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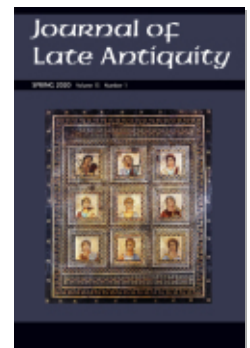
The Silence of the Muses in Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* .
12–13, *Ep.* . 8.11): Aphasia and the Timelessness of Poetic
Inspiration

Sigrid Mratschek

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The Silence of the Muses in Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 12–13, *Ep.* 8.11): Aphasia and the Timelessness of Poetic Inspiration

When the Muses and Apollo fall silent for Sidonius, this signifies neither a general silence of poetry in Late Antiquity nor a lasting silence on the poet's own part. It is paradoxically the "silence of the Muse," the trope for the poet's loss of speech, that most clearly displays the gamut of the emotions of the poetic persona. The "inward turn" and psychological approach will be used to show that Sidonius, in discourse with the changing voices of the Muses, created a series of self-portraits—petitioner of Majorian, host to the Burgundians, a human suffering deeply after the murder of Lampridius—that prove instrumental in explaining himself and the world. Using his allegory of the "silent Muse" and the literary technique of allusion, Sidonius evokes a multi-layered world of imagery that enables him to overcome his traumas and make his readers into spectators alert and responsive to the troubles of their epoch.

The Barren Muse and the "Poetics of Silence" in Late Antiquity

"The source of all poetry and thought was the Muses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne . . . , [but] they had never before assumed such a powerful role in the visual arts as they did in the Late Antiquity." Paul Zanker's comment (1995, 327) refers to the astonishing tenacity with which the pagan

For Jill Harries. I would like to thank John F. Miller, Ralph W. Mathisen, Roy Gibson and Jesús Hernández Lobato for a number of stimulating insights which I gleaned at conferences in Wasenaar, Edinburgh, and San Diego, and from some thoroughly enjoyable discussions at Corpus Christi College during my Oxford Fellowship and at Rostock University. My thanks also to Andy Cain and to the *Journal of Late Antiquity's* anonymous reviewer for the careful reading and constructive feedback combined with inspiring ideas. This paper was also enriched by lively exchanges at the Basel Workshop led by Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer and Judith Hindermann in January 2018 and by manuscripts from Karin Schlapbach and Raphael Schwitter. Warm thanks are due to

tutinary goddesses lived on in the Christian Empire, conveying knowledge and inspiration to the poets. Sidonius's epitaph conjures up an image of the bishop seated on the episcopal throne who was not merely a successful politician and judge but also a formidable intellectual endowed by the Graces with the gifts of philosophy and artistic sense:¹ Aglaia ("the Radiant"), Euphrosyne ("the Joyous"), and Thalia ("the Blooming") lent his works the charm, the beauty, and the festive spirit that would ensure "one must possess them throughout all future centuries" and that Sidonius "is read in the entire world." The author of the poetic epitaph alludes to the three Graces, the Charites of Hesiod's *Theogony*, rather than the Muses, to emphasize the aesthetic quality of Sidonius's art and its timelessness.² Graces and Muses follow alike in Apollo's wake, but only Thalia belongs to both. To what extent, then, did Sidonius inscribe himself in this cult of the Graces and Muses, and what functions did the Muses fulfill in the works of the poet-bishop?

Sidonius's works are a stage-set for a display of learning and poetic artistry: his unbroken relationship with the Muses dates from his earliest youth (*Ep.* 5.21)—*mihi . . . semper a parvo cura Musarum*. With classical models in mind, he stylizes himself as a natural poetic talent and as such lays claim to the "poetic legacy" and "inherited talent" of Victorius, a masterly poet (*poeta doctissimus*), while generously renouncing his material inheritance.³ Ovid's light-hearted Muse Thalia is also Sidonius's favorite Muse (Figure 1): of the five Muses in his repertoire, she plays a most-favored role as his medium of inspiration and is invoked more often than her sisters.⁴ Sidonius, like Ovid, sees himself as both creator and victim of his art. Ovid succumbs to his Muse, everything he writes turning into verse.⁵ Sidonius, the bishop, is so

Thomas Zühmer, GDKE/Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, for kindly permitting me to reproduce "the mosaic of the Muses (Inv. 1941.1520: cover and fig. 1)," and to Daria Lanzaolo, DAI in Rome, for the "Anaglypha Traiani (Neg. 68.2783, 68.2785: figs. 2–3)."

¹ *Epith. Sidonii* 12–14; 17–18 (MGH [AA] 6): *Et post talia dona Gratiarum / summi pontificis sedens cathedram / mundanos soboli refudit actus / . . . Nulli incognitus et legendus orbi / illic Sidonius tibi invocetur*. See Prévot 1993, 227, 229; this is ascribed to Sidonius by Becht-Jördens 2017, 143 note 51, but to Sidonius's son by Condorelli 2013, 279 and Furbetta 2014, 154–56.

² On the Three Charites or Graces, daughters of Zeus and Eurynome (Hes. *Theog.* 907–9, with Paus. 9.35.3–5), see Hunger 1969, 89–90 and 262–64 on the nine Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne.

³ Note the antithesis *patrimonia tenete, date carmina* in *Ep.* 5.21. *Carmina* can be understood either as "collection of poems" or as "poetic talent." Victorius is the uncle of Sacerdos and Justinus who inherited his fortune; see Mathisen 2020, 126.

⁴ *Ov. Trist.* 4.10.56: *Notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est*. Hes. *Theog.* 2.909 refers to "lovely Thalia," Θάλειν τ' ἐρατεινήν. Sidonius's Muses included Calliope, Clio, Erato, Terpsichore, and Thalia; see André 2009, 210–12.

⁵ *Ov. Trist.* 4.10.19–20: *At mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant, / inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus*. 4.10.25–26: *Sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos, / et quod temptabam scribere versus erat*.



Figure 1. *Thalia with shepherd's crook and mask. Mosaic of the Muses, Trier, 3rd or 4th c. CE. Photo: Th. Zühmer, Inv. 1941.1520, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.*

overwhelmed by the magic of the Muses and of Apollo at the remote fountain of the Muses on Helicon—the Muses he has sent packing for the sake of the One God—that he accedes to Tonantius's plea for Horatian asclepiads and transforms himself “after 12 years of silence” into a Horatian bard: *Ecce, dum quaero quid cantes, ipse cantavi* (“Searching for what you might wish to sing, I myself have been singing”).⁶

⁶ Sid. Ap. Ep. 9.13.95–103, especially 95–99: *Procul hinc et Hippocrenen / Aganippicosque fontes / et Apollinem canorum / comitantibus Camenis / abigamus . . .* At 9.13.6, *cantes-cantavi* is emphasized by *symploce*. On the poetic landscape, see André 2009, 214–15; on interpretation, see Mratschek 2017, 316–22, especially 316.

