers' gallery (*inter auctores*) in the *exedrae* of the libraries of Latin and Greek literature, visible to all at this site of memory.¹ It is fascinating to observe Sidonius the senator, torn between survival strategy and inner conviction, assuming the role of exemplar and combative bishop, paving the way for his own generation towards

Chapters 5 and 6 have a joint theoretically substantiated introduction (ch. 5, sect.1) and conclusion (ch. 6, sect.7) intended to provide an insight into the interaction between society and literature, and the vital tension between 'time present' and 'time past'. These chapters are gratefully dedicated to Martin West, who was always happy to discuss epistolographic and poetological questions with me, and also deepened my appreciation of the academic traditions of Oxford and All Souls College. The chapters have benefited greatly from the lively discussions at the International Conference on 'Sidonius, his Words and his World' at Edinburgh, in November 2014. Thanks are due to Raphael Schwitter and Lisa Bailey for their thought-provoking books, to Ralph Mathisen and Roy Gibson for their unpublished contributions on 'Sidonius' people' and 'Sidonius' novel canon of epistolographers', and to Jill Harries for her stimulating insights. In particular, I should like to thank Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden for their careful reading and their work in convening this major joint project: the conference remains memorable both for its intellectual atmosphere, fully worthy of its setting in the 'Athens of the North', and for the friendly conviviality shared by all. Faber & Faber Ltd. and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company kindly gave permission to quote the excerpt of T.S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' above.

¹ Sidon. *Carm.* 41 (*Ep.* 9.16.3) 27–8; see Chenault (2012) 111, 130 table A: 'Honorific inscriptions', and Mratschek (2017) 319–20. The bronze statue with inscription was dedicated to Claudian in 400 in the names of Arcadius and Honorius, at the senate's request (*CIL* 6.1710 = *ILS* 2949); cf. Claud. *Get. praef.* 9 *adnuit hunc princeps titulum poscentem senatu*. See Cameron (1970) 248–9 and Kelly (2012) 241–3. Fl. Merobaudes, *magister utriusque militiae* in Italy and Spain, was praised for his unusual combination of literary and military skills, when he was honoured with a statue in 435 (*CIL* 6.1724 = *ILS* 2950), cf. Sidon. *Carm.* 9.299–301 (unnamed) and Hydat. *Chron.* 120 Burgess [128 Mommsen]. See Gillett (2012) 274–5. Ammianus (14.6.8 and 18) comments scathingly on the statue cult of the idle urban elites of Rome and on their unfrequented libraries; his criticism does not hold good for the Gallo-Roman Sidonius, the Spaniard Merobaudes, and the Alexandrian Claudian, all of whom had a distinguished record of political activities.

the security of medieval Christianity² – meanwhile continuing to regard himself as the last remaining representative of a more glamorous bygone age, and withdrawing more and more into the self-constructed illusion of his own world.

Memory points forwards as well as backwards.³ So overwhelming was the power of remembering for Sidonius that it defined his present, deformed his past, and became engraved in the collective memory of future generations. He was an eyewitness as the Visigothic king Euric used his conquests to create the most important successor state to the Roman Empire, a Gallic-Spanish *regnum*, with some ten million people living on three-quarters of a million square kilometres.⁴ But in his revised letter collection and its subsequent publication in book form, this late antique author modelled his social world of the Dark Ages and the empire's disintegration into a simulacrum of the Golden Age of Augustus or Trajan in dialogue with Pliny the Younger.⁵ Sidonius' vision of a Rome fading away in timeless elegance into the twilight of a barbarian age, was – as Greg Woolf has persuasively shown – 'a response to threatened change, rather than a reflection of continuity'.⁶ Peter Brown⁷ has defined this attitude as 'hyper-Romanity', because Sidonius presented what remained of the Roman Empire as a 'model society': 'the home of laws, the training-school of letters, the assembly-hall of high dignitaries, the head of the universe, the mother-city of liberty, the one community in the whole world in which only slaves and barbarians are foreigners'.⁸ Glimpses of contemporary society, as perceived by Sidonius and mirrored in his letters, are thus to be regarded not as depictions of empirical reality, but as reflections and constructions of his persona: depictions of the present and hopes for the future are indissolubly bound up with the culture of the past.⁹ The style and structure of Pliny's letter collection,¹⁰ together with themes and motifs of the Golden Age, provided Sidonius with a background against which he could redefine his shifting roles as politician, bishop, and leading figure in the literary circles of the Gallo-Roman elite engaged in a 'war of cultures', and could differentiate them from his model.

² By the appeal to enter the clergy (5.4) and the performance of the *episcopalis audientia* (5.5).

³ On the concept of cultural memory based on external storage media and cultural practices, see the definitions of Jan Assmann (1992), (2006) 70, and Aleida Assmann (1999) 19; also her project on 'The Past in the Present. Dimensions and Dynamics of Cultural Memory' (since 2011); on the dichotomy of the narratives of the past in 'Experience and Teleology', Grethlein (2013) title, preface, and 29–52 'on traces of teleological design'; on temporality in Sidonius recently Hanaghan (2019) 58–90: 'Reading Time: *Erzählzeit* und *Lesezeit*'.

⁴ Wolfram (2009) 187, Heather (1996) 181–91, and Ward-Perkins (2005) 14–15. Cf. the comprehensive bibliography of Ferreiro (2014). According to Delaplace, 'a reorganisation of Roman Gaul rather than the creation of a kingdom': see Wood, Préface, in Delaplace (2015) iii. However, the term *regnum* in reference to the Goths and Burgundians occurs several times in Sidonius: see Christiansen and Holland (1993) 194–5, Christiansen et al. (1997) 613; contra Delaplace (2015) 167–8. In the present volume, see Kulikowski, ch. 4, sect. 3.

⁵ Compare Pliny's 'journey from light to dark': see Gibson (2015) esp. 230–2, also in this volume, ch 11, and the poetics of history conceived by White (1986) in his 'Metahistory'.

⁶ Sidon. *Carm.* 7.540–41 *portavimus umbram / imperii*, 'we endured that shadow of Empire'. See Woolf (1998) 164, n. 2; also Jones (2009) 25.

⁷ Brown (2012) 404. Cf. Harries (1996) 44 and Pohl (2018) on Romaness and identities.

⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.6.2 (on Rome) *domicilium legum, gymnasium litterarum, curiam dignitatum, verticem mundi, patriam libertatis, in qua unica totius orbis civitate soli barbari et servi peregrinantur*.

⁹ As with Eliot's poems, 'time is switched off in such a space of tradition': see Assmann and Assmann (1987) 7–8. Cf. Watson (1998) 178, 196, Hardie (2019), Elsner and Squire (2016) on visual memory in Roman rhetoric. Overwien (2009b) regards the letters as a 'political tool' in Sidonius' fight for Gaul, but takes insufficient account of the artful stylistic elaboration prior to publication. They certainly do not express a general 'cultural pessimism', as wrongly assumed by Kaufmann (1995) 263–8.

¹⁰ As Sidonius declared programmatically (*Ep.* 1.1.1 and 4.22.2).

There have so far been few attempts at literary-epistolographical analysis of Sidonius' art and coded communication with a view to understanding his culture and society and the construction of his self. The fundamental requirement for such an approach is the close integration of reception aesthetics and sociocultural analysis, as demonstrated by Gibson for Pliny.¹¹ Just as the literary genre of the letter is linked to the sociopolitical milieu within which it operates, and that milieu influences the writer's presentation of his self, so the individual letter seeks to exercise influence through its artistry and positioning within the collection, and to construct a social and cultural universe of its own. The stage designed for the actors to play out their roles provides the setting for processes of cultural and sociopolitical negotiation; visualisation and focalisation through the persona of the writer, and of the recipient, generate a reader's perspective that might be said to flash selected glimpses of the author's circle past the eye of the observer like a montage of images.¹² Sidonius' evocation of literary role models and spatial concepts during a period of political and religious turmoil prompts his audience to engage in discourse with past voices that are made relevant to the present. In his attempt at crisis management, Sidonius' powers of persuasion and communication prove to be a tool for creating both artistic authority and cultural identity.

2 Pliny in Late Antique Gaul: Oases of *Romanitas*

One of the most prominent exponents of epistolography, the younger Pliny, hailed the age of Trajan as a true literary renaissance that had 'brought an abundant harvest of poets', and he expressed his delight at the current vigour of literary studies.¹³ Similarly, Sidonius praised the 'flourishing studies' (*florentia studia*) in the liberal arts being pursued by the grammarians and rhetors of late antique Gaul, whose literary productivity surpassed that of any earlier era.¹⁴ It took nearly three centuries for Pliny's letters to come back into favour, at the end of the fourth century, and 350 years to find in Sidonius the reader who would proclaim them to be his model.¹⁵ While booksellers in Lyon had a copy of the letters in stock during Pliny's lifetime, and manuscripts were in circulation in Gaul during the fourth century,¹⁶ the reader known to have studied them most thoroughly was Sidonius Apollinaris.¹⁷ As a blue-blooded aristocrat from Lyon he

¹¹ Gibson (2012), cf. (2011, (2013a, 2013b); cf. Mratschek (2013, 2017).

¹² Webb (2009) *passim* on the ways in which visual and textual media work collaboratively and competitively with each other. Comparable with the younger Pliny: see Mratschek (2017).

¹³ For the renaissance of literature in the age of Trajan see Plin. *Ep.* 1.13.1 *Magnum proventum poetarum annus hic attulit . . . iuvat me, quod vigent studia.*

¹⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.21.4 *hic te imbuendum liberalibus disciplinis grammatici rhetorisque studia florentia monitu certante fovērunt*, 'here eminent schools of grammar and rhetoric nurtured you, each in eager rivalry as they sought to ground you in the liberal arts'. On the production of literature, see Mathisen (1988a) and Mratschek (2002) 39, 44–6.

¹⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.22.2 *ego Plinio ut discipulus adsurgo*, 'to Pliny I yield homage as a pupil'. See Whitton (2019) 43 with n. 126, 319 with n. 180, and Hanaghan (2019) 176–8.

¹⁶ On Pliny's letters in Gaul, see Plin. *Ep.* 9.11.2 (in Lyon, c. 107) *bybliopolas Lugduni esse non putabam ac tanto libentius ex litteris tuis cognovi venditare libellos meos*, 'I did not think there were booksellers in Lyon, and was all the more pleased to learn from your letter that they sell my books.' Another reader was Ausonius (*Cent. nupt.* p. 153.4 Green): *lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba, ut Martialis* [Green (1.4.8), codd. *Plinius*] *dicit. meminerint autem, quippe eruditi, probissimo viro Plinio in poematis* [*Ep.* 4.14, 5.3] *lasciviam . . . constitisse*, "My page is naughty, but my life is clean", as Martial says. But let them remember, learned as they are, that Pliny, a most honourable man, shows looseness in his little poems.' Here he follows Catullus (16.6–11), quoted by Plin. *Ep.* 4.14.5. On the reading of Pliny's Letters from the third to the fifth century, see Gibson and Rees (2013) and the revised view of Cameron (2016b).

¹⁷ Sidon. *Carm.* 13.23–4 (Lyon as *patria*), *Ep.* 1.5.2 (*Rhodanusia nostra*), 1.8.1 (*mei*), 5 (*civitas nostra*, i.e. Lyon). See Stevens (1933) 61–2, 171; Harries (1974) 34–47; Cameron (2016b) 479–81.

displayed his snobbish superiority over foreigners and men from merely municipal stock by quoting the Vergilian verse addressed by Pallas, son of the mythical king Evander of Latium, to the foreign invader Aeneas: *Qui genus, unde domo?* – ‘Who are you by birth and where do you come from?’¹⁸ A politician and author of elaborate letters like Pliny, Sidonius initiated a vigorous correspondence with the local authorities, the landowning nobility, including twenty-three bishops, and a few prime political actors of the time.¹⁹ His network reached as far north as the English Channel and Trier²⁰ and stretched south to the Mediterranean coast, west to Nantes and Bordeaux, and east to the Jura, Geneva, and the Grenoble Alps. Outliers included correspondents in Spain, Liguria, and on the Adriatic.

At the age of almost fifty, Bishop Sidonius again attempted to continue the literary success of his friend Johannes, through whom ‘the Latin language, shattered by this tempest of wars, had reached port, although Latin arms have suffered shipwreck’.²¹ Sidonius loved polarities: Euric, the successful Visigothic king, master of Gaul from the Pyrenees to the Loire and the Rhône, is stylised in the bishop’s literary output under the guise of Rome’s archetypal foe, Hannibal, the embodiment of the uncultivated barbarian, whom Ennodius, a distant relative of Sidonius, depicted ‘burling some unintelligible native mutterings’.²² As Ward-Perkins explains, these stories do not prove that Euric could not speak Latin, but they do show that Gothic was still a live language at his court. The more clearly Rome’s weakness and the ‘slender thread of Tiber’s flow’ were revealed under Euric’s regime,²³ the more intensively Sidonius worked on revising and publishing his correspondence. He meant it to be a compensation for the loss of Rome, and his legacy to future generations.²⁴ After the surrender of Clermont in 475, Sidonius abandoned his role as an organiser of Gallic resistance and switched to communication strategies. The Roman aristocrats, living in the secluded splendour of their estates, felt increasingly cut off from each other as the Visigothic invasion progressed; the act of letter-writing became their ‘survival strategy’, establishing oases of *Romanitas*, making it possible to keep friendships and social intercourse alive from day to day, and becoming a marker of class and cultural solidarity.²⁵ Nine volumes of letters and twenty-four poems served to proclaim his message across the Gothic provinces in Gaul: a renewed vision of the cultural and political values of the Roman past, and the dissemination of new religious thinking on behalf of the church, in support of the interests

¹⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.11.5 (on Paeonius, a *homo novus*) alludes to Verg. *Aen.* 8.114, Aeneas’ landing in Italy. See Harries (1994) 26–7, Mathisen (1993) 10–13 and ch. 6 on the thinking and outlook of the aristocracy in barbarian Gaul.

¹⁹ See the list of addressees in Kaufmann (1995); Dill (1899) 195 n. 2, counting seventeen bishops, is wrong.

²⁰ Volusianus’ *praedia Baiocassina* near Bayeux (Sidon. *Ep.* 4.18.2); Arbogastes, count of Trier (7.13.1).

²¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.2.1 *sub hac tempestate bellorum Latina tenuerunt ora portum, cum pertulerint arma naufragium.*

²² Sidon. *Ep.* 7.7 (see Mratschek (2013) 249–71), 4.22.3: Euric as *potentissimus rex*. Cf. Ennod. *v. Epif.* 89–90 *at Euricus, gentile nescio quod murmur infringens, fertur ad interpretem rex locutus*, ‘but Euric, it is told, talked to the interpreter, burling some unintelligible native mutterings’. See Ward-Perkins (2005) 75. On Ennodius’ relationship to Sidonius, cf. Mathisen (1981a) 104 = Mathisen (1991a) 22.

²³ *Carm.* 34 (*Ep.* 8.9.5) 42–4 *Eorice, tuae manus rogantur, / ut Martem validus per inquilinum / defendat tenuem Garumna Thybrim*, ‘Euric, your troops are called for so that the Garonne, strong in its settlers, may defend the dwindled Tiber.’

²⁴ Sidonius (*Ep.* 8.2.2) regards his literary legacy and that of his circle as *natalium vetustorum signa* (‘the signs of ancient birthright’) and *solum . . . posthac nobilitatis indicium* (‘henceforth the only token of nobility’) for his descendants. See Harries (1996) 241–2, Mathisen (1988a) 51 = Mathisen (1991a) 51, Mratschek (2002) 48, *inter alia*.

²⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.11.1 *sed quoniam fraternae quietis voto satis obstrepit conflictantium procella regnorum, saltim inter discretos separatosque litterarii consuetudo sermonis iure retinebitur, quae iam pridem caritatis obtentu merito inducta veteribus annuit exemplis*, ‘but since the tempest of battling kingdoms breaks noisily upon our desire for quiet brotherly communion, this custom of epistolary converse will rightly be maintained, at least between parties sundered and removed from one another; it was deservedly introduced long ago for reasons of friendship and is in agreement with old examples’. See Mathisen (1993) 108–12, Jones (2009) 25, van Waarden (2010).

of both.²⁶ Three regional elites were his allies in the struggle to keep the Gallic aristocracy alive: a group from his own region, the Auvergne, a second in cosmopolitan Narbonne, and another composed of the intellectual circle of Bordeaux.²⁷

The foci of Sidonius' correspondence were his native Lyon (Lugdunum) and his adopted home of Clermont (Augustonemetum). Lyon, at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône and at the intersection of the four principal routes, was the central traffic hub of Gaul.²⁸ But his heart belonged to Clermont in the land of the Arverni, and his favourite villa, Avitacum, was here too. Small and provincial though it might be, Clermont was not subject to the metropolis of Bourges, capital of Aquitania Prima.²⁹ Sidonius employs the rhetorical device of a *praeteritio* and a triple anadiplosis on *taceo* (*Ep.* 4.21.5) to draw his readers' attention to 'the particular charm', the *peculiarem iucunditatem*, of Clermont and the Auvergne: 'I say nothing of the cultivated plain', he wrote, 'where waves of corn are swaying in the wind that bring profit without danger; . . . this is a region gentle to travellers, fruitful to the tiller, delightful to the hunter.' Clermont is a 'place that, when but once seen, . . . often induces many visitors to forget their own native land. I pass over the city itself, which loves you above all else.'³⁰

3 The Correspondents: Epistolographic Networks and Political Space

Christians like Sidonius were heirs to an impressive culture of letter-writing following on from pagan role models – Cicero, Pliny, Symmachus – who deployed the letter as an effective means of establishing social and political networks for patronage and to ensure that their ideas entered circulation among their peers. In accordance with the rules of communication (*amicitiarum iura*) in Late Antiquity, letters would impose a reciprocal obligation (*officium votivum*) on the recipient in the same way as gifts (*munera*) and called for a reply (*obsequia*).³¹ As in Symmachus, letters were a vehicle for conveying friendship which was cultivated and deepened by its correct performance (*religiones quibus iure amicitia confertur*).³² The 147 letters of Sidonius' collection were addressed to 117 correspondents, mainly his friends in the Gallo-Roman elites and the

²⁶ Amherdt (2004) 373–87.

²⁷ Loyen (1943) 65–92 and Köhler (1995) 10.

²⁸ Majorian had given Sidonius his *patria* and his *vita* back in 458 when he saved Lyon from being ruined by an oppressive tax burden (*Sidon. Carm.* 13.23–5). On the topography, see Reynaud (1998) 18.

²⁹ Harries (1994) 12, n. 30.

³⁰ *Sidon. Ep.* 4.21.5 *taceo territorii peculiarem iucunditatem; taceo illud aequor agrorum, in quo sine periculo quaestuosae fluctuant in segetibus undae . . . ; viatoribus molle, fructuosum aratoribus, venatoribus voluptuosum; . . . quod denique huiusmodi est, ut semel visum advenis multis patriae oblivionem saepe persuadeat.* (6) *taceo civitatem ipsam tui semper amantissimam.*

³¹ *Sidon. Ep.* 4.7.3 *percipiose me officii votivi compotem fecit*, 'he has enabled me to discharge my incumbent duty to the full', 8.14.8 *quia tuorum apicum detulit munera, meorum reportat obsequia*, 'since he brought me the boon of a letter from you, now he carries to you my respects in return'. Cf. 6.6.1 *officiorum . . . sermonem*, 'the payment of my respects', 8.9.1 (sc. *litteras*) *quibus silentium meum culpas*, '(your letter) in which you complain of my silence', 9.4.1 *propositae sedulitatis officia*, 'the obligations of our planned diligent correspondence'. See Mratschek (2018a, 2018b) with reference to Bourdieu's concept of gift-exchange.

³² *Symm. Ep.* 7.129 (ed. Seeck 213–14); see Matthews (1985) 81 = Matthews (2010) 234 and Mratschek (2002) 390–1. Cf. *Sidon. Ep.* 4.7.1 *amicitiarum iura*, 'the claims of our friendship', 7.17.1 *lege amicitiae, quam nefas laedi*, 'the law of friendship, which it would be infamous to violate', 7.10(11).2 *quocirca salutatione praefata, sicut mos poscit officii*, 'so after the greeting which ordinary courtesy demands', with *Symm. Ep.* 7.66 *salutationis honore praefato*, 'having first given you the honour of greeting', and 4.23.2 *salutationis officium*, 'the duty of greeting'. They have the same function in the Greek East: see Cabouret (2014) 151–2.

clergy, or the political leadership in the Visigothic kingdom and in Burgundy.³³ The focus is on writing about his own self; and, with one exception, all the letters are composed by the author himself.³⁴

The author emphasises how the pagan tradition of epistolography lives on in his letters – in cultural terms through his shaping of individual letters according to their respective functions, and in social terms as shown by his audience, addressees, and readers. While Sidonius acknowledges his debt to Pliny the Younger for the stylistic principle of *variatio* and the structure of his letter collection,³⁵ he consciously opts for a different approach in his dedication: rather than follow Pliny's choice of a praetorian prefect such as P. Septicius Clarus, he apologetically passes over his relative Tonantius Ferreolus, a praetorian prefect, in favour of the priest Constantius, a close friend from Lyon.³⁶ Sidonius considered that the humblest churchman (*minimus religiosus*) must take precedence over the most distinguished layman (*honoratus maximus*). A bishop and himself one of the *boni*, he argues that the first red-letter title of the whole collection (*primae titulorum rubricae*) can thus not be fittingly bestowed on Ferreolus (7.12.1) – only 'the Proem in the Middle' – and matches the action to the word by dedicating his letter collection (Books 1–8, at least) to Constantius, the priest not holding high office.³⁷ Constantius was actively involved in revision and publication of the text.³⁸ High-born, a gifted orator and excellent poet, he came from the same social and cultural milieu as Sidonius, and had kinship ties to his circle.³⁹ The two friends were closely linked by shared activities.⁴⁰ But the decisive factor behind Sidonius' choice of dedicatee was the deep gratitude (*gratiae quam fundamenta tam culmina*, 'both the foundation and the culmination of gratitude') that Constantius had earned when he visited Clermont during the Visigothic siege in winter 473.⁴¹ The advice given by the priest after seeing the ravaged city for himself

³³ On the number of addressees, see Kaufmann's (1995) Prosopography, 275–356. The number of addressees is unchanged by the question of whether there may in fact be the remains of 148 letters, since *Ep* 1.4b lacks an address (see Kelly in this volume, ch. 3, n. 11). For a full and reasoned prosopography of Sidonius' oeuvre, including social network analysis, see in this volume Mathisen, ch. 2.

³⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.2 by Claudianus Mamertus.

³⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.1: see Gibson (2011, 2013b).

³⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.1, 3.2, 7.18 (to Constantius); cf. 7.12.1; 4 (to Ferreolus) commented on in n. 37.

³⁷ See the chiasmus and the ambiguity at Sidon. *Ep.* 7.12.4 (to Ferreolus): *praestantior secundum bonorum sententiam computatur honorato maximo minimus religiosus*, 'according to the view of the best men, the humblest ecclesiastic ranks above the most exalted secular dignity'. According to Mratschek (2017) 311–13, *primae titulorum rubricae* refers to the whole letter collection and to Constantius (cf. the front cover of MS Laud. Lat. 104, fol. 2r, from the Bodleian Library, Oxford); according to van Waarden (2016a) 60–1, however, to the collection of bishops and Lupus (*Ep.* 6.1–7.11). Ferreolus, *praef. praet. Galliarum* 451 and *rector columenque Galliarum*, 'helmsman and mainstay of the Gauls' (*Carm.* 24.35), has not actually entered the ranks of the clergy; see *PLRE* 2, 465–6 and Mratschek (2017) 311–12. But see the excellent observation of *Ep.* 7.12 as a 'proem in the middle' by van Waarden (2016a) 53–5 and 80–1: Tonantius Ferreolus is treated 'as though he were the lowest ranking bishop' and accorded 'an intermediary position' because of his eminent rank.

³⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.1.3 *tibi . . . has litterulas . . . defaecendas . . . limandasque commisi*, 'I submit these letters to you for revision and purging.'

³⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 3.2.2 *nobilitate sublimis*, 9.16.1 *praestantioris facundiae dotes, vir singularis ingenii*, 2.10.3 *eminens poeta*; cf. his verse inscription in the basilica at Lyon (2.10.3) for which Sidonius and other friends also wrote poems. A son of Ruricius was called Constantius; on nomenclature and possible kinship, see Ruric. *Ep.* 2.24, 2.43; cf. Mathisen (1981a) 107, n. 46 = Mathisen (1991a) 25, n. 46, (1999a) 24, n. 30.

⁴⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.10.3 on the poems on the Basilica of St Justus: the *tumultuarium carmen* of Sidonius in hendecasyllables (*Carm.* 27 in §4); hexameters by Constantius and Secundinus to the right and left of the altar.

⁴¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 3.2.4. The travelling distance from Lyon to Clermont was 180 km! See Fournier and Stoehr-Monjou (2014) 13.

encouraged the townspeople to rebuild their homes and resume their common defence policy.⁴² He was backed by the authority and great wealth of Bishop Patiens of Lyon.⁴³

As a holder of government office under three Roman emperors and then of a bishopric, Sidonius, like Pliny the Younger before him, exemplified how political duty and literary inclination might typically interact: his ironic comment that he owed the urban prefecture (468) purely to ‘the good style’ of his panegyric veils the harsh reality that the emperor Anthemius badly needed endorsement by the Gallo-Roman aristocracy.⁴⁴ The conspicuous silence of Sidonius about his consecration as a bishop (469) in succession to Eparchius, a relative of his wife, suggests that this sudden shift was not a happy promotion from worldly dignity to spiritual honour.⁴⁵ As in his everyday life, the secular and ecclesiastical aristocracy around him were divided into two distinct circles in his social thought and in his correspondence: men of letters and high-ranking clerical dignitaries. Formally, the difference in etiquette is clear at first glance, from the letters’ opening and closing salutations.⁴⁶ High culture and high office are the main criteria for inclusion in the correspondence. The honour of first and last mention in the series of the episcopal letters (6.1 and 9.11)⁴⁷ goes to Lupus of Troyes, *episcopus episcoporum*. According to Sidonius, the recipient of more than one letter in the collection, like Lupus, might feel especially honoured, which suggests that an act of self-fashioning is involved.⁴⁸

The regional distribution of the correspondents is illuminating: the centres of letter production in Gaul, and the routes by which letters were circulated, can be traced through the distribution patterns of the letters. Sidonius spent most of his life in the Roman enclaves of the Auvergne and the Rhône valley. As with the correspondence of senators from the old days – Pliny, Symmachus, Ausonius – exchanges of letters were most intensive in the areas where Sidonius, his relatives, and friends had their homes.⁴⁹ With sixteen recipients in Lyon

⁴² Sidon. *Ep.* 3.2.1 *quas tu lacrimas ut parens omnium super aedes incendio prorutas et domicilia semiusta fudisti! . . . quae tua deinceps exhortatio, quae reparationem suadentis animositas!*, ‘what tears you shed, as if you were the father of us all, over buildings levelled by fire and houses half-burnt . . . and then how animating was your encouragement, what a great spirit you showed in urging them to rebuild’, 3.2.2 *quibus tuo monitu non minus in unum consilium quam in unum oppidum revertentibus muri tibi debent plebem reductam, plebs reducta concordiam*, ‘it was at your admonition that they returned not only to a united town but also to a united policy, and to you the walls owe the return of their people, to you the returned people their harmony’, 9.16.1 (Constantius as *vir* . . . *consilii salutaris*, ‘man of wholesome judgment’). See Harries (1994) 226–7.