Just as the Muses' gift of poetic inspiration expresses itself unconsciously in verses, so also the silence of the Muses may cause temporary aphasia, moments of selective muteness, because something terrible, or joy, literally "leaves the poet speechless." As a result, the dynamic concept of language becomes physically tangible. Breathing is irregular, all energies are paralyzed, speaking and answering are impossible. Perceptively, Jesús Hernández Lobato has referred to a "poetics of silence"—an insight which became my stimulus for this enquiry.⁷ Rainer Henke defines Sidonius's silence as escapism, refuge in an imaginary world of semblance.⁸ But as shown by John Miller with regard to the disclaimer of divine inspiration, muteness and failure of divine inspiration are commonly used by poets to reflect on their literary program.⁹ Hernández Lobato reads Apollo's silence (*Apolline muto*) in poem 5 (verse 372) as a motto and program for late antique art and poetry in general.¹⁰ Karin Schlapbach demonstrates that in Sidonius, as in Augustine, the Muses appear as abstract representatives of different arts, while Sidonius self-deprecatingly characterizes his own Muse as "barren" (9.318: *sterilis*).¹¹ But is such silence, embodied in the "barren" or "unproductive" Muse (*Musa sterilis*), indeed, truly typical of the poet and of *all* late antique poetry?

The Inward Turn: Sidonius's Three Modes of Silence

This article presents three key passages in Sidonius to argue that his silences are pregnant, effective, and positive rather than signs of the end of classical poetry. Memory and inspiration conveyed by the Muse are pivotal to the artist's self-reflexive emotions and creativity in the triangular relationship of author, work, and audience.¹² But how does he manipulate his audience's emotions or transmit his own emotions to them? The "inward turn," a model of perception comprising the awareness of the world around one as well as an image of the world, and the psychological approach to poetic composition¹³ will be used to show that Sidonius, in discourse with the changing voices of

⁷ Hernández Lobato 2017, 278–310. It is described in De la Portbarré-Viard 2018 as "a fruitful area for further research."

⁸ Henke 2008, 155–73.

⁹ Miller 1986, referring to poetry under the Principate.

¹⁰ For example, Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 5.372–73: [*Illa*] . . . *quae fanda mihi vel Apolline muto: / pro Musis Mars vester erit*. See the full reference in Hernández Lobato 2012 and Van Waarden 2013 and also 2017, 283 ("the spirit of his time"), 287 ("the futility of poetry"). The "unsparing self-diagnosis" (Schmitzer 2015, 87) refers to Martial's dedicatory poems (Mart. 3.2.5; 4.86.8).

¹¹ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 9.318: *Nos valde sterilis modos Camenae* . . . See Shanzer 2005 on the personification of the Muses as *disciplinae* from Varro to Augustine.

¹² On the "triangle" in relation to theories of emotions, see Halliwell 2017, 106 and 122.

¹³ On the "Inward Turn" see the definition of Travis 2013, 144–77; on poetic conceptions of the Self, see Sorabij 2006, and Arweiler and Möller 2009, vii–xiv.

the Muses, created a series of self-portraits—petitioner of Majorian, host to the Burgundians, a human suffering deeply after the murder of Lampridius—that prove instrumental in explaining himself and the world. The diverse textual functions of the Muses may reveal to us what concepts and procedures he was able to use for literary self-construction and what place is to be assigned to them in the space of late antique poetics.¹⁴

Unlike Jesús Hernández Lobato, whose wide-ranging review examines the relevant passages of a number of poets in isolation from the rich historical background of their poetry, I choose the method of interactive contextualization and intertextuality for my analysis of the “silence of the Muses,” with special reference to Sidonius. My aim is to demonstrate concisely that all the passages discussed by Hernández Lobato could be understood in different ways, depending on which of the three major rhetorical reasons for adopting silence is held to apply. The following new reading of the meta-discursive poems and letters will therefore analyze three representative episodes to trace the concepts behind “the silence of the Muses” and offer a key to understanding this highly allusive author—a key, moreover, that fits both genres and enables Sidonius’s literary achievement to be seen in a new perspective. The focus will be on a petition (*Carm.* 12), a satire in verse (*Carm.* 13), and the obituary on Lampridius, in epistolary form (*Ep.* 8.11). The drying up of Sidonius’s poetic inspiration as a new Apollo in the panegyric for Euric (*Ep.* 8.9), the *recusatio* of Bible exegesis (*Ep.* 9.2) and epic (*Ep.* 9.15), and the author’s total apathy (*impatientia*, that is, ἀπάθεια) prompted by the sight of Sigismer’s wedding procession in Lyon (*Ep.* 4.20), have already been the subject of publications elsewhere.¹⁵

Sidonius’s Petition (Carm. 13): The Eloquent Muse and the Political Dimension of Silence

In art, which sets its own boundaries yet experiences them as painful, the external conditions of late antique culture are put to the test: by invoking the Muses in existential borderline situations, Sidonius evokes metaliterary reflections that highlight certain aspects of his times and prompt his audience or the individual addressed to engage in a discourse with the poet and his personal vision of the world. In his passionate plea in winter 458 for the survival of

¹⁴ On the literary concept and the semiotics of space, see Pelttari 2014, 161–64.

¹⁵ Mratschek 2017, 316–19: Sidonius’s styling of himself as the poet-god Apollo and Horace’s swan metaphor are means of presenting his poetic *persona* (*Ep.* 8.9, 9.2, 9.15). See also Mratschek 2020b, 235: Sidonius’s sense of alienation from Domnicus and his fellow-citizens (*Ep.* 4.20). A paper on Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11 was delivered at the international Conference *Sidonius Apollinaris, His Words and His World* organized by Gavin Kelly and Joop Van Waarden at Edinburgh in 2014.

his native city of Lyon and a reduction of the capitation-tax—the victorious Majorian having tripled the tax after rebellion and siege¹⁶—Sidonius conjures up the pitiful image of the once eloquent Muse (*Musa loquax*) now rendered impotent: the tax burden has deprived her of her vocation and rendered her silent. She is a mendicant Muse now, heedless of her power of song, as she scrapes together not Virgil’s and Terence’s verses but rather small coins—sixths, twelfths of an *as* (*sextans* and *uncia*)—for the imperial treasury. “She fears the hand and rope of Marsyas,” Sidonius tells the emperor, “who from old-time hatred of Phoebus now threatens bards with the noose.”¹⁷ In his startling final punchline, the emotional climax of the petition, the poet follows the principles of Aristotelian rhetoric: he makes his audience vividly aware of his suffering, which “evokes pity all the more powerfully” when “it appears close at hand, set before our eyes as either future or past.”¹⁸

Sidonius was typical of late antique elites in loving to introduce allusions to figures from Greek and Roman mythology. Like all educated people, the readers and listeners as well as the petition’s addressee, Majorian, were expected to recognize the allusions and respond to them. Sidonius confounds the expectations of his audience by switching perpetrator’s and victim’s perspectives and reversing the myth’s performative strategies: while the myth has the uncultured satyr hanged on a tree by Apollo Tortor for his hubris and then flayed alive,¹⁹ in the historical present the hand of Marsyas (*Marsyaeque . . . manus*) threatens the poets (*vatibus*), that is, Sidonius Apollinaris and the most highly cultured of all gods, Apollo, with hanging. The metapoetic discourse allows the emperor Majorian a glimpse of the “topsy-turvy world” in which Sidonius Apollinaris, the Apollo of his time, is facing Marsyas’s death-penalty, despite his unsurpassable lyrics, while his Muse is alienated from her true calling to become a suppliant and beggarwoman, humiliating and prostituting herself before Marsyas for the sake of money.