⁴³ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.12.5; Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.24. See below, sect. 4.

⁴⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.9.8 *stili occasione*. See Harries (1994) 11–12.

⁴⁵ Harries (1994) 15, van Waarden (2011b) 1, Brown (2012) 405; see Gotoh (1997) and Gerth (2013) 158 for an alternative perspective. Cf. Delaplace (2015) 25 supposing ‘a radical change of his political position’.

⁴⁶ Salutation to his literary friends: name of the addressee, in the dative, with the possessive pronoun *suo*; to the bishops: *domino papae*; farewell salutation to his friends: *vale*; to the bishops: *memor nostri esse dignare, domine papa* (‘deign to keep us in mind, lord bishop’). See Mathisen (2013a) 241–2.

⁴⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 9.11.5 *adde, quia etiam in hoc . . . reverentiae tuae meritorumque ratio servata est, quod sicut tu antistitum ceterorum cathedris, prior est tuus in libro titulus*, ‘add that also in this point have I shown due consideration for your venerable character and merits, that namely, just as you hold the first place among the enthroned bishops, so your name forms the first superscription in a book’.

⁴⁸ Sidonius began a letter to Fortunalis with the words (8.5.1): ‘You also shall find a place in my pages, pillar of friendship’, *Ibis et tu in paginas nostras, amicitiae columen*. He apologises to Gelasius for not yet having included him in his letter collection (*Ep.* 9.15.1): *deliqui, quippe qui necdum nomine tuo ulla operi meo litteras iunxerim*. Claudianus Mamertus complained that he was not mentioned in Sidonius’ correspondence (*Ep.* 4.2.2).

⁴⁹ In Transpadana, in central Italy directed towards Rome, or in Aquitania; see Bowersock (1986) 1–12 (Symmachus and Ausonius); Sivan (1993) 66–79 (Ausonius); Mratschek (2003) (Pliny’s circle and its geographic reach).

and fifteen in Clermont, his correspondence is distinctly concentrated in his own *patria* and that of his wife Papianilla. Only in three instances is it certain that letters have a destination outside Gaul: one was sent to Spain, one to the former imperial residence at Ravenna, and one to Rome.⁵⁰ The anodyne letter of congratulations to Audax, prefect of Rome in 474/5, is an exception, but in the period of dissolution of Roman rule in Gaul, there is no other record of any direct exchange of letters between Sidonius and influential power-brokers in Rome itself, *fastigatissimi consulares* such as Gennadius Avienus, one of the negotiators with Attila, or Fl. Caecina Decius Basilius, a former praetorian prefect of Italy.⁵¹ Sensitive communications with the old centre of power were conducted face to face. An epistle to a good friend from Lyon records how Sidonius, after a fruitless search, found accommodation in the palace of a former prefect of Rome, and gained access to the imperial court and the urban prefecture through advice given by the prominent ex-consul Caecina Decius Basilius.⁵² The dynamic region of Sidonius' communications extended from Aquitania to Provence, to the two Narbonnensian provinces, Viennensis and Aquitanica II: nine letters went to relatives and friends in Narbonne, five to Vienne, four each to Nîmes, Arles, and Bordeaux. Sidonius' correspondence illustrates how far the retreat had progressed: the urban centres of Gallo-Roman culture and those who still upheld that culture had withdrawn into southern Gaul, where they were clustered around the new headquarters of the praetorian prefecture at Arles, and the dense channels of communication and interactive networks that once linked the aristocracy of Gaul and Italy had been gradually crumbling since 420.⁵³

In Sidonius' hybrid correspondence, two epistolographical cultures overlap: the classical senatorial form focused on the elite circle and limited to a single narrowly defined cultural landscape; and the trail-blazing new concept of global communication among Christian intellectuals.⁵⁴ While the lion's share of the letters went to big landowners of his own class, Sidonius, as bishop of Clermont, devoted a special 'collection within the letter collection' (*Ep.* 6.1–7.11, 8.13–15, 9.2–11) to his fellow bishops associated with a third class, the *conversi*

⁵⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.5.1 (to Fortunalis, a native of Spain) *Hibericarum decus inlustre regionum*, 'bright glory of Spanish lands'. It is uncertain whether Oresius came from Tarraconensis (*Ep.* 9.12.1 *pagina . . . quae trahit multam similitudinem de sale Hispano in iugis caeso Tarraconensibus*, 'a letter from you . . . which bears much likeness to Spanish salt cut on the hills of Tarraconensis'). He may be identical with the founder of the church at Narbonne (*CIL* 12.5336 = *ILCV* 1806: date 445). Candidianus, to whom *Ep.* 1.8.1–2 is addressed, was a native of Cesena (*Caesenatis . . . verna*), but lived in Ravenna (*te Ravennae felicius exultantem*). Audax is congratulated on his promotion to a prefecture in Sidon. *Ep.* 8.7, and must be Castalius Innocentius Audax 3 (*PLRE* 2, 184–5), attested epigraphically as prefect of Rome under Julius Nepos in 474/5 (see *CIL* 3.9335 = 15.7110a–e = *ILS* 814); it is not, however, evident from the letter itself that the prefecture is urban rather than praetorian or that Audax was based in Rome. Debate continues over whether the Ligurian poet Proculus (*Carm.* 40 (*Ep.* 9.15.1) *44 humo atque gente cretus in Ligustide*) can be identified with the Proculus to whom *Ep.* 4.23 is addressed: this view is raised doubtfully in Loyen (1970) 3.176 n. 69, and opposed in *PLRE* 2, 923–4 (Proculus 4).

⁵¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.9.2. On Avienus (*PLRE* 2, 193–4 (Gennadius Avienus 4)), cos. 450, on Basilius (*PLRE* 2, 216–17 (Basilius 11)), cos. 463, *PPO Italiae* 458 and 465, see Cameron (2012) 150–3 and Croke (2014) 122.

⁵² Sidon. *Ep.* 1.9.1 *blanda hospitalitas*, 'cordial hospitality', of Paulus, a man of praetorian rank, identified as Fl. Synesius Gennadius Paulus, *praefectus urbi* before 467 (*PLRE* 2, 855 (Paulus 36)), 1.5.9 *conducti deversorii parte susceptus*, 'I found quarters in a hired lodging', 1.9.6 (on Basilius) *egit cum consule meo, ut me praefectum faceret senatui*, 'he got my consul to appoint me as president of the senate'. Heronius (Herenius according to Köhler 1995), addressee of the letter and accompanying letter, lived in Lyon (*Ep.* 1.5.2 *Rhodanusiae nostrae moenibus*).

⁵³ Wickham (2005) 181 and Riché (1976) 177–83 rightly emphasise 'the greater strength of southern aristocracies', cf. Mathisen (1992) 236–7 on the historical background and Fournier and Stoehr-Monjou (2014) 16 on the disappearance of Rome from the correspondence.

⁵⁴ On the World Wide Web of Christians see Mratschek (2002) 266–73, fig. 16 (395–6), fig. (rear endpaper), and (2010).

(*Ep.* 7.12–18), and this correspondence was a typical example of Christian communication in aiming for as wide a dissemination as possible.⁵⁵ Euric, who saw the Catholic church as a pillar of *Romanitas*,⁵⁶ often left sees vacant for years,⁵⁷ or banished incumbents, and occasionally handed Catholic churches over to the Arian clergy.⁵⁸ Sidonius' strategy in response was to build up a network of correspondents linking Gaul's episcopal sees,⁵⁹ which ensured that contact among office-holders was preserved, and also constituted a decision-making body for the election of new bishops. Most of the letters to the bishops of his day⁶⁰ – there were a few also to officials in the Visigothic kingdom of Aquitania and in Burgundian Sapaudia on the upper Rhône – were official, either recommendations or legal interventions; most of them, again, unlike those to his literary friends, were one-off letters and served to enhance the writer's status as a man of power and prestige.

4 Reorientation: Ritual and Religion

Brought up as they had been according to the traditions of classical education,⁶¹ Sidonius and his friends sought inspiration from the pagan Latin literature of the past (see chapter 6 in this volume). Yet these traditional patterns of Roman life and a superficially static cultural atmosphere concealed an almost imperceptible metamorphosis that over time saw many of the rituals of a cultivated private life gradually integrated into a Christian religious system and interpreted in a new way. The younger Consentius, *clam sanctus, iam palam religiosus*, provides a clear example of the new way of life. Before his retirement, he had been charged with the oversight of Avitus' palace.⁶² The architecturally notable features of his villa included not only colonnades and baths

⁵⁵ For the third category, the *conversi*, which link both extremes, and the 'Ascetic Letters', see van Waarden (2016a) *passim*, esp. 22–6. On globalisation see Mratschek (2019).

⁵⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.6 (on Euric) *praefatum regem Gothorum . . . non tam Romanis moenibus quam legibus Christianis insidiaturum pavesco. . . ut ambigas, suae gentis an suae sectae teneat principatum*, 'I fear the said king of the Goths less for his designs against our Roman city walls than against our Christian laws. . . that one doubts whether he is more the ruler of his nation or of his sect'. See Harries (1996) 43.

⁵⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.7–9, esp. 7 (on the *catholici status valetudo occulta*, the 'secret malady of the body Catholic'): in Bordeaux, Périgueux, Rodez, Limoges, Javols, Eauze, Bazas, Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, Auch, etc., no successor bishops were elected (7.6.8 *nulla in desolatis cura diocesibus parochisque*, 'no oversight in the desolate [urban] dioceses and [rural] parishes'). See Stein (1928) 380, Harries (1994) 34, 45, Pietri (1998) 214.

⁵⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.9 *taceo vestros Crocum Simpliciumque collegas, quos cathedris sibi traditis eliminatos similis exilii cruciat poena dissimilis*, 'I need scarcely mention your colleagues, Crocus and Simplicius, ousted from the thrones to which they had succeeded and suffering different tortures from a similar exile.' On the exiling of Crocus, which may have been from Nîmes, Simplicius from Bourges, and Volusianus from Tours by the Goths c. 496 on suspicion of collaboration with the Franks (Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.26), of Aprunculus (Sidonius' successor in Gothic Clermont) from Langres by the Burgundians in the early 480s (2.23), and also of Faustus of Riez, see Stein (1928) 580 and Harries (1994) 34, n. 18. Cf. *PCBE* 4, 173 (Aprunculus 2), 743–4 (Faustus 1), 2002–3 (Volusianus 1). But note the rhetorical overstatement in *Ep.* 7.6 referred to by Wood (1992) 12–13, Mathisen and Sivan (1999) 38–9, 41–2, Schwitter (2015) 270–5.

⁵⁹ On the concentration in Gaul, see Gemeinhardt (2007) 237; cf. Fournier and Stoehr-Monjou (2014) 15, fig. 4.

⁶⁰ He permits himself epitaphs and mytho-poetic interpolations, however, e.g. Sidon. *Ep.* 6.12.6 (comparison with Triptolemus), 7.2.9 (marriage fraud as comedy from Attica or Miletus), 7.9.8 ('Scyllae' of abusive tirades), 7.3.1 (comparison with Apelles, Phidias, and Polyclitus).

⁶¹ Sidonius (*Ep.* 5.21.1) said of himself: *mihī quoque semper a parvo cura Musarum*, 'I also from boyhood have constantly cultivated the Muses'; *Carm.* 23.210–13 (on Consentius). See Mratschek (2020).