The poet who had to represent Lyon alludes not only to the famous legend of the musical contest between Marsyas and Apollo, discussed by Hernández Lobato, but also to the earliest Marsyas statue we know of, depicted on a

¹⁶ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.20: *capita . . . tria*. For interpretation, see below (note 28); for dating, see Mathisen 1991b, 181 and Kelly 2020, 169, with 6 November 458 (*Nov. Maior.* 7) as *terminus post quem*.

¹⁷ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.35–40: *Nam nunc Musa loquax tacet tributo, / quae pro Vergilio Terentioque / sextantes legit unciasque fisci, / Marsyaeque timet manum ac rudentem, / qui Phoebi ex odio vetustiore / nunc suspendia vatibus minatur.*

¹⁸ Arist. *Rh.* 2.8.14 (1386a): ἐγγὺς γὰρ ποιοῦσι φαίνεσθαι τὸ κακὸν πρὸ ὁμμάτων ποιοῦντες, ἢ ὥς μέλλον ἢ ὥς γεγονός.

¹⁹ The motif of Marsyas’s hanging and Apollo’s cruel punishment recurred often and variously in visual art; see Rawson 1987, 53–66, 140–53 and Miller 2009, 15, 28, 350 on Apollo the Torturer.

denarius of L. Marcius Censorinus in 82 BCE:²⁰ *Tristis . . . fronte obducta ceu Marsya victus* (“sad, with furrowed brow, like the conquered Marsyas”),²¹ the statue had stood in the Forum Romanum since 294 BCE, near the Comitium, the space for the political activities of the *plebs* and the rostrum from which legal pleas were delivered during litigation. It was also the fashionable rendez-vous for lawyers (and courtesans) in Rome.²² The twofold coding of the Marsyas allusions was to remind the victorious emperor of the multiple significance of *libertas* as embodied in the Marsyas statue with the raised hand. Apollo, Sidonius’s pseudonym in his circle of Bordeaux, had proved an appropriate identification figure for a poet called Apollinaris, and similarly Marsyas with his outstretched right arm, as a symbol of Roman liberty and the law, was intended to appeal to Emperor Majorian and his ruler-like qualities. Sidonius alludes here to the series of Novels (1–7) that Majorian had issued between 11 January and November 458, before his crossing of the Alps and *adventus* in Lyon.

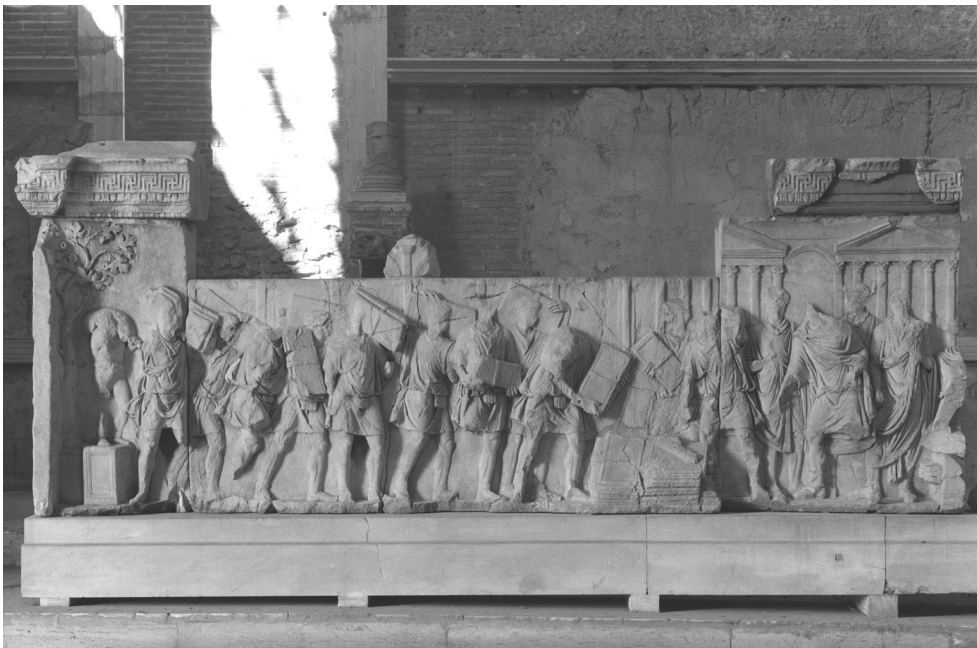
According to Servius’s aetiological explanation, it was customary in Italy to put up a statue of Marsyas, a devotee of the god Liber, on the public squares of non-tributary *civitates liberae*, as a symbol of their freedom (*indicium libertatis*), and Marsyas’s raised right hand affirmed that the city in question wanted for nothing.²³ On the *Anaglypha Traiani* (Figures 2 and 3), which depict the recipients of a *congiarium* and the burning of *tabulae*—the tax records of the Roman citizens in the Forum Romanum (still intact in Late

²⁰ Hernández Lobato 2017, 283–84. Compare Crawford 1974, 37–78, number 363, plates 47 and 11; see also Rawson 1987, 11 and 225.

²¹ Thus, see Juv. 9.2 on the Marsyas statue as the proverbial symbol of the vanquished, interpreted by Braund 1988, 170 as “allegory of the procedure of the satire,” in which the poet dramatizes the constraints upon his freedom of speech. See also Uden 2015, 74–76. On emotionally loaded depictions of Marsyas in art using dramatic gestures of despair, suffering, or agony in contrast to Apollo’s pose of divine equanimity, see Chanotis 2017, 28 and 164.

²² Torelli 1982, 98–106; Wiseman 1988, 4–5; Fantham 2005, 220–21, 227; Miller 2009, 350; Barja de Quiroga 2018. See also the reading of Braund 1988 (note 21). On the lawyers’ rendezvous, see Mart. 2.64.7: . . . *fora litibus omnia fervent, / ipse potest fieri Marsua causidicus*. On Julia’s crowning of Marsyas as a form of defiance of Augustus and his patron Apollo (Sen. Ben. 6.32.1; Plin. NH 21.8–9), see Fantham 2005, 227 note 52.

²³ Serv. (on Verg. Aen. 3.20): *Quod autem de Libero diximus, haec causa est, ut signum sit liberae civitatis. Nam apud maiores aut stipendiariae erant, aut foederatae aut liberae. Sed in liberis civitatibus simulacrum Marsyae erat, qui in tutela Liberi patris est*. See also Serv. (on Verg. Aen. 4.58): *Qui [Liber pater], ut supra diximus, apte urbibus libertatis est deus. Unde etiam Marsyas, eius minister, est in civitatibus in foro positus, libertatis indicium, qui erecta manu testatur nihil urbe deesse*. See Torelli 1982, 105; Rawson 1987, 11–12, 91 notes 18–19; Wiseman 1988, 4, 7–8; Fantham 2005, 227 on a bronze replica of the Roman statue at Paestum 273 BCE and many others in the Roman empire, especially in Italy and Africa. See also Barja de Quiroga’s (2018, 150–54) link between the Marsyas statue and the *Quinquatrus* of June, reviewing all the competing interpretations of Marsyas’s iconography. See Miller 2009, 323 and 350 on Bacchus and the *Liberalia*.