⁶² Sidon. *Ep.* 8.4.4 *ut qui Christo favente clam sanctus es, iam palam religiosus*, 'you who by Christ's grace are pious in private, now also openly religious'. On Consentius' career and his post of *cura palatii* in 455/6 (*Carm.* 23.255, 432), see *PLRE* 2, 308–9 (Consentius 2), Mathisen (1991a) 150, 172, 200, Matthews (1975) 339–40.

but a private chapel (*sacrarium*).⁶³ Ancient practices of aristocratic mobility to maintain social contacts (*amicitia*) were replaced by pastoral visits in the name of Christian charity (*caritas*).⁶⁴ The poet Sidonius who had visited the estate of Pontius Leontius in 461/2, and had referred to the church there as a temple of that god (*templa dei*) who is the greatest, was now invited in his episcopal capacity to consecrate a baptistery (*baptisterium*) on Elaphius' lands near Rodez and invited a friend to take part in the new ritual of the Rogations at Clermont.⁶⁵ Sidonius was trying to recruit his friends and relatives as members of the clergy. In the early to mid-470s, when Ruricius was becoming interested in adopting a religious life, Sidonius sent him a copy of a part of the Old Testament.⁶⁶ He considered that for a prominent politician like Tonantius Ferreolus, who had defended his country against the Huns and Arles against the Visigoths commanded by King Thorismund, and had earned respect by securing tax relief for landowners in Gaul, it should be easy to exchange his place among the praetorian prefects (*inter praefectos Valentianiani*) for one among Christ's saints (*inter perfectos Christi*) as a priest.⁶⁷ The aristocratic and wealthy Volusianus, a landowner residing near Bayeux, whom Sidonius had asked to take charge of St Cirques abbey at Clermont 'over the head of the abbot', reappears ten years on as bishop of Tours.⁶⁸ The former Palatine official Maximus of Toulouse adopted an ascetic appearance and lifestyle, but continued to reside in his villa as a priest.⁶⁹ Another senator followed the ascetic way of life, but wore the cloak of a military commander, not the cowl of a monk.⁷⁰

The traditions of leisure (*otium*) extolled by Sidonius had likewise changed fundamentally. The old pursuits were now in competition with specifically Christian modes of behaviour, or might be invested with new Christian significance. Talented poets like Constantius and Sidonius, now priests and bishops, vied in composing verse inscriptions for the new basilica of St Justus in Lyon, commissioned by Bishop Patiens.⁷¹ Earlier, in the cultivated house of Consentius, who headed the literary circle in Narbonne, Sidonius had felt physically surrounded by the presence of the Muses.⁷² Now, as a bishop, he recommends to Consentius that when he withdraws to

⁶³ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.4.1 *tum sacrario porticibus ac thermis conspicabilibus late constans*, 'next, it gleams far and wide from the conspicuous chapel, colonnades, and baths'.

⁶⁴ On aristocratic friendship (*amicitia*), see Mathisen (1993) 13–16; on episcopal visits to Vienne, Rodez, Bourges, Chantelle-la-Vieille, see Fournier and Stoehr-Monjou (2014) 7–8.

⁶⁵ Sidon. *Carm.* 22.218 (Leontius' Burgus): *templa dei qui maximus ille est*, 'the temple of that god who is greatest'. See the discussion on dating in Delhey (1993) 9–12 and Kelly ch. 3 sect. 3.1. *Ep.* 4.15.1 (Elaphius' *castellum*) *nam baptisterium, quod olim fabricabamini, scribitis posse iam consecrari*, 'for you write that the baptistery, which you had long been building, is now ready for consecration'. Sidon. *Ep.* 5.14.1 (Rogations): see Bailey (2016) 113–15.

⁶⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 5.15 (Heptateuch for his relative Ruricius): see Mathisen (1999a) 22, 29, 87 (Stemma), 119–20.

⁶⁷ On Ferreolus, Sidon. *Ep.* 7.12.3–4; cf. the alliterative wordplay; see n. 37 and van Waarden (2016a) 53–82. Sidonius advises Elaphius to undergo 'open conversion' (4.15.2).

⁶⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.17.4 *quaeso, ut abbas sit frater Auxanius supra congregationem, tu vero ut supra abbatem*, 4.18.2 and *Vita Vigoris* 5, AASS Nov. 1, 300 (*praedia Baiocassina*); Greg. *Tur. Hist.* 2.26 (*valde dives*), Ruric. *Ep.* 2.65 (*nobilitas*). See Heinzelmann (1982) 717 and PCBE 4, 2001–3 (Volusianus 1); cf. the discussion in van Waarden (2016a) 200–1.

⁶⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.24.2 (*villa*), 3 (*habitus . . . religiosus*), 4 (*impacto sacerdotio*). See Harries (1994) 215–16 and Bailey (2016) 40 on external markers of the clergy.

⁷⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.9.3 (on the *vir illustris* Vettius) *novoque genere vivendi monachum complet non sub palliolo sed sub paludamento*. Note the alliterative wordplay *palliolo* – *paludamento*. On the exemplary layman and the diversity of religious behaviour, see Bailey (2016) 117–18.

⁷¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.10.3–4 (for Bishop Patiens, with a copy to Hesperius): the *tumultuarium carmen* of Sidonius in hendecasyllables; hexameters by Constantius and Secundinus to the right and left of the altar (see also above n. 40). Cf. 4.18.5 (for Bishop Perpetuus of Tours).

⁷² Sidon. *Carm.* 23.500–1 *post quas (sc. thermas) nos tua pocula et tuarum / Musarum medius torus tenebat*, 'after the bath your cups and a couch in the midst of your Muses would claim us'. On the rhetorical functions of the Muses, see Mratschek (2020).

his house his 'tongue should be dedicated to praising heaven, the mind intent on thoughts of heaven, the right hand busy dispensing offerings of heaven'.⁷³ In the thanksgiving to Faustus of Riez, author of *De spiritu sancto*, he invokes not the Muses but the Holy Spirit, and recalls emotionally charged scenes from his own baptism by the bishop.⁷⁴ Sidonius defends Faustus against the charge of semi-Pelagianism by means of a Christian metaphor when favourably reviewing his second book, *On the Doctrine of Grace*: Faustus has merely placed pagan philosophy at the service of the church, Sidonius argues, overcoming the pagans 'with their own weapons'.⁷⁵ Claudianus Mamertus, his opponent, a man of eloquence and a precursor of scholasticism, dedicated himself untiringly to neo-Platonic philosophy without on that account forsaking religion; he was a priest, and brother to the bishop of Vienne.⁷⁶ In spite of their deviation from official church doctrine, Faustus and Sidonius were venerated after death as saints.⁷⁷

Gaul had a long-standing tradition of euergetism. The social-anthropological concept of gift-exchange specific to ancient cultures was reinterpreted and given transcendental significance as Christian almsgiving when Bishop Patiens of Lyon, at his own expense, organised grain distribution not only for the Rhône and Saône valleys but beyond his diocese as well, and Sidonius' brother-in-law Ecdicius reportedly kept 4,000 people fed during a famine.⁷⁸ They were honoured as benefactors and commemorated by later generations as recipients of miracles.⁷⁹ The munificence of the Christian bishop, Patiens, was compared with that of Triptolemus, a hero in pagan mythology who was almost immortalised for his invention of agriculture.⁸⁰ To

⁷³ Ep. 8.4.4 *invigiletque caelestibus lingua praeconiis, anima sententiis, dextra donariis*. On demarcating *lectiones spirituales* (Ep. 7.9.1) from pagan literature, see Eigler (2003) 148–9.

⁷⁴ Sidon. *Carm.* 16.5–6 *magis ille veni nunc spiritus, oro, pontificem dicture tuum*, 'rather do you come, great Spirit, I pray, to speak of your pontiff', 16.78–88, esp. 81–4 *hospite te* (i.e. *Fausto*) *nostros exceptit protinus aestus / pax, domus, umbra, latex, benedictio, mensa, cubile. / . . . voluisti, / ut sanctae matris sanctum quoque limen adirem*, 'your hospitality straightway greeted my hot discomfort with peace, home, shade, water, benediction, bed, and board. . . . you were willing for me to approach also the hallowed threshold of the hallowed mother'. See Santelia (2012) 122–6 with improved interpretation by Köhler (2015) 124–5 and PCBE 4, 1764–5 (Sidonius 1); not a baptism, but confession; cf. Amherdt (2014) 424–5; on poetics, see Condorelli (2008) 145–8, Hernández Lobato (2014a), and Mratschek (2020). Gennadius 86 (91 Richardson): *Faustus . . . composuit librum De Spiritu Sancto*.

⁷⁵ Sidon. Ep. 9.9.15 *Stoicos, Cynicos, Peripateticos haeresiarchas propriis armis, propriis quoque concuti machinamentis*. Cf. Ambr. *In psalm.* 118 21.10–12; Aug. *Doctr. christ.* 2.60; Paul. Nol. Ep. 16.11. PCBE 4, 740–1 (Faustus 1), and Hebert (1988) 329–30.

⁷⁶ Sidon. Ep. 4.11.1 *vir siquidem fuit . . . doctus, eloquens, acer et hominum aevi, loci, populi sui ingeniosissimus quique indesinenter salva religione philosopharetur*, 'he was a man . . . learned, eloquent, ardent, the most talented among men of his time, his country, and of his people, and one who ceaselessly devoted himself to philosophy without detriment to religion', 5.2.1 *peritissimus Christianorum philosophus*, 'the first of all Christian savants'. Cf. Sidonius' epitaph for him (*Carm.* 30 (Ep. 4.11.6) 17–18): *antistes fuit ordine in secundo*, 'he was a priest of the second order'. On the philosophy of *De statu animae* and its inspiration from Porphyry, see Brittain (2001) 259–60 and Schmid (1957) 170–9.

⁷⁷ Faustus in southwestern Aremorica (PBCE 4.735, s.v. Faustus 1), Sidonius in Clermont: see Prévot (1993b).

⁷⁸ Sidon. Ep. 6.12.5 *post Gothicam depopulationem, post segetes incendio absumptas, peculiari sumptu inopiae communi per desolatas Gallias gratuita frumenta misisti*, 'when the crops had been consumed by fire you sent free supplies of corn through all the devastated Gallic lands at your private expense to relieve the public destitution'. See Harries (1994) 227. Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.24 (Ecdicius) *eos [pauperes] per omne tempus sterilitates pascens, ab interitu famis eximit. fueruntque . . . amplius quam quattuor milia promiscui sexus*, 'by feeding them through the whole period of the famine he saved them from death by starvation; there were more than 4,000 of both sexes'. See Mratschek (2008) 378, and on Christian gift-giving (2018b, 2019).

⁷⁹ Sidonius himself (Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.22) and Paulinus of Nola (Ep. 34.7) likewise typified the *amator pauperum*: see Mratschek (2002) 601–2 and (2018b).

⁸⁰ Sidon. Ep. 6.12.6 *fabularum cedant figmenta gentilium et ille quasi in caelum relatus pro reperta spicarum novitate Triptolemus*, 'the inventions of pagan fable must yield pride of place, with their Triptolemus supposedly consigned to heaven for discovering the *unfamiliar corn-ear*'.

Ecdicius, *amator pauperum*, and his descendants a voice from heaven prophesied a perpetual supply of bread.⁸¹ Sidonius assured his cousin Avitus, who had endowed the church in Clermont with his estate, Cuticiacum, that in return for his gift he had come by an inheritance as a 'reward from Heaven'.⁸² And he rejoiced over the piety of the new *comes* of the Auvergne, Victorius, who paid for a holy man to be accorded a funeral 'appropriate for a bishop'.⁸³

A contrastingly light-hearted image of Sidonius as bishop presents him reading Terence and Menander in the company of his son.⁸⁴ On consecration as bishop he had declared his intention to renounce poetry *ab exordio religiosae professionis*, but continued nevertheless to circulate his pagan poems privately among his friends, retaining copies with a view to one final publication.⁸⁵ Sidonius the bishop had not the slightest scruple in comparing the ascetic lifestyle of Euric's adviser Leo with the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.⁸⁶ As Most has shown, the early-third-century biography of this thaumaturge can be read as a pagan version of the resurrection of Jesus and his miraculous appearance.⁸⁷ Sidonius the secular author, whose panegyrics elevated deceased emperors to the company of the gods (*divi*), used the term *deus* in the singular to describe divine power.⁸⁸ Flatly declining to write works of theology or contemporary history, he nevertheless agreed that, rather than write a *History of the Huns*, he would accept a commission from the bishop of Orléans to compose a hagiography of the latter's predecessor, Anianus, who in 451 had repelled the Huns from the city walls of his see.⁸⁹

Late antique Christianity was by no means a predetermined, immutable, and ageless set of doctrines, ethical requirements, and sanctions.⁹⁰ On the contrary, the reformation of the religious landscape was characterised by a remarkable experimental variety and diversification of religious expression, as European life became Christian. Whether Sidonius was 'religious' or not remains, given his silence, an unresolved question.⁹¹ The same applies to most other bishops of

⁸¹ Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.24 (*vox . . . e caelis lapsa*) *Ecdici, Ecdici, quia fecisti rem hanc, tibi et semini tuo panis non deerit in sempiternum, eo quod obaudieris verbis meis et famem meam refectioe pauperum satiaberis*, '(a voice coming down from heaven:) 'Ecdicius, Ecdicius, as you have done this, you and your descendants will never be short of bread in all eternity, because you obeyed my words and relieved my hunger by feeding the poor.' Cf. Sidonius' praise in *Ep.* 3.3 (to Ecdicius).

⁸² Sidon. *Ep.* 3.1.3 *Nicetiana namque . . . hereditas Cuticiaci supernum pretium fuit*.

⁸³ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.17.2 *totum apparatus supercurrentis impendii quod funerando sacerdoti competeret impertiens* (*sacerdos* here means bishop). On Victorius' further religiously motivated donations, see Brown (2012) 406 and Jones (2009) 221; on a latent animosity towards Victorius concerning the primacy of patronage, cf. van Waarden (2016a) 207–9.