Figures 2 and 3. Adlocutio relief: liberal donation (congiarium), with Marsyas statue on the right. Burning of the tax records (tabulae), with Marsyas statue on the left. Anaglypha or Plutei Traiani, Rome, after Trajan's Dacian Wars CE 103/106. Photos c: J. Felbermeyer, Neg. D-DAI-Rom 68.2783 and 68.278.

Antiquity)—the Marsyas statue and the *figus Ruminalis*, the sacred fig-tree, constitute a link between the concept of Rome's liberty and the demonstrations of imperial *liberalitas*.²⁴ This ancient tradition is to cajole the ruler into showing leniency: "Give me back my native city and with it my life, by freeing Lyon from the burden of its ruination," runs the appeal of the aristocratic Sidonius, staging himself as the supplicant servant (*supplex famulus*) before the emperor.²⁵ The granting of amnesty and cancellation of debt, Sidonius suggests in his appeal, would enable Majorian, personifying Marsyas, not only to demonstrate his liberality, but also to restore the freedom of the conquered city of Lyon. Then, one might envision his statue standing in the Forum at Lyon, right hand upraised like that of Marsyas as *indicium libertatis*.

The silence of the Muse marking the oppressive debt burden and Sidonius's petition for his fellow-citizens as a trauma is disadvantageous, as the author hints, for the emperor too: he had fixed in law the amount of tribute to be paid. He could become the target of ridicule as in the satires of Horace, where the outstretched hand of the Marsyas statue is maliciously misrepresented as a gesture of revulsion at a notorious usurer.²⁶ The emperor would lose the praise bestowed on him by Apollo in the person of Sidonius Apollinaris, the finest poet of the age. By allegorizing the emperor as the hero of the mythical past (*quondam Alcides*) in the *captatio benevolentiae* at the beginning of his petition, Sidonius had stylized him as a "second Hercules" (*Tirynthius alter*) for his own contemporary present, freeing the world of its evils (*monstra*) and thereby gaining entry to heaven.²⁷ As a demigod he had the power to cut off the "three heads" of the capitation tax, symbolized by the triple-headed monster Geryon.²⁸

²⁴ Torelli 1982, 99–106; Rawson 1987, 11–12, 224–25; Seelentag 2004, 477–83. On *libertas* and *liberalitas* as imperial coinage program into Late Antiquity, see Stylow 1972, 54–77; on the exact site and the Forum in Late Antiquity with Marsyas as place of remembrance: Freyberger 2009, 101–5 and 96 figure 64.

²⁵ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.23–25 (to the Emperor Majorian): *Vt reddas patriam simulque vitam / Lugdunum exonerans suis ruinis, / hoc te Sidonius tuus precatur*. On the poet as *supplex famulus*, see Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.21. Note the deliberate ambiguity of *ruinae* as "collapse," respectively, "ruin" (Harries 1994, 47) and "ruins" (Loyen 1960, 1: 188–89).

²⁶ Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.119–21: *Deinde eo dormitum, non sollicitus, mihi quod cras / surgendum sit mane, obeundus Marsya, qui se / voltum ferre negat Noviorum posse minoris*. On Novius the Younger, *tumultuosus faenerator*, see Porphyry on 1.3.21.

²⁷ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.1–18, especially 1–2, for a reminiscence of Hes. *Theog.* 954–55: *Amphitryoniden perhibet veneranda vetustas, / dum relevat terras, promeruisse polos*. See Stevens 1933, 46 and Schmitzer 2015, 81–84; compare Galinsky 1972 on the "Roman Hercules" (126–52) and as "a prototype for Aeneas and Augustus (153–66)."

²⁸ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.20–21 (to the Emperor Majorian): *Hinc capita [monstri, i.e. tributi], ut vivam, tu mihi tolle tria . . .* Compare 13.14, *tergeminum caput* (Geryon's "three heads") with Hes. *Theog.* 287 (τρίκεφαλον Γηρυονῆα, "the triple-headed Geryon") with Aesch. Ag. 870 (τρισώματός . . . Γηρυών, "the three-leaved Geryon"). Tripling of the tax assessment is therefore likelier than

In alluding to the tenth labor of Hercules, which he considered unquestionably the greatest of all the hero's feats,²⁹ Sidonius was pursuing an additional plan. He hoped to gain public backing for the emperor's expedition against the Vandals.³⁰ Majorian's crossing of the Alps secured him a place in Silius Italicus's *Punica* alongside Hannibal as a successor to Hercules.³¹ Majorian's intention was to follow in Hercules's footsteps to the world's western limits and win back what was now the basis of Geiseric's power, the province of Africa, currently occupied by the Vandals; the fight he faced—like that of Q. Fulvius Flaccus (first consulship in 237 BCE) during the siege of Capua in the Second Punic War and of the emperor Maximian upon whom was bestowed the cognomen *Herculius*—ranked equal with that of Hercules against Geryon.³² By early 458, the year of Sidonius's appeal, the campaign against Geiseric had become central to Majorian's policy of ensuring “that Carthage ceases waging war against Italy.”³³ But for his campaign in Spain and Africa the emperor needed the support of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy led by Sidonius. With a subtle allusion to the political imperative, slipped into a manipulative web of mythological imagery, Sidonius defined not only his importance for the success of the expedition but also his significance as poet-god: Hercules too, after aiming his bow at Phoebus Apollo, needed the help of the sun-god in order to cross Oceanus, in the opposite direction, to Erytheia (Cadiz) and kill Geryon.³⁴

quadrupling; see Anderson 1936, 1: 214 note 1, but note Mathisen's (1991b, 180–81 note 55) different interpretation, based on *Nov. Maior.* 2 (10 March 458), which states to the effect that taxes must be paid “in three installments per year” (*trina per annum vice*). On Stesichoros's Geryon, monster and hero, and his *Geryoneis*, see Eisenfeld 2018.

²⁹ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.13–14: *Nulla tamen fusa prior est Geryone pugna, / uni tergeminum cui tulit ille caput*. During the imperial era, Geryon was depicted only in the cycle of Hercules's feats; see Brize 1988, 190. According to Eisenfeld 2018, the *Geryoneis* is anticipating Heracles's future Olympian trajectory.

³⁰ As in the verse panegyric to Majorian; see Heather 2006, 397–98.

³¹ But from Italy to Spain, Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 5.510–52, especially 510–13: *Iam tempore brumae / Alpes marmoreas . . . primus pede carpis . . .* Compare with Sil. *Pun.* 2.354–57: *Per saxa nivesque . . . per caelum est qui pandet iter. Pudet Hercule tritas desperare vias laudemque timere secundam.*

³² Sil. *Pun.* 13.200–203, on Fulvius's labor (see also Galinsky 1972, 160–62): *Qualis Atlantico memoratur litore quondam / monstrum Geryones immane tricorporis irae, / cui tres in pugna dextrae varia arma gerebant*. On Q. Fulvius Flaccus, four times consul, see Briscoe 1989, 54–55, 524–27; on Maximian, see Hardie 2019, 212.

³³ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 5.348–49 (spoken by the personification of the province Africa): . . . *ultorem mihi redde, precor, ne dimicet ultra / Carthago Italiam contra*. See Montone 2013.

³⁴ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.13–14 (quoted at note 29 above). To this end, Helios lent Heracles his divine vessel, the golden bowl; see Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.106 (5.10.1)–2.109 (5.10.7), especially 2.107 (5.10.5): *θερόμενος δὲ ὑπὸ Ἡλίου κατὰ τὴν πορείαν, τὸ τόξον ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐνέτεινεν. ὁ δὲ τὴν ἀνδρείαν αὐτοῦ θαυμάσας χρύσειον ἔδωκε δέπας, ἐν ᾧ τὸν Ὠκεανὸν διεπέρασε*. See Galinsky 1972, 20–21 and Eisenfeld 2018, 94–97, with West 1997, 463–71 on the motif's universality.

In May 460 Majorian became the last emperor to lead an army into Hispania Carthaginiensis, where he planned to cross to Africa with 300 ships assembled between Illici (Elche) and Carthago Nova (Cartagena).³⁵ Sidonius found models in the political program and portraiture of the imperial era: coins minted then had borne the legend *Herculi Gaditano*, depicted the struggle with Geryon and celebrated the ruler as a “new Hercules” and *pacator orbis* who was bringing the world a new Golden Age.³⁶ Majorian, to whom the petition is addressed, variously portrayed as Hercules the Savior (σωτήρ)³⁷ and as Marsyas, promiser of immunity, the landowners of Lyon, and posterity, which witnessed Majorian’s downfall—all these become wanderers between two worlds, real and imaginary.

Sidonius’s strategy of humbling himself and his bizarre visualization of himself as the poet-god facing the cruel death at the hands of Marsyas, with his Muse forced into silence and mendicancy, proved successful.³⁸ While on the face of it engaged—with grim humor—in acquainting the emperor with his concept of “the unfeasibility of poetry in a crumbling world,”³⁹ Sidonius was simultaneously paving the way for a compromise between himself, Majorian and the citizens of Lyon. As Hernández Lobato has convincingly pointed out, this was an attempt to strike a new balance between art and power.⁴⁰ But a brief consideration of the panegyric to Majorian may lead to a clearer perspective on the issue: like Augustus rewarding Tityrus, Majorian gave back to his poet Sidonius his life (*vita*) and his land (*agri*), and to his Muse her power of song (*laus*), a restitution attested later that year by the 603 hexameters of the praise for the emperor (*Carm.* 4.11-14 and 5.3).⁴¹ In return for his pardon

³⁵ On the destruction of the fleet and the disadvantageous peace treaty with Geiseric, see Heather 2006, 398–99; compare Henning 1999, 235 on the date.

³⁶ On the Geryon on the reverse of Postumus’s billon *denarius*, see Drexler 1890, 1638; on Hercules as an identification figure for Alexander the Great, Commodus (see Ath. 12.537, the Rome portrait with Hercules’s attributes), and Maximian, see Anguissola 2014, 128–30 and Hardie 2019, 211–12.

³⁷ For example, SEG 41.541: dedication to *Heracles Soter* at Kassope, from around 129 BCE. On Heracles as “agent of the cosmic order” in Hesiod and Stesichoros, see Haubold 2005 and Eisenfeld 2018; on the evidence in Roman literature, see Galinsky 1972, 16, 126–27, 134 and Hardie 2019, 211–14.

³⁸ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 5.574–85, especially 584–85: . . . *veniens tamen omnia tecum / restituís*. See Mathisen 1993, 54 on tax relief for Lyon.

³⁹ Hernández Lobato 2017, 283.

⁴⁰ Hernández Lobato 2012, chapter 4, especially 219–21 stresses the mutual dependency of poet and emperor, when it comes to saving Roman civilization from decline.

⁴¹ See the *praefatio* of the panegyric to Majorian, Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 4.3: *Praestitit adflicto [Tityro] ius vitae Caesar et agri . . .*; 4.5–6: *Sed rus concessum dum largo in principe laudat, / caelum pro terris rustica Musa dedit*; 4.13–14: *Serviat ergo tibi servati lingua poetae / atque meae vitae laus tua sit pretium*. Sidonius was pardoned by Majorian before delivering his panegyric to the emperor (*Carm.* 5.598–99): *Memini, cum parcere velles, / hic tibi vultus erat*. See Stevens 1933, 181–85;

and for the tax relief, Sidonius offered him his services as a poet, promising to make all the heroic deeds of Majorian's glorious triumphs immortal for posterity.⁴² The poet's wish that Majorian might wear the "purple redipped in Sidonian dye" (*Sidonio recocta fuco . . . purpura*) for many years to come is a double-entendre. The pun linking his own name with that of the city of Sidon, famous for its purple fabrics, enables Sidonius to refer simultaneously to Majorian's imperial status, and consequent prerogative of the purple *paludamentum*, and to the highlights (*purpurae*) of the elaborate speech with which Sidonius will endow his imperial panegyric to Majorian after the granting of debt relief.⁴³ Sidonius's Muse, Thalia, can now revert unburdened to her true vocation composing pastoral poetry in the style of Virgil,⁴⁴ and her poet once again sings bucolic tunes like Tityrus representing Virgil in the Eclogues. A god, the emperor, had given him back his leisure (*otium*) and his freedom (*libertas*).⁴⁵

Sidonius's Satire (Carm. 12): The Jestng Muse and the Aesthetic Dimension of Silence

In designing his famous xenophobic portrait of the Burgundians in poem 12, no less than in the mythologically charged petition to Majorian on behalf of Lyon, Sidonius combines suspense-maintaining strategies: ambiguity and obfuscation, self-deprecation and humor, playfulness and deception. The requirement was a wedding poem for the *vir clarissimus* Catullinus, an ode to

Mathisen 1991b, 181; Harries 1994, 87; and Kelly 2020, 169. The reverse chronological order (Loyen 1942, 61; Loyen 1960, 1: 188 note 7; Anderson 1936, 1: 215 note 1) is erroneous.

⁴² Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.31–34: *Quod si contuleris tuo poetae, / mandem perpetuis legenda fastis / quaecumque egregiis geris triumphis*. On "epic verse panegyric on Majorian," see Gillett 2012, 276.

⁴³ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.26–27: *Sic te Sidonio recocta fuco / multos purpura vestiat per annos*. Compare *Ep.* 2.10.1 on "all the purple ornaments of aristocratic diction" (*omnes nobilium sermonum purpurae*) and *Carm.* 22 *ep.* 6 on "many . . . purple patches of stock phrases" (*multis . . . purpureis locorum communium pannis*). Here, note the contrast with *usualis sermo*, "ordinary language" (*Ep.* 4.10.2); see Harries 1994, 2–3 and Mratschek 2020a, 237; compare Hernández Lobato 2012, 215: *Sidonius poeta = murex Sidonius*.