⁸⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.12.2 with Hanaghan (2019) 54: *legebamus, pariter laudabamus iocabamurque*, 'we were reading, praising, and jesting together'. Models exist in the solicitude of Ausonius for his grandson's education (*Protrepticus*) and in Symmachus (*Ep.* 5.5). See Eigler (2003) 150, allegedly 'without further consequences'; cf. Gerth (2013) 160–71.

⁸⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 9.12.1: renunciation of poetry. *Ep.* 9.13.6 *tales enim nugas in imo scrinii fundo muribus perforata post annos circiter viginti profero in lucem*, 'for I now bring to light about twenty years after they were written some trifling verses which have been lying at the bottom of a book-case, nibbled full of holes by the mice'. See Mratschek (2017) 311, 314–36.

⁸⁶ *Ep.* 8.3.5 *lege virum fide catholicae pace praefata in plurimis similem tui*, 'read a man who – be it said with all due deference to the Catholic faith – was in most respects like you'.

⁸⁷ On the complicated and still controversial Christian interpretation of Apollonius, see Most (2004) 112–13, 245, and recently Cameron (2011) 556–8 on a 'depaganised Apollonius'.

⁸⁸ Sidon. *Cam.* 2.542 *si mea vota deus perduxerit*, 'if god further my prayers', 2.317–18, where Sidonius wrote that Severus, the western emperor, after his death *auxerat . . . divorum numerum*, 'had increased the ranks of the gods'. See Cameron (1970) 197.

⁸⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.15.1, although he did claim to have begun work on the history of the Huns, see Harries (1994) 18–19.

⁹⁰ Cf. Fried (2008) 100, on 'Religion and Church' in the Middle Ages.

⁹¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.14.9 ascribes the role of an ecclesiastic or a religious person (*religiosus*) to Philagrius and the shadow of one (*imaginem*) to himself: a topos of modesty? Demandt (2007) 510 calls him a cultured Christian ('Kultur-Christen'); but see van Waarden (2011a) 111 and (2016a) 17–22: 'The Lerinian background is Sidonius' natural habitat.'

Late Antiquity, though not to advocates of ascetic ideas.⁹² It is clear, however, that from the fifth century onwards acquisition of a bishopric provided aristocrats with a highly effective means of maintaining their prominence in local society and keeping up the activities expected of their rank: public benefactions, patronage of buildings, and the leisure to engage in literature. This in no way implied that pagan philosophy, myths, and social practices had become irrelevant: they lived on into the Middle Ages as part of the assets of a newly evolving educational culture that was to unite and perpetuate Roman, Greek, and Christian thought in its reservoir of knowledge.⁹³

5 Transformation: The Patron and his Messengers

With the imperial court transferred to Ravenna in 402/3 and with much of Gaul occupied by Visigoths and Burgundians, we enter the fragmented and volatile new world of an Age of Transition. Gallo-Roman senators lost their political influence in the empire, and communications were forced into new channels. Deprived of access to the emperor as a source of dispensation of honours and distinctions, they chose, as Sidonius noted (*Ep.* 2.1.4), either to leave their homeland or remain and join the clergy: *statuit . . . nobilitas seu patriam dimittere seu capillos*.⁹⁴ It was no coincidence that both the readiness of wealthy aristocrats to seek episcopal office and the growth of the monastic movement in Gaul reached their apogee in the period when close ties with central government began to loosen.⁹⁵ Sidonius' letter collection presents a picture of this transition from the serene daylight of Ausonius' world of educated aristocrats to a world of churchmen mediating with warlords on behalf of their people. His letters differ from those of the Church Fathers in that they served no 'sacramental function', and the messengers were not a mirror image of their master:⁹⁶ 'They had business to transact.'⁹⁷ Sidonius' copyist and bookseller was a paid professional, who personally brought a manuscript written in his own hand to Ruricius.⁹⁸ The letter-writer used his messengers as highly mobile agents to keep open the channels through which information could arrive from crisis-hit areas, to bring support to friends and subordinates, and to keep his readers up to date with the culture and literary production of Gaul. In 468, in his capacity as urban prefect, Sidonius received a personal briefing from the prefect of the Annona about an impending famine in Rome.⁹⁹ In winter 471/2, after Eutropius' diocese had been laid waste by Euric's soldiers, Sidonius confided to

⁹² See Mathisen (1993) 91–3, Rapp (2005) 193, and Jones (2009) 114–28: 'Ecclesiastical Aristocrats'. One criterion could be the portrayal of conversion, e.g. in Augustine's *Confessions*.

⁹³ Such as the library of Claudianus Mamertus (*Sidon. Ep.* 4.11.6). See further ch. 6, sect. 5.

⁹⁴ For a different view, see Frye (1994) 60–1 and Delaplace (2014) 24.

⁹⁵ Sidonius' choice for the episcopal elections of Bourges was a *vir spectabilis* and layman (*Ep.* 7.8.2–3); see Norton (2007) 178–80 and van Waarden (2011a) 558. Most of the bishops promoted to the Metropolitan sees came from aristocratic families. See Heinzlmann (1976) 231 and (1982) on the evidence provided by bishops' epitaphs, Mathisen's case study on individual families (1979d), and the inferences drawn by Rapp (2005) 192–3. But note the doubts of Patzold (2014) arguing for an increasing role of the local elites, a consequence of the loss of local power by the *defensor civitatis*, see Schmidt-Hofner (2014) 511–22. On Sidonius' successors in the see of Clermont, cf. Jones (2009) 116, contra Patzold (2014) 531–2. See further Bailey in this volume, ch. 7.

⁹⁶ The messengers Sidonius sent to Rusticus of Bordeaux (*Ep.* 2.11.2) were an exception. Cf. Conybeare (2000) 55–9 and Mratschek (2011).

⁹⁷ A point well put by Harries (1994), ch. 10, 'The bishop at work' (207–21), esp. 208.

⁹⁸ *Sidon. Ep.* 5.15, esp. 1 *librum igitur hic (sc. bybliopola) ipse deportat heptateuchi, scriptum velocitate summa*, 'so he [the bookseller] is bringing you by his own hand a copy of the Heptateuch, written by him with great speed'. Cf. 2.8.2 *mercennarius bybliopola*, 'the bookseller I employ'. On the humble role of copyist, see Cameron (2011) 491 and 496; see also Santelia (2000).

⁹⁹ *Sidon. Ep.* 1.10.1 *acepi per praefectum annonae litteras tuas*.

the bishop of Orange that he was 'ravenous for news'.¹⁰⁰ To relatives who had retreated before the Visigoths to Vaison in the south, he wrote enquiring about conditions there.¹⁰¹

Like the rest of his peer group, Sidonius employed slaves to carry his mail, but when opportunity arose, he would also ask friends and acquaintances to convey letters for him.¹⁰² In terms of social standing, the messengers (*tabellarii*, *geruli*, *portitores*) embraced all classes and religious denominations from Jews (Gozalas, Promotus) to clergy (Constans, Faustinus, Vindicus, Megethius), from clients and slaves (*clientes*, *pueri*) and free-born but despised paupers of low birth (*personae despicabiles*, *obscurae*, *humiles*) to officials, such as a *vir tribunicius* (Petrus) or a *praefectus annonae* serving under Sidonius, and blue-blooded *viri clarissimi* (Theodorus and Eminentius).¹⁰³ As required by epistolary etiquette, high-ranking correspondents like the Count Arbogastes opted wherever possible to have their news conveyed by a senator of equal standing: Eminentius was the grandson of Sidonius' former host Pontius Leontius, and was extolled in a letter from Bishop Faustus of Riez as *dulce decus nostrum*, 'my dear glory'.¹⁰⁴ But bottlenecks developing in a time of mass migrations might necessitate the adoption of emergency solutions, prompting occasional mockery and parody from Sidonius: one such instance was the commissioning of an illiterate and impoverished Goth (*peregrinus*, *rusticus*, *pauper*), who mixed with the rabble and lived a hand-to-mouth existence at the expense of rich villa owners; another is the case of the doltish messenger Hermes, who lost the reply letter and is wittily contrasted by Sidonius with Pliny's unfailingly reliable messenger of the same name.¹⁰⁵

The correspondence shows us Sidonius at the head of a widely ramified patronage system and of a body of clergy in Clermont not always focused on matters spiritual. A key role was played, as in Classical Antiquity, by letters of recommendation (*commendationes*), which were one of the main obligations of a bishop and Roman patron. Almost half of the messengers (thirteen of twenty-seven) were petitioners in their own cause. The matters raised were predominantly financial transactions and disputes, although one letter, to Bishop Lupus of Troyes, asked him to support reconciliation in a marital crisis.¹⁰⁶ From Leontius of Arles, Sidonius

¹⁰⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.6.2 *avidam nostrae ignorantiae . . . esuriam*; 6.6.1 (Goths as *foedifraga gens*); cf. 6.12.8.

¹⁰¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.4.1–2 and 4.6.1 to Simplicius and Apollinaris, Sidonius' cousins. See Mathisen in this volume, ch. 2, sect. 10.4; contra Harries (1994) 177, Kaufmann (1995) 278, 358: Sidonius' uncles.

¹⁰² See Mratschek (2002) 274–324: 'Das Postwesen' (The postal system) and 'Die Boten' (The messengers).

¹⁰³ E.g. Sidon. *Ep.* 4.8.3 (*puer* of Evodius), 3.9.2 (*humilis obscurus despicabilis*), 3.4.1, 4.5.1 (Gozolas), 8.13.3 (Promotus), 4.12.2 (*lector*, a reader called Constans), 3.10.1 (Theodorus), 1.10.1 (*praefectus annonae*). My thanks for a tabulation of the messengers go to Ralph Mathisen, as well as to Joop van Waarden. See also the complete list in Kaufmann (1995) 244, n. 747. In this volume, see Mathisen, ch. 2, sect. 11.2, and Wolff, ch. 12, sect. 3.14.

¹⁰⁴ From Bordeaux, Sidon. *Ep.* 4.17.1; cf. Faustus, *Ep.* 15 (*MGH AA* 8.282). See Mathisen (1982) 371 = (1991a) 372, and *PBCE* 4.628, s.v. Eminentius 1–2; on Arbogastes, Anton (1984) 1–52 and Nonn (2010) 106.

¹⁰⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.7.1–3, esp. 2 (probably a Goth) *cum inevitabitur peregrinus ad domicilium, trepidus ad conloquium, rusticus ad laetitiam, pauper ad mensam, et cum crudos caeparumque crapulis esulentos hic agat vulgus, illic ea comitate retractabitur ac si inter Apicios epulones et Byzantinos chironomuntas hucusque ructaverit*, 'when you bid the stranger welcome to your home, the nervous messenger to a talk with you, the bumpkin to your gaiety, the poor man to your table, and when a man who is here the ringleader in a dyspeptic mob that gorges itself on a surfeit of onions, there finds himself treated with as much courtesy as if he had hitherto made himself sick in the company of gormandising Apicii and of posturing carvers from Byzantium', 4.12.3 (the 'lector', i.e. reader Constans) *illum ipsum Hermam stolidissimum*, 'that senseless Hermes'. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* 7.11.6–7 *has epistulas Hermes tulit exigentique* (sc. *Corelliae*) . . . *vides . . . quod libertus meus meis moribus gessit*, 'Hermes took her this letter, and when she asked . . . You see . . . what my freedman did in accordance with my wishes.'

¹⁰⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.9.1 *Vir iam honestus Gallus, quia iussus ad coniugem redire non distulit, litterarum mearum obsequium, vestrarum reportat effectum*, 'Gallus, who has now established his character by immediately complying with your order to return to his wife, takes back in this letter my dutiful respects, and takes back in himself the effectual result of your letter.'

expected that he deploy the authority of his episcopal office and the expertise of trained lawyers in a testamentary issue so as to secure ‘a safe haven’ for the messenger;¹⁰⁷ he pleaded with Bishop Censorius to overlook the rent owed to the church by a deacon from Clermont who had fled the depredations of the Goths and illegally set up a little farm on land owned by the diocese of Auxerre;¹⁰⁸ he asked Bishop Theoplastus of Geneva to provide hospitality for the client and slaves of Donidius of Nîmes, and also to find favourably in his friend’s legal case.¹⁰⁹ In a time of crisis, correspondence and trade still continued to link the Mediterranean with the Arvernian hinterland: an amusing and illustrative anecdote concerns Sidonius’ *lector* and courier Amantius, who routinely transformed himself into a trader (*negotiator*) on the way from Clermont to Marseille.¹¹⁰ His services were so valuable that he gained Sidonius’ support in quashing an *actio de repetundis*, after he had used false assurances to abduct and impregnate the daughter of a rich Massiliote family.¹¹¹

What had changed was not patronage or recommendation letters, but the sphere of influence of the actors involved, who, with the *episcopalis audientia* in the fourth century and universal synods, now occupied important clerical rather than political office, often, like Sidonius himself, without having held a previous position in the church.¹¹² Lawyers, secular authorities like Riothamus, king of the Bretons, and landowning friends whom, before his ordination (469), Sidonius had asked to intervene against the powerful and well-connected (*potentes et factiosos*) afterwards became the exception.¹¹³ For legal assistance in property cases was now increasingly arranged by the bishops in Gaul. But bishops were not only judges, they were arbitrators and mediators as well.¹¹⁴ When Sidonius requested legal support or intervention in

¹⁰⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.3.2 *commendamus apicum portitorem . . . grandis actionibus illius portus securitatis aperitur. negotium huic testamentarium est . . . hunc eatenus commendare praesumo, ut . . . auctoritas coronae tuae dissimulantibus studeat excudere responsi celeritatem*, ‘I commend to you the bearer of this letter . . . a great haven of security will be opened to his pleas. His case concerns a will . . . I take it upon me to recommend him to the extent that . . . the influence of your Excellency may exert itself to force a quick response from those negligent gentlemen.’

¹⁰⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.10.1 *hic cum familia sua depraedationis Gothicae turbinem vitans in territorium vestrum delatus est ipso . . . pondere fugae*, ‘he with his family, seeking an escape from the whirlwind of Gothic depredation, was carried into your territory by the very impetus of his flight’, 6.10.2 *huic si legitiman, ut mos est, solutionem perexiguae segetis indulgeas*, ‘should you, as is your custom, let him off the statutory payment due for his exceedingly small bit of land’. See Harries (1994) 213–14.

¹⁰⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.5.1 *cuius (sc. Donidii) clientem puerosque commendo, profectos seu in patroni necessitate seu in domini. labore peregrinantum qua potestis ope humanitate intercessione tutamini*, ‘I commend to you his client and slaves, who have left home on the urgent business of patron or master. Support the labour of these travellers with all the help, the sympathy, and the intervention you can give.’

¹¹⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.7.1 *Ecce iterum Amantius, nugigerulus noster, Massiliam suam repetit, aliquid, ut moris est, de manubiis civitatis domum reportaturus, si tamen cataplus arriserit*, ‘Here is Amantius again, the bearer of my trifles; he is returning again to his well-loved Massilia in order to carry home, as usual, his pickings from the city’s spoils – at least if the incoming ships should favour him’, an ambiguous joke, alluding to the commercial dealings and rich dowry of his wife. On Marseille, a late antique success story, see Loseby (1992) 165–85 and Brown (2012) 412.

¹¹¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.2. See Harries (1994) 214–15 and Jones (2009) 100–3 on Amantius’ ‘rhetoric of inclusion’.

¹¹² On the full jurisdiction (*episcopalis audientia*) of bishops in the period 331–408 according to *Simm.* 1, see Sirks (2013) 79–88.

¹¹³ Sidon. *Ep.* 3.10.3 to Tetradius, a lawyer from Arles (cf. *Carm.* 24.81–3): a legacy dispute, resolution uncertain; 5.1.3 to the jurist Petronius: the agnatic property right of Vindicus, deacon of Clermont, to an estate at Arles; 3.9.2 to King Riothamus: an appeal to restore slaves to a poor man, a non-native (*peregrinus pauper*) in the land of the Bretons. On the individual jurists, see Liebs (1998), but overall his approach is too positivist. *Ep.* 5.19.2 to Pudens: the sanctioning of a legitimate marriage (*connubium*) through the release of a tenant farmer, a *colonus (inquilinus)*. See Mathisen (2003a) 64–5 and Jones (2009) 173–4.

¹¹⁴ Harries (1999) ch. 10, ‘Dispute settlement II’: *episcopalis audientia*, focusing on their role as *iudex* and *arbiter* (191–211).

disputes, he would send the petitioner (*petitor*) as a messenger in his own cause to the appropriate fellow bishop, whose role was to decide and settle the case. In recommendations and supra-regional decisions, the authority of a *nobilis* is now combined with that of a bishop and city governor, a position that also became attractive for the local elites after 500.¹¹⁵

The bringer of messages was no mere postman: he might be a close friend or trusted bearer of important personal or political news. Mere salutations in the manner of Symmachus for the sake of keeping friendships alive were rare,¹¹⁶ but on occasion a request would be so sensitive that Sidonius preferred to limit himself to a terse recommendation for the messenger. His letter to Bishop Eleutherius contained only a vague request for support in financial dealings with a Jew; another letter asked the bishop of Vaison to 'use his authority' to solve the messenger's problem.¹¹⁷ Sometimes the topic was so explosive and the political situation (*Arvernae forma vel causa regionis*) so tense that Sidonius would send an oral message rather than a letter.¹¹⁸ While Euric was laying siege to Clermont, Sidonius could not contemplate visiting Provence. And now the city's courageous defender was seized by an attack of claustrophobia. He painted a heart-rending picture of the distress surrounding him to convince Graecus, an envoy from Nepos to Euric, of the seriousness of the situation (*Ep.* 7.10(11).1): 'and I, shut in here within the half-burnt confines of a fragile wall, am totally debarred by the menace of a war close at hand'. With his metaphor of the burning wall, which calls to mind a familiar Horatian proverb, Sidonius is deploying his characteristic combination of artistry and rhetoric to emphasise to his equally well-read fellow bishop that the conflict was spreading very rapidly, as if with the energy of wildfire (*incendia . . . vires*), necessitating his intervention:¹¹⁹ for Graecus' property is at risk too when the wall of his neighbour (that is, Sidonius) catches fire – *nam tua res agitur, cum proximus paries ardet*. In the atmosphere created by political crises between Visigoths and Burgundians before Euric captured Arles and Marseille in 477, the two correspondents agreed that, if need be, they would suspend epistolary contacts altogether.¹²⁰ As no courier

¹¹⁵ On the transformation of the local nobility in 'Clovis's World', see Schmidt-Hofner (2014) 518–20 and Patzold (2014) 541–3.

¹¹⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.3.1 (to Magnus Felix) *vir amicitiarum servantissime*, 'you with your characteristic regard for the claims of friendship', like Q. Fabius, Cn. Pompeius, Germanicus; 9.4.1 (to Graecus) *ne forte videatur ipse plus litteras ex more deponere quam nos ex amore dictare*, 'lest perhaps he should think that he calls for our letters as a matter of habit rather than that we compose them as a labour of love'.

¹¹⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 6.11.1–2 (to Eleutherius) (1) *Iudaeum praesens charta commendat . . . (2) quae sit vero negotii sui series, ipse rectius praesentanea coram narratione patefaciet*, 'The present note commends to you a Jew . . . It is best that he should tell you with his own lips in a personal interview the whole story of this trouble'; 7.4.4 (to Fonteius) *praeterea commendo gerulum litterarum, cui istic, id est in Vasionensi oppido, quiddam necessitatis exortum sanari vestrae auctoritatis reverentiaeque pondere potest*, 'further, I commend to you the bearer of this letter; a bit of trouble has arisen for him over here – your town of Vaison, I mean; it can be set right by the weight of your influence and sanctity.'

¹¹⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.10(11).1. In the ancient world, there was neither copyright nor the right to confidentiality of correspondence; see Mratschek (2011) 109.

¹¹⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.10(11).1 *et ego istic inter semiustas muri fragilis clausus angustias belli terrore contigui*. Cf. Hor. *Ep.* 1.18.84–5 *nam tua res agitur, cum proximus paries ardet, / et neglecta solent incendia sumere vires*, 'for you own safety is at stake when your neighbour's wall burns, and fires neglected tend to gather strength'.

¹²⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 9.3.1 *dum sunt gentium motibus itinera suspecta, stilo frequentiori renuntiare dilataque tantisper mutui sedulitate sermonis curam potius assumere conticescendi*, '[it is the wisest and safest course] with the roads rendered insecure by the commotions of peoples, to renounce our rather too busy pens, putting off for a little our diligent exchange of letters, and concerning ourselves rather with silence'. For the capture of Arles and Marseille, see Burgess (2001) 87–9, 99, and Delaplace (2015) 255. See Loyen (1970) 2.xxi n. 2, 3.204 n. 9, and Stein (1928) 585, n.7 for conflicts between Visigoths and Burgundians from 471 onwards over Provence, and *PBCE* 4.1779, s.v. Sidonius 1, between Saxons and Franks on the Loire 470/1. On the difficulties affecting postal communications (*difficultas itineris intersit*) between Soissons and Clermont, cf. *Ep.* 8.14.8.

could travel the public highways without being subjected to intrusive body searches and physical ill-treatment by the sentries, the tribune Petrus was advised by Sidonius in Bordeaux that, against the ‘tempestuous uproar of colliding kingdoms’, he should, for discretion’s sake, present his request to Faustus, the bishop of Riez, in private.¹²¹

6 The Worlds of the Others: Barbarians in Contemporary Imagery, Perception, and Reaction

Sidonius shared Pliny the Younger’s attachment to his homeland,¹²² but his was a new and more emotional style of Roman patriotism, a hyper-Romanity in a universal empire seen by its citizens as defining the civilised world, and challenged solely by the barbarians within and beyond its borders.¹²³ Sidonius reminded his brother-in-law Ecdicius that the land of their birth had a right to first place in their affections, *summas in adfectu partes*,¹²⁴ and the two became leaders of the resistance movement which defended Clermont tenaciously for three years (473–5) against the annual onslaughts of the Visigoths under King Euric and the threat of absorption into the expanding Gothic kingdom.¹²⁵ But Sidonius’ picture of a unified Gallic aristocracy bound together by a common love for classical tradition, standing fast as the last ‘Romans’ against the onrushing tide of barbarism, was wishful thinking. It was a desperate appeal for united action in the face of the increasing fragmentation of the Gallo-Roman elites, and a means of explaining himself and the world to others so as to justify his actions:¹²⁶ when, for instance, with Avitus defeated, he transferred his loyalty to the victorious Majorian; when his support for Arvandus led to a head-on clash with an influential group of fellow aristocrats, including his own cousin and a circle of high-ranking imperial officials led by Polemius and Magnus Felix;¹²⁷ when during the defence of Clermont he broke away from a sizeable group of influential bishops and landowners, only to run into opposition in the city itself;¹²⁸ and when he accepted Euric’s rule after his return from exile in 476–7 and nurtured contacts with friends at court.¹²⁹ An appreciable number of his peers in the Gallo-Roman aristocracy followed the ‘standards of a victorious people’ and went on to carve out successful careers at the Visigothic court.¹³⁰ The Aquitanian Namatius put an end to Saxon

¹²¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 9.3.2 *quod custodias aggerum publicorum nequaquam tabellarius transit inrequisitus, qui . . . plurimum sane perpeti solet difficultatis, dum secretum omne gerulorum pervigil explorator indagat*, ‘that a courier can by no means pass the guards of the public highroads without a strict scrutiny; he . . . usually experiences a great deal of difficulty, as the watchful searcher pries into every secret of the letter-carriers’; *Ep.* 7.11.1 *conflictantium procella regnorum*.

¹²² Plin. *Ep.* 1.3.1 (cit. *Cat.* 2.1) thought of his native town of Comum as *deliciae meae*.

¹²³ On the term ‘barbarian’, see Mathisen (2000) 17, n. 3; on the Gallic perspective, Brown (2012) 402.

¹²⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 3.3.1 (on *Arverni mei*) to Ecdicius, 472/3: *primum quod summas in adfectu partes iure sibi usurpat quae genuit*.

¹²⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.4, 3.3.3–6, 3.4, 3.7, 5.16.1, esp. 3: *vicinae quoque obsidionis terror*. Ecdicius spent part of his fortune on recruiting a body of fighting men, and risked his life on several occasions while leading them (*Ep.* 3.3.7–8). See Kaufmann (1995) 170–219.

¹²⁶ The Arvernian Calminius reportedly participated in the siege of Clermont under duress (Sidon. *Ep.* 5.12.1). On Calminius and other senators, see Harries (1996) 38–42, (1994) 246, Delaplace (2015) 236, 244–6, and more generally Rebenich (2008) 175.

¹²⁷ Harries (1994) 176–9, Delaplace (2014) 3–24, and Mathisen, ch. 2, pp. 80–1.

¹²⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 3.2.2 on opposition in Clermont. Participants in the negotiations between Euric and Iulius Nepos, in addition to Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia (5.17.10), were the bishops Basilius of Aix, Leontius of Arles, Faustus of Riez, and Graecus of Marseille (7.6.10).

¹²⁹ E.g. Leo, Lampridius, and Victorius; see below and ch. 6; cf. Harries (1996) 36–44.