⁴⁴ On Thalia, the muse of pastoral poetry and comedy, see Walde 2002, 236; she is depicted with shepherd's crook (*pedum*) and mask (Lancha and Faedo 1994, 1027 and 1032), rarely with lyre (Queyrel 1992, 661.15, 17).

⁴⁵ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 4.3–6 (see note 41 above), especially 4.1–2: *Tityrus ut quondam patulae sub tegmine fagi / voveret inflatos murmura per calamos . . .* Compare with Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1–2 (*Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena*), 1.6 (*O Meliboe, deus nobis haec otia fecit*), and 1.26–27 (*Et quae tanta fuit Romam tibi causa videndi? / Libertas . . .*). On the panegyric to Majorian, see Rousseau 2000, 252; on Virgil in the role of a shepherd and *poeta creator*, see Volk 2009, 75, 80, with Anderson 1936, 1: 58 notes 1–2. On the emperor as Tityrus's god, see Holzberg 2016, 164; on bucolic leisure, see Keith 2016, 275–77.

Venus in the artful Catullan style, in light-hearted Fescennine verse. The pun on the addressee's name as the diminutive form of Catullus and the link with the celebrated Catullan wedding poems (61, 62, and 64, the epyllion of Peleus and Thetis) as well as to those of Sidonius himself (*Carm.* 10–11, 14–15) were noted by Henke.⁴⁶ The resulting piece was a humorous satire targeting the Burgundians, who occupied Lyon for a second time in 461.⁴⁷ Physically tormented by the sound of the Germanic idiom and by having to incessantly extol the singing of the gluttonous Burgundians,⁴⁸ Sidonius suffers from writer's block: "Chased away by the barbarian plectra, [his] Thalia has spurned the six-footed exercise ever since she beheld those seven-foot-tall patrons."⁴⁹ It is in conscious allusion to Ovid's aphasia in exile in barbarous Tomis that Sidonius here depicts himself as an exile in his own homeland.⁵⁰

These inter-literary allusions apart, the "failure" of the wedding poem displays virtuosic multiple coding in the punning with (metrical) feet and genres. Thalia flees from the din of the heavyweight Burgundian epic poetry in six feet—hexameters, their dimensions exceeded only by those of the seven-foot-tall (2.10 m) barbarians,⁵¹ whereas the poetry that she and Sidonius create consists of well-turned Phalaecian hendecasyllables with no more than five feet. The scholarly Muse of light entertainment who in Virgil's sixth Eclogue attends festivals as a sensitive Muse and in Horace's Odes (*Carm.* 4.6) is one of the Graces and directs the festive choirs of *Roma nobilis*, is repelled by the cacophony of heroic epics for barbarian rulers.⁵²

As already observed by Harich-Schwarzbauer and Hindermann, the Muse here shows herself to be no remote divine being but rather a proactive ally against ignorance and barbarism. The trigger seems to have been the obligation (*munus*) imposed on Sidonius as a wealthy senator to provide

⁴⁶ Henke 2008, 165; Harich-Schwarzbauer 2014, 133–48; and Schlapbach in this volume; for a different view, see Consolino 1974, 423–26 and Hernández Lobato 2012, 141–42 and 2017, 281–82, referring to Catull. 1.1–2.

⁴⁷ Kaufmann 1995, 141–44; Stevens 1933, 66–67; Loyen 1960, 1: xvii note 2; and Kelly 2020, 171 on place and dating.

⁴⁸ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.3–7: *Inter crinigeras situm catervas / et Germanica verba sustinentem, / laudantem tetrico subinde vultu / quod Burgundio cantat esculentus, / infundens acido comam butyro? Burgundio is pars pro toto.*

⁴⁹ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.9–12: *Ex hoc barbaricis abacta plectris / spernit senipedem stilum Thalia, / ex quo septipedes videt patronos.*

⁵⁰ Ov. *Pont.* 3.7.1: *Verba mihi desunt eadem tam saepe roganti . . .* See, convincingly, Henke 2008, 162.

⁵¹ Schwitter 2015, 264.

⁵² Heroic poetry in Latin at the court of Gundobad is attested by Avit. *Ep.* 53 (MGH [AA] 81.29, translated in Shanzer and Wood 2002, 316–17); for a dissenting view, see Smolak 2008, 49, who links the hexameters with the epithalamium.

rations for a ten-strong contingent (*contubernium*) of the Burgundian army.⁵³ Here, the reluctant host remarks sardonically and with Homer in mind, was a task that would have defeated even Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians.⁵⁴ Alcinous had, after all, entertained the shipwrecked Odysseus, a stranger and guest (ξένος), and the entire court, young and old—and numerous—in his palace and had honored them with heroic songs of the Trojan War.⁵⁵ The rhetorical device of *enargeia* or compellingly vivid narration transforms the listeners into spectators at the banquet. By recalling Homeric hospitality as he relives the unwanted billeting of the Burgundians at his expense, Sidonius confronts Catullinus, his learned addressee, with an “Anti-Phaeacis” *en miniature*.

Appearing in it as a humorous caricature of Alcinous and a contrasting character, Sidonius acts the part of an elderly grandfather (*ut vetulus patris parens*) or foster-father (*nutricis vir*), all but overwhelmed by the number and physical size of the diners, emphasized by the alliteration of *tot tantique*.⁵⁶ Like the Alcinous of Juvenal’s fifteenth Satire when Odysseus regales him during the feast with tales of Egyptians devouring human flesh, he reacts with shock as he contemplates the eating habits of his unwelcome guests.⁵⁷ The cultural gap is illustrated by using stereotypical Homeric images of barbarians to characterize the Burgundians: here they are set off as “giants” against Sidonius’s peers, just as the Cyclops of the *Odyssey* are the antipode of the hypercivilized Phaeacians:⁵⁸ seven feet tall, their exuberantly long hair greased with rancid butter rather than fragrant oils.⁵⁹ At Alcinous’s royal table the meal is served in the prescribed manner and harmoniously accompanied by the lyre;⁶⁰ in Lyon, even in the early morning, the barbarous table manners—belching, mouth odors, exhalation—are backed by the stench of ten garlic- and

⁵³ Goffart 1980, 245 for military “tentful” (*contubernium*); Loyen 1963, 446 for Burgundian troops; Kaufmann 1995, 142 note 373, and Thompson 1956, 68 for *hospites*.

⁵⁴ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.19: . . . *quot vix Alcinoi culina ferret*. See Anderson 1936, 1: 213 note 1.

⁵⁵ Hom. *Od.* 8.57–64, especially 57–58: πλῆντο δ’ ἄρ’ αἴθουσαι τε καὶ ἔρκεα, καὶ δόμοι ἀνδρῶν / ἀγρομένων. πολλοὶ δ’ ἄρ’ ἔσαν, νέοι ἡδὲ παλαιοί.

⁵⁶ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.16–18: . . . *quem non ut vetulum patris parentem / nutricis virum die nec orto / tot tantique petunt* . . .