¹³⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.6.16 (to Namatius) *primum quod victoris populi signa comitaris*. On Romans in Visigothic service, see Mathisen (1993) 126–8, Mathisen and Sivan (1999) 31–3.

piracy along the Atlantic seaboard – while serving Euric as admiral of the Visigothic navy based at Bordeaux.¹³¹ After Clermont surrendered in 475, its first *comes* under Euric was Victorius, who had been *dux* of seven cities in Aquitania I in the early 470s.¹³² Elaphius and Leo held high office under the Visigothic king Alaric II, and Sidonius' own son Apollinaris led an Arvernian contingent to fight for the Visigoths against the Franks at the battle of Vouillé in 507.¹³³

It was during the fifth century that geographic or ethnic affinities – metaphorical concepts of citizenship – became widely accepted as indicators of personal identity for both Romans and barbarians across late antique Gaul – supplanting legally attested civic status.¹³⁴ Such designations as 'citizen of the Goths' (*civis Gothus*) for the Homoian debater Modaharius, or 'citizen (at the court) of the Visigoths' for Lampridius of Bordeaux, illustrate the considerable degree to which these new notions of civic identity depended on the territory held by one's rulers.¹³⁵ This accorded well with the Goths' desire to live under the rule of law. Sidonius publicly denounced the vicar of Aquitania, Seronatus, as a collaborator on the grounds that he 'trod underfoot the laws of Theodosius, putting forward those of Theoderic', *leges Theodosianas calcans, Theudericianasque proponens*.¹³⁶ The presence at the courts of Euric and Alaric II of Roman jurists such as Leo of Narbonne, who could 'expound the Law of the Twelve Tables', and Syagrius junior, 'a new Solon of the Burgundians', was symptomatic of the new thinking on statehood.¹³⁷ Decoded, Sidonius' metaphorical language suggests that Leo, counsellor of the most powerful king, can be linked with the compilation or publicising of the Code of Euric, and the learned Syagrius with the *lex Romana Burgundionum* in which the Theodosian Code is regularly cited.¹³⁸ Sidonius was well aware that law was a defining feature of the emerging new societies: as King Euric 'restrained peoples by arms, so now throughout the bounds of his increased dominion, he restrains arms by statutes'.¹³⁹ The promulgation of Euric's Law c. 477 was an emphatic statement of sovereignty.¹⁴⁰

¹³¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.6.13 *asseveravit nuper vos . . . inter officia nunc nautae, modo militis litoribus Oceani curvis inerrare contra Saxonum pandos myoparones*, 'he affirmed that recently you . . . in discharging the duties now of a sailor, now of a soldier, were roving the winding shores of Ocean to meet the curving sloops of the Saxons'.

¹³² *PLRE* 2, 1162–4 (Victorius 4), Harries (1994) 129, Mathisen and Sivan (1999) 31.

¹³³ On Elaphius, *vir sublimis semperque magnificus frater*, 'egregious Lord and always sublime Brother' (Ruric. *Ep.* 2.7), see *PCBE* 4, 619–29 (Elaphius). On Leo, 'consiliarius' of Alaric II, see Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 91 (*MGH SRM* 1.54). Cf. Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.37 *maximus ibi tunc Arvernorum populus qui cum Apollinare venerat*, 'there and then, a great number of Arvernians having come with Apollinaris'; Alc. Avit. *Ep.* 51 (on his military office). See *PLRE* 2, 114 (Apollinaris 3), and Mathisen (2003b) 68–9.

¹³⁴ Mathisen (2018c); cf. Humfress (2014) 140 on the emergence of new legal 'ethnic' identities.

¹³⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.2–3 *Modaharium, civem Gothum, haereseos Arianae iacula vibrantem*, 'Modaharius, a Gothic citizen, launching his darts of Arian heresy', *Carm.* 2.239–42 *sed Scythicae vaga turba plagae, feritatis abundans, / dira, rapax, vehemens, ipsis quoque gentibus illic / barbara barbaricis, cuius dux Hormidac atque / civis erat*, 'but a roaming multitude from the Scythian region, teeming with savagery, frightful, ravening, violent, barbarous even in the eyes of the barbarian people around them, whose leader and citizen was Hormidac'. Cf. *Carm.* 7.373–5 on a citizen (*civis*) of the Alemanni, not of the Romans.

¹³⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.3. Not a 'Code of Theoderic', but a concept of Gothic law; see Matthews (2000) 331–2, Harries (1994) 126, and Delaplace (2015) 248, disputing Wallace-Hadrill (1962) 40. For Sidonius, Seronatus was 'the Catiline of our age' (2.1.1).

¹³⁷ Sidon. *Carm.* 23.446–9, cf. *Ep.* 4.22.3, 8.3.3 (Leo), 5.5.3 (Syagrius). See Harries (1994) 61, 222–3, 130–1, Ward-Perkins (2005), 70–1, Heather (2011) 115–4, and Humfress (2014) 140–55.

¹³⁸ Matthews (2000) 332; cf. Liebs (1998) 16–22, 25, (more critically) Harries (2001) 48–9 (Leo), and Humfress (2014) 151 (Syagrius).

¹³⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.3.3 *modo per promotae limitem sortis ut populos sub armis, sic frenat arma sub legibus*.

¹⁴⁰ It is uncertain whether the Code was the work of Euric (466–84) or of Alaric II (484–507). See Harries (2001).

Sidonius' attitude to cooperation with the Goths and to their settlement in Gaul was deeply critical. He was personally affected, through his conflict with Seronatus, who promoted barbarian interests by planting Gothic *hospites* in Roman villas, and through his litigation over his mother-in-law's land, two thirds of which had probably been seized by a Goth.¹⁴¹ His deeply ingrained aversion to the alien rulers is clear from his ironical remark to a fellow senator (*Ep.* 7.14.10): 'You shun barbarians because they have a bad reputation; I avoid them, even when they have a good one.'¹⁴² The perception of others by this Gallo-Roman bishop and champion of the fight against the Visigoths involved many divergent images of barbarians. Like his predecessors, Sidonius views exchanges between Romans and barbarians in terms of the supra-epochal concept of alterity and identity, and distinguishes two categories of counter-world in his 'rhetoric of confrontation'.¹⁴³ On one hand, this is effected by stereotypical attributions of collective group characteristics (skin and hair colour, dress code, customs, practices, norms) accompanying mechanisms of identification or dissociation. Their physical size, lack of cultivation, clothing, and mentality – which is both ferocious and stolid (*ferociam stoliditatemque*) – make them akin to animals, devoid of sensibility, brutal, prone to sudden rage.¹⁴⁴ What they lack in order to achieve true humanity, Sidonius writes, is not the Bible, but philosophy and poetry.¹⁴⁵ Clichés of this type regarding the nomadic way of life of the 'barbarians', who reject all civilisation and teach their enemies the meaning of fear, derive from a tradition of ethnographic writing about the rise and fall of states dating back to Herodotus, with his distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' cultures, and are also widely encountered among more recent authors like Ammianus.¹⁴⁶ Sidonius provides some textbook examples in his humorous invective against the Burgundians billeted in Lyon c. 461, who rub rancid butter into their hair and reek from early morning of garlic and onions¹⁴⁷ – or the two female prison warders in Livia, Goths and 'the most quarrelsome, drunken, vomiting

¹⁴¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 2.1.3 (on Seronatus): see Harries (1996) 40, 8.9.2 (*hereditas socrualis*). This is the interpretation put forward by Harries (1994) 240–1, (2001) 39–51, also Humfress (2014) 145 and Liebeschuetz (2015b) 171, 205; a different view is taken in Goffart (1980) 248–51 and (2006) 133–4 (interpreted as division of inheritance according to *Codex Euricianus*); on the debate, see Kulikowski (2001) 33–8 and Halsall (2003) 42–3.

¹⁴² *Barbaros vitas* (i.e. the educated Philagrius), *quia mali putentur, ego etiamsi boni*. From the time of Cicero, aristocrats like Sidonius (7.14.1) claimed to be the *boni*, meaning the ruling class of 'the best'; see Mratschek (1993) 4–5; cf. van Waarden (2016a) 160–1; probably a humorous allusion to the ethical commitments (*sapientia*) of the ideal orator (Cato *Fil.* 78, cited in Quint. 12.1): *orator est, Marce fili, vir bonus dicendi peritus*. See Alexander (2007) 98. Cf. Cicero's *vir bonus* (*De orat.* 2.85). Sidonius (*Ep.* 7.14.7) confused Cicero's son Marcus with the homonymous of Cato.

¹⁴³ Overview in Gehrke (2004) 362–75; definition in Harries (1996) 41; representation in the letters, Fascione (2019).

¹⁴⁴ E.g. Sidon. *Ep.* 4.1.4 on the *bestialium rigidarumque nationum corda cornea fibraeque glaciales* and *illorum ferociam stoliditatemque, quae secundum beluas ineptit brutescit accenditur* of the Sygambrian marsh-dwellers, the Caucasian Alans, and the mare-milking Gelonians; *Ep.* 5.7.4: a catalogue of similar beasts and further examples of inappropriate dress and behaviour; *Carm.* 7.363: likening of Goths to 'ravens wolves' (*raptores . . . lupi*); also the catalogues of barbarians (e.g. *Carm.* 5.473–7); see Goffart (2006) 110–11 and Mathisen (2011) 17–42, esp. 26.

¹⁴⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.1.4, *Carm.* 7.495–8. See Demandt (2007) 385.

¹⁴⁶ Hdt. 9.122, where 'hard cultures' are defined as backward, poor, unwelcoming, nomadic, and vigorously independent, 'soft cultures' as civilised, luxury-loving, seductive, and often ruled by a central government; see Luce (1997) 57–9 and Woolf (2011) 14. On Ammianus, see Kelly (2008) 283–4 and Vergin (2013) 211–21; cf. Woolf (2011) 112–13 on the tenacity of ethnic stereotyping.

¹⁴⁷ Sidon. *Carm.* 12.6–7 *quod Burgundio cantat esculentus, / infundens acido comam butyro?*, 12.14 *cui non allia sordidumque cepe / nuctant mane novo decem apparatus*. On the billeting, see Goffart (1980) 245 and von Rummel (2007) 170–1; on fiction drawn from a classical stereotype, Jones (2009) 34.

creatures the world will ever see'.¹⁴⁸ The barbaric tunes bawled out by the seven-foot Burgundians reduce Sidonius' verse, with its mere six classical feet, to impotent silence.¹⁴⁹ The din from the old women ranting on the other side of the prison skylight (*impluvium*) keeps Sidonius and his tormenting fears awake night after night.¹⁵⁰

Tropes of the barbarian were the common subtext to the new barbarian stories being created in the Roman West, and mirrored changing relations in the contact zone: 'They change constantly to suit the communicative and persuasive strategies of those who employ them.'¹⁵¹ Thus, for example, Sidonius will ignore the ethnic origins of individual actors, choosing not to count them as barbarians if they are culturally and linguistically integrated into the Roman system of rule, and perhaps both blue-blooded and Catholic as well. Among his discursive narrative and communicative strategies of cultural identity he projects the figure of the 'noble savage' as a role model for his own society – and in order to demonstrate the superiority of his own class. Although not developed and exploited until the eighteenth century, when it was popularised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, this figure was implicitly present very much earlier: in the *Histories* of Herodotus, in Tacitus' *Germania*, and also in Salvian.¹⁵² The hordes of the Migration Period, Sygambrians, Alans, and Gelonians, were often more despised as uncouth barbarians than feared as a threat to the established political order.¹⁵³ Sidonius' perception of the society he lived in was characteristically antithetical: on the one hand the relatively uncultured type (*rusticus*), who earns his living by manual labour (*illiberalis labor*), on the other the cultured aristocrat whose rise to distinction is assisted by his command of the *artes liberales* and by political achievements.¹⁵⁴ For anyone with the intellectual capacity to engage in debate with the author, there was no exclusion. Arbogastes, a descendant of the homonymous Frankish general, even found a place within the exclusive circle of Sidonius' correspondents after sending him a truly literary letter (*litteras litteratas*).¹⁵⁵ The son of the *comes* Arigius and of a lady from a wealthy Gallo-Roman family, and governor of the Middle Moselle from 480 as *comes* of Trier, with the support of residual Roman troop units and Frankish *foederati*, Arbogastes was also a Catholic Christian and as such had no difficulty, once Trier had fallen to the Franks, in exchanging his position for that of bishop of Chartres.¹⁵⁶ By contrast, Sidonius confronts his audience

¹⁴⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.3.2 *duae quaequam Getides anus, quibus nil unquam litigiosius bibacius vomacius erit, 8.3.1 non valebat curis animus aeger . . . , nunc per nocturna suspiria . . . distractus*. See Harries (1994) 238. *Moenia Livianorum*, the Livian walls (8.3.1), means the walls of Livia, but cf. the Peutinger Table (*MGH AA* 8.443): *m.p. XVII a Ebromago m.p. XII ad Livianam* (i.e. Capendu near Carcassonne).

¹⁴⁹ Sidon. *Carm.* 12.9–11 *ex hoc barbaricis abacta plectris / spernit senipedem stilum Thalia, / ex quo septipedes videt patronos*. See Mratschek (2020). In *Ep.* 5.5.3, he describes the Burgundians as *aeque corporibus ac sensu rigidi . . . indolatilesque* ('ungainly and uncouth in body and mind alike').

¹⁵⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.3.2 *nam fragor ilico, quem movebant vicinantes impluvio cubiculi mei duae quaequam Getides anus*.

¹⁵¹ Woolf (2011) 112. On Sidonius' strategies see Egetenmeyr (2019).

¹⁵² Opelt and Speyer (2001) 813–95, esp. 859–60, s.v. Barbar.

¹⁵³ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.4.1. On the 'social and political message', see Amherdt (2004), (2001) 16, 40, and Overwien (2009b).

¹⁵⁴ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.17.2 (ch. 6.3), see Amherdt (2004) and Näf (1995) 137–9. On comparing uncultivated persons to 'barbarians', *Ep.* 8.11.3, 9.11.6.

¹⁵⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.17.1 (to Arbogastes) *Eminentius amicus tuus, domine maior, obtulit mihi quas ipse dictasti litteras litteratas et gratiae trifariam rendentis cultu refertas*, 'Your friend Eminentius, my honoured Lord, has handed me a letter written by your own hand, a truly literary letter, replete with the grace of a three-fold charm.' *Litteras litteratas* alludes to Auson. *Ep.* 17.13–14 Green (for his favourite pupil, Paulinus). Burgundio, the addressee of *Ep.* 9.14, a senator and poet (9.14.3–4), is likely to be of Burgundian descent; see Kaufmann (1995) 287–8, no. 16, referring to Schönfeld (1911) 55.

¹⁵⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.17.2. See *PLRE* 2, 142 (Arigius 1), Anton (1984) 22–39, and Nonn (2010) 105–6.

with the incongruities of an overturned social order that gives the uneducated authority over the educated, and he denounces as illegitimate the barbarian rule that has institutionalised these wrongs. King Euric's court, ironically referred to as the Athenaeum ('Temple of Learning'), and Ragnahilda, Euric's queen, who rates the extrinsic value of a silver dish above the true worth and artistry of the author's distichs engraved in it, become butts for the mockery of his sophisticated readership.¹⁵⁷

In his letters, Sidonius constantly devises new ways of staging history, and manipulates his readers by projecting a sequence of visual impressions that reveals the historical process of transformation. He captures the dynamic of the political shift from Roman Empire to Visigothic kingdom by focusing visually on scenes from the public appearances of their representatives. His subtle handling of flashback in association with this 'iconography of power' casts light on his own day and invites his readers to draw comparisons. As a nineteen-year-old adolescent Sidonius had seen with his own eyes the mesmerising visual display of Roman ceremonial when Astyrius became consul (449). We see the praetorian prefect's son at the court in Arles, standing in a line of high dignitaries in resplendent robes close by the *sella curulis* of the consul.¹⁵⁸ He was dazzled by the brilliance of the consular *toga palmata* steeped in Tyrian purple, which, in Sidonius' metaphor, was echoed in the speech of the panegyrist – 'still more richly coloured and more suffused with gold'.¹⁵⁹ For the opening entry in his letter collection, Sidonius chooses the unusual visual presentation of the 'non-Roman royalty' of Theoderic II in 455/6.¹⁶⁰ By means of a meticulously precise description of Theoderic's physiognomy and kingly duties, he stylises the 'barbarian' king of the Visigoths into the embodiment of the ideal monarch, receiving deputations and hearing disputes on a daily basis.¹⁶¹ The addressee (Agricola, the son of the emperor Avitus) and the reader are rhetorically transformed into immediate spectators as Theoderic is made to represent Greek elegance, Gallic opulence, and Italian vivacity.¹⁶² A cameo illustrating how the author learnt that losing a dice-game to the king was a sure way to gain favour also shows the audience that Sidonius played some part in Theoderic's daily routine. The letter has thus been read as an 'affirmation of political allegiance'.¹⁶³ But a focus on reception aesthetics and temporality may be meaningful: in the early 470s, when the letter was published as part of a *libellus*, and in c. 477, when Sidonius produced his final and authorised edition, the Visigothic king was long since dead, murdered by his brother Euric, and Sidonius became the first writer to publish a panegyric of an independent barbarian king for a broader

¹⁵⁷ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.8.5 *namque in foro tali sive Athenaeo plus charta vestra quam nostra scriptura laudabitur*, 'for in that sort of forum or Athenaeum your writing material will get more praise than my writing'. On the 'poème-bijou' and an intertextual reference to Claudian *Carm. min.* 45, see Guipponi-Gineste (2014) and Mratschek (2017) 315. The Athenaeum, Hadrian's famous educational institution at Rome, is used by Sidonius as a symbol to describe Tonantius Ferreolus' and Faustus' libraries (*Ep.* 2.9.4, 9.9.13) and Burgundio's promised audience (9.14.2).

¹⁵⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.6.5 *adhaerebam sellae curulis . . . mixtusque turmae censualium paenulatorum consuli proximis proximis eram*. See Harries (1994) 52–3, Brown (2012) 404–5, and PCBE 4, 1759–60 (Sidonius 1) on his date of birth in 430/1.

¹⁵⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 8.6.6 *et illam Sarranis ebriam sucis inter crepitantia segmenta palmatae plus picta oratione, plus aurea convenustavit*. See PLRE 2, 174–5 (Fl. Astyrius) and 782–3 (Fl. Nicetius) (the panegyrist).

¹⁶⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2. Preceded only by the programmatic epistle introducing the collection. On the dating, see Stevens (1933) 67 and Sivan (1989a).

¹⁶¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2.4–9. On the political relationships see Sivan (1989a); on physiognomy-related and panegyric tradition, Gualandri (1979) 56–8, 67–74; on the legations Humfress (2014) 145.

¹⁶² Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2.6 *videas ibi elegantiam Graecam, abundantiam Gallicanam, celeritatem Italiam*. Note the ambiguous second person of the potential subjunctive. See Harries (1996) 36–7.

¹⁶³ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2.8. For its dissemination under Theoderic II see Sivan (1989a) 86 and Harries (1994) 128, with her quotation (1996) 36.

public and posterity, thereby placing his subject on a par with the Roman emperors.¹⁶⁴ He had positioned his idealised portrait of Theoderic centrally and prominently in his letter collection so as to serve as a model of *civilitas* and Romanness and to hold up a 'mirror for princes' to the successor king and his own aristocratic peers.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the consul's curule chair, however, the throne was ringed by armour-laden Gothic nobles, and pelt-clad bodyguards barred the way.¹⁶⁶

At the age of forty Sidonius again captivates his audience with his talent for observation after watching from the crowd as the Frankish prince Sigismer's wedding procession passes through the streets of his home city of Lyon.¹⁶⁷ Even now, in peacetime (c. 470), it was an intimidating sight, with the light reflecting off the weapons borne by the young barbarian kings escorting Sigismer and by the prince's own retinue in their animal-hide boots, a counter-image to the toga-clad people (*gens togata*) celebrating Ricimer's wedding at Rome three years earlier.¹⁶⁸ With the focus on Sigismer in the centre of the procession, wearing a scarlet cloak, set off by the reddish glint of gold, resplendent in the pure white silk of his tunic and with his sword by his side, the pageantry seems to Sidonius to be a '*pompa* rather of Mars than of Venus': his clothing looked like a general's *paludamentum* at an *adventus* ceremony.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the enthusiasm aroused in the massed citizenry by such a picturesque spectacle, and in Sidonius' correspondent, Domnicus, as he visualises the weapons,¹⁷⁰ is not shared by the letter's author: Sidonius is seized with total apathy (*impatia*, that is, ἀπάθεια), and indeed experiences a sense of alienation from his friend and his fellow citizens.¹⁷¹ In accordance with Roman rhetorical theory, which considered sight

¹⁶⁴ Reydellet (1981) 49, 70–1, 76–7. Cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 4.10.2 (the *libellus*, containing probably Book 1 or Books 1 and 2); see Harries (1994) 7–10, Mathisen (2018a), and Mratschek (2017) 312 on the editorial process. For a different view see Kelly, ch. 3, sect. 5.2, pp. 189–92 in this volume.

¹⁶⁵ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2.1 *quia Theodorici regis Gothorum commendat populis fama civilitatem*, 'because report commends to the world the graciousness of Theoderic, King of the Goths'. Cf. 1.2.6 (n. 155), in addition 'dignity of state, attentiveness of private home, ordered discipline of royalty'. Sidonius' panegyric (*Carm.* 7.495–6) claims that Theoderic received his education in Roman law from Avitus, and depicts him as protector and patron of the Roman population (23.71–2 *Romanae columen salusque gentis*); see Humfress (2014).

¹⁶⁶ Sidon. *Ep.* 1.2.4 *circumsisit sellam comes armiger; pellitorum turba satellitum ne absit, admittitur, ne obstrepat eliminatur*. Cf. Stilicho's *satellites pelliti* (*CTh* 9.42.22 from 22 November 408; *Rut. Nam.* 2.49) and *pellita iuventus* (*Claud. IV Hon.* 466).

¹⁶⁷ Stevens (1933) 94, n. 7, 175, Loyen (1970) 2.155, 254, n. 20, and von Rummel (2007) 174 consider that the *regius iuvenis* Sigismer was more probably of Frankish than of Burgundian provenance; Kaufmann (1995) 159–60, 296, no. 28, believes him to have been a Frank from the Middle Rhine.

¹⁶⁸ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.20.2 *regulorum autem sociorumque comitantum forma et in pace terribilis; quorum pedes primi perone saetosos talos adusque vinciebantur*, 4.20.3 *quorum* (sc. *clipeorum*) *lux in orbibus nivea, fulva in umbrionibus*. Cf. 1.5.11 (Ricimer's wedding), alluding to Verg. *Aen.* 1.282; see von Rummel (2007) 388–9; also Schwitter (2015) 164–5. The expression *in pace terribilis*, 'terrifying even in peacetime', permits us to date the letter to c. 470; see Loyen (1970) 2.155, 254, n. 20, and *PLRE* 2, 1008 (Sigismer), who dispute Stroheker's dating of 474 ((1948) 164, no. 104).

¹⁶⁹ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.20.3 *ut in actione thalamorum non apparet minor Martis pompa quam Veneris*, 4.20.1 *ipse* (i.e. Sigismer) *medius incescit, flammeus cocco nutilus auro lacteus serico*. Note the allusion introduced by *flammeus* to the bridal veil, *flammeum*. Nevertheless, it was a general's *paludamentum*: see Mathisen (2012) 92, n. 59, and the detailed but positivist approach of von Rummel (2007) 179–81, 382. Wearing a military *dhlamys* was forbidden to senators (*CTh* 14.10.1: 382 CE).

¹⁷⁰ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.20.1 *Tu* [i.e. Domnicus] *qui frequenter arma et armatos inspicere incundum est, quam voluptatem . . . mente conceperas, si Sigismerem . . . vidisses!* On Domnicus, one of Lyon's leading citizens, *civium primi* (*Ep.* 5.17.4, 6), and *darissimus vir*, see *PLRE* 2, 372 and Kaufmann (1995) 296, no. 28.

¹⁷¹ Sidon. *Ep.* 4.20.3 *nam cum viderem quae [sc. spectacula] tibi pulchra sunt non te videre, ipsam eo tempore desiderii tui impatientiam desideravi*, 'for when I saw that you were not seeing the sights your eye delights in, at that moment I wanted not to feel the want of you'. Sidonius addresses Domnicus (*Ep.* 5.17.6) as *frater*. *Impatentia* ('ἀπάθεια') in Stoic philosophy means a state of mind in which one is not disturbed by such passions as longing and desire, and, in Pyrrhonian scepticism, the eradication of all feeling: see Sorabji (2002) 194–6 and 198–200; misinterpreted by von Rummel (2007) 181. It was not the 'peaceloving citizens' that were frightened (thus Harries (1996) 36); Sidonius alone was gripped with fear and loneliness.

to be the sharpest of our senses, Sidonius seems keen to create visual scenes in the mind of the reader, of a vividness which, by means of internal focalisation, provokes interest in deciphering their message.¹⁷² Since 455, when the proclamation of Eparchius Avitus as emperor would not have been successful without the backing of Gothic auxiliaries, it had been clear for all to see that power had shifted from the ‘emperors dressed in purple’ to the ‘kings who dress in animal skins and carry arms’:¹⁷³ a few years after Sigismer’s wedding, in 474, a Burgundian king, Chilperic, ruled at Lyon ‘governing Lyonese Germany’ (*Lugdunensem Germaniam*).¹⁷⁴ However, the aristocrats who had been active in politics before the conquest of the Auvergne were subsequently to play a crucial role in the further dissemination of Roman culture and as key figures in the processes of generating, circulating, and transforming knowledge, thanks to the spatial extension of episcopal communication and to their presence at the courts of the Visigothic and Burgundian kings.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Cic. *De orat.* 2.357 *acerrimum autem ex omnibus sensibus esse sensum videndi*, ‘sight, however, is the sharpest of all our senses’. On the connections between vision and imagination, and the mental processes involved in both, esp. through tropes such as ἐνάργεια, *illustratio*, and *evidentia*, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.32. On ‘visual memory’ and ‘virtual visions of Roman mnemonics’, see Elsner and Squire (2016) 203–4; on the use of creating and communicating images, Webb (2016) 208–13; on internal focalisation, Genette (2010) 121–4, 217–20.

¹⁷³ Sidon. *Ep.* 7.9.19 *vel ante pellitos reges vel ante principes purpuratos*. Cf. 1.9.2 Anthemius as *purpuratus princeps*, *Carm.* 5.363 *pellitus . . . hostis* (i.e. Theoderic II), 7.219 *in media pelliti principis* (i.e. Theodorici) *aula*. *Ep.* 1.2 is conspicuously silent on Theoderic’s dress code. Animal pelts (*pelles*) are a pejorative stereotype and synonym for the new class of barbarian rulers; see von Rummel (2007) 146, 154, 166–8, 182, 391. On the emperor’s purple *chlamys*, see MacCormack (1981) e.g. 180, and Mathisen (2012) 92, fig. 5; on Avitus’ reign, see Harries (1994) 54.

¹⁷⁴ Note the poignant sarcasm of Sidon. *Ep.* 5.7.7. On Chilperic’s reign at Lyon (6.12.3) and Genava (Greg. Tur. *Vit. patr.* 1.5), see *PLRE* 2, 286–7 (Chilperic II) and Harries (1994) 224, 230–2.

¹⁷⁵ Further reading for this chapter is provided at the end of chapter 6.