⁵⁷ Juv. 15.13–16: *Carnibus humanis vesci licet. Attonito cum / tale super cenam facinus narraret Ulixes / Alcino, bilem aut risum fortasse quibusdam / moverat ut mendax aretalagus*. On cannibalism as a motif of barbaric *feritas* (15.32) and in contrast to Greek and Roman acculturation and *paideia*, see Uden 2015, 210–13 and Woolf 1998, 54–60.

⁵⁸ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.18: . . . *tot tantique petunt simul Gigantes*. See also Hom. *Od.* 7.206: ὥς περ Κύκλωπές τε καὶ ἄγρια φύλα Γιγάντων. See Grethlein 2017, 136–37.

⁵⁹ On stereotypes of the barbarians, see Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.3–7. See Mratschek 2020b, 232–33, and on barbarian eating habits, see Shanzer 2001, 231 and Rousseau 2000, 257.

⁶⁰ Hom. *Od.* 8.98–99.

onion-laden meals and the strumming of what barbarians call music.⁶¹ The Muse who so “exceedingly loves” Homer’s divinely inspired bard Demodocus and bestows on him such “sweet songs” that Odysseus is moved to tears,⁶² is silent (*tacet*) here in Sidonius, repelled by Burgundian vulgarity.⁶³ Like her *alter ego*, the *poeta doctus* whose sensitive eyes, ears, and nose suffer from an impaired perception of the world around, she is afflicted by the intimidating spectacle, din, and stench of the foreigners.

The dominance of the Burgundians in every field of life (including art and hospitality) has reduced the poet and his Muse, who simply watch and listen, to a purely receptive role that admits no divine inspiration to beget Fescennine verses for Venus. Catullinus alone, the addressee, has the good fortune to be spared this, as Sidonius’s ironic *macarismos* shows.⁶⁴ The tension between literary form and semantics resulting from the satirical technique of invective and exaggeration warped epithalamium into satire, and the poem was “broken” (*poema . . . fractum*).⁶⁵ A polemic against the forged alliance with the Burgundian “protectors” had been born.

However, even if immortalized “in letters of gold,” satire was not welcomed at Majorian’s court.⁶⁶ The issue arose from a private joke between Sidonius and his current client about an anonymous satire directed against the former prefect Paeonius. Catullinus had ascribed authorship of the satire to Sidonius, who consequently, in 461, came under attack from the aggrieved Paeonius.⁶⁷ Over dinner with Majorian in Arles, however, Sidonius had turned the tables by unmasking his opponent as an informant (*delator et index*)⁶⁸ and then quick-wittedly defusing the fraught situation by humorous means:

⁶¹ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.9 (*barbaricis . . . plectris*). 12.14–15: . . . *allia sordidumque cepe / ructant mane novo decem apparatus . . .*

⁶² Hom. *Od.* 8.63–64: [ἄοιδόν] τὸν περὶ Μοῦσ’ ἐφίλησε . . . δίδου δ’ ἡδεῖαν ἀοιδίην.

⁶³ Full details Hernández Lobato 2017, 278–83.

⁶⁴ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.12–13: *Felices oculos tuos et aures / felicemque libet vocare nasum . . .*

⁶⁵ Hernández Lobato 2017, 282–83. On intergeneric confrontation and tension, see Harrison 2007, 17.

⁶⁶ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 1.11.3, with Anderson 1936, 1: 398 note 1 and Köhler 1995, 302: . . . *clamare coepit [Catullinus] dignum poema quod perennandum apicibus auratis iuste tabula rostralis acciperet aut etiam Capitolina*. I read it as a witty comparison of satire with official documents preserved in perpetuity in the *tabularium* located part-way down the Capitol hill, not far from the orators’ rostrum. Golden letters (*litterae aureae*) or gilded bronze letters (*litterae auratae*) were used to display Chilon’s words of wisdom in Delphi (Plin. *NH* 7.119), Nero’s verses in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus (Suet. *Ner.* 10), and the prestigious epigraphy for the emperors as an eternal memorial, *ad aeternam memoriam* (CTh 14.4.4). On the links between shiny letters and their poetic reflection, see Schwitter 2019.

⁶⁷ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 1.11, excellently analyzed by Harries 1994, 93–95, and also Rousseau 2000, 252–53. See also Schwitter in this volume.

⁶⁸ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 1.11.8 with the question: . . . *utrumnam ille delator aut index, qui satiram me scripsisse confinxit, et perscripsisse confinxerit?* Thus Harries 1994, 94, contra Stevens 1933, 54.

he promised not to further pursue Paeonius—himself now the target of a counter-charge, “the sword to his neck,”⁶⁹—with satire.⁷⁰ Emperor Majorian was already dead during the second occupation of the Burgundians; he had been taken prisoner on Ricimer’s orders on 2 August 461 and beheaded five days later.⁷¹

Faced with the Burgundian war songs in heroic hexameters, Thalia, the unwarlike Muse of festivities and comedy, a learned figure (*docta*), has turned into a Catullian *patrona virgo* who rejects her poet’s new barbarian “patrons.”⁷² Authoritative image, contempt, silence, and polemics characterize the rejective stance of the jesting Muse (*Musa . . . iocata*).⁷³ As shown by Hernández Lobato, the *recusatio* and its gestures, sudden silence in the face of official criticism and flight, are the immediately apparent features of this picture of failed knowledge transfer, and they justify the poet’s inability to perform.⁷⁴ What remains is a fragmented and seemingly unfinished “non-poem.”⁷⁵ But that is not all.

On the metapoetic level, what Catullinus received from Sidonius was not an innocuous wedding poem but a politically incorrect satire targeting Gundioc, king of Burgundy, who had reoccupied Lyon after the fall of Majorian and had been appointed to replace Aegidius as *magister militum Galliarum*.⁷⁶ Gundioc, married to a sister of Ricimer, made Lyon his new capital and seized the provinces of Gallia Lugdunensis I, now Burgundy, and, in 463, Gallia Viennensis, the Rhône corridor.⁷⁷ Sidonius’s twist in the last line is covertly a subversive criticism of the regime, its focus the final extinction of the genre under Majorian’s barbarian successors. By abruptly

⁶⁹ On grounds of false accusation (*calumnia*), see Majorian’s speech and Sidonius’s observation (Sid. Ap. Ep. 1.11.15): *Nec satis defuit quin gelarent tamquam ad exsertum praebere cervices [Paeonii] iussa mucronem*. See Harries 1994, 95.

⁷⁰ Sid. Ap. Ep. 1.11.16: *Dixi ad extremum pressus oratu procerum conglobatorum, sciret conatibus suis [Paeonii] versu nil reponendum . . .*

⁷¹ On the dating of Majorian’s death, see PLRE 2: 703, “Fl. Iulius Valerius Maiorianus,” with Heather 2006, 399.

⁷² Catull. 1.9 (the Muse as patroness): *Quod [ibellum], o patrona virgo, / plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*. On the rejection of grander poetry by the unwarlike Muses, see Miller 2009, 88, evoking Callimachean traditions (88, 300–301).

⁷³ Sid. Ap. Carm. 12.20–23 (see also note 78 below).

⁷⁴ Hernández Lobato 2012, 139–57.

⁷⁵ Hernández Lobato 2017, 282.

⁷⁶ On the deposition of Aegidius in 461/462, see PLRE 2: 12, “Aegidius.” The Burgundian king (PLRE 2: 523, “Gundiocus”) is attested around 462/463 as *vir illustris magister militum (per Gallias?)*; see also *Epistulae Arelatenses genuinae* 19 (MGH Epp. 3). See Shanzer and Wood 2002, 15–16, with Harries 1994, 224 (“in recognition of his federate status”) and 247–48 (Sidonius’s relations with Aegidius).

⁷⁷ Harries 1994, 137; Delaplace 2015, 236; Shanzer and Wood 2002, 438 (map of “Burgundian Kingdom”), 16, 439 (marriage and stemma of the “Burgundian Royal Family”).

silencing the poet and his allusive verse after no more than a few hendecasyllables, “so that no-one can call even these lines satire,” “the jesting Muse” shields her protégé from the perils of a further charge of lèse-majesté.⁷⁸ In so doing, she vies with Ovid’s *musa iocosa*, who was unable to prevent the banishment of her poet.⁷⁹

Sidonius’s Obituary on Lampridius (Ep. 8.11): The Muse as Servant and the Emotional Dimension of Silence

The Trauma: Murder in the Style of Pliny

In a third instance it is the poet who silences the Muse. Being the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne, she is endowed with creative power and the faculty of memory, and she acts as an allegory for the self-reflexive poem itself. The Lampridius murder, the theme of Sidonius’s obituary, is mirrored in the author’s emotions and physical reactions. He is guided in his presentation by Quintilian’s rhetoric, according to which that person is considered to be the most powerful in the expression of emotions (*in adfectibus potentissimus*) by whom “the images of absent things (φαντασίαι) are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them actually with our eyes and have them physically present to us.”⁸⁰ Sidonius’s broken chain of behavior (trauma-schema) and self-perception conform to the modern neurological definition of psychological trauma as a

vital discrepancy experience between threatening situational factors and the individual’s coping possibilities, which is accompanied by feelings of helplessness and defenseless abandonment and accordingly causes a lasting shock to one’s self- and world-comprehension.⁸¹

It is the flashbacks in his poem (*Carm.* 35) that suddenly trigger Sidonius’s memory of the trauma.⁸² The poet in the role of Apollo Musagetes is overwhelmed by his own art while quoting, in his obituary on Lampridius that

⁷⁸ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 12.20–23: *Sed iam Musa tacet tenetque habenas / paucis hendecasyllabis iocata, / ne quisquam satiram vel hos vocaret.* The genre of satire imposed hexameter form, not hendecasyllabic meter; see Smolak 2008, 49. On the Muses’ guardianship of the poet (for example, Hor. *Carm.* 3.4), see Miller 2009, 303–4, 306, 310.

⁷⁹ Ov. *Rem. am.* 387: *Musa iocosa.* Sidonius (*Carm.* 23.158–61) knew the cause of Ovid’s banishment; see Fielding 2017, 95.

⁸⁰ Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.29; 6.2.32 relating to visual effects (*enargeia, illustratio, evidentia*). See Halliwell 2017 on the poetics of emotional expression.

⁸¹ Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 84.

⁸² Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 170; see also Mratschek 2020a, 257 on his blending of past and present.

was sent to the rhetor Lupus, from a humorous billeting-letter (*metatoria pagina*) for his now deceased poet friend. In this he had instructed his favorite Muse, Thalia, to put aside her lyre for a while and travel around as a messenger, with tied-up robe and sandaled feet, to find a lodging for him in Bordeaux.⁸³ But the carefree ambience of the “Phoebus Society” of old in Bordeaux, an intellectuals’ playground in which landowners and men of letters felt among friends to the extent of jocularly devising nicknames for each other such as Dionysus (Pontius Leontius), Apollo (Sidonius Apollinaris), and Orpheus (Lampridius),⁸⁴ has been shattered by the irruption of violent death.⁸⁵ The verses of his roaming Muse have brought back to Sidonius the memory of Lampridius’s cruel fate. Abruptly cut short by the poet’s passionate lament, Thalia falls silent.

The outburst of emotion from the “leader of Muses” abruptly breaks off the hendecasyllabic verses of her poem and, by the rhetorical device of interjection, turns it into a prose epitaph for his dead friend: “So bleak the necessity of being born, so wretched the necessity of living, the necessity of dying so cruel!”⁸⁶ The sense prevailing that aggression was in the air at this turning-point of the eras, and it might on the slightest pretext break loose in naked violence; it is mirrored as a projection in Sidonius’s presentation of crime and his reactions to it. Sidonius’s poem inserted in the epistle (8.11 *Carm.* 35) was only a “remembering of these jests” from a distant past, “inappropriate at a time of mourning” (*tempus dolendi*), and consciously contrasted with his contemporary present.⁸⁷

The poet and rhetor Lampridius, adept like Orpheus in all literary genres, a senator and very much in favor with the Visigothic king, Euric,

⁸³ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.3 (*commonitorium* to Thalia), verses 18–19 (*memento / Orpheum [Lampridium] visere*) and 30: *Dic: Phoebus* [Apollo, i.e. Sidonius Apollinaris] *venit* . . . Sidonius is cast as a “new Apollo” (compare Ep. 8.9.5.6–10) and a rival of Apollo (Ep. 5.17.9); see Mratschek 2017, 317–18 and Stähle in this volume.

⁸⁴ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.3 (from 487/488): *Hic me quondam, ut inter amicos ioca, Phoebum vocabat ipse a nobis vatis Odrysi nomine acceptus*. See Mathisen 1991a, 29–43 on the circle of Bordeaux; on the poetical *agon*, see Schwitter in this volume; see Wolff 2015, 193, 196 on the structure and mixture of epistolary genres in Ep. 8.11, and Mratschek 2017, 317–18 for a new reading of the poem it contains.

⁸⁵ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.3: . . . *cuius* [i.e. *Lampridii*] *interitus amorem meum summis conficeret angoribus, etiamsi non eum rebus humanis vis impacta rapuisset*. Compare Plin. Ep. 3.14.1: *Rem atrocem nec tantum epistula dignam Larcius Macedo, vir praetorius, a servis suis passus est*.

⁸⁶ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.4: *O necessitas abiecta nascendi, vivendi misera, dura moriendi!* See similar laments about the fragility of the human condition (*fragilitatis humanae miseratio*), for example, in Plin. Ep. 3.7.11 (on Silius Italicus): *Quid enim tam circumcicum, tam breve quam hominis vita longissima?*

⁸⁷ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.2: *Intempestiva . . . recordatio iocorum tempore dolendi*. See Kelly 2020, 178. The letter is from around 478, the poem from the 460s.

who had restored his lands to him,⁸⁸ had been strangled in his own home by the hands of his own slaves: like a common criminal, he had died from suffocation with his windpipe compressed (*obstructo anhelitu gutture obstructo*).⁸⁹ Sidonius's historical *exempla* of Roman public enemies (*hostes publici*) stress the cruelty of this manner of execution. Those who had died in the same way included P. Cornelius Lentulus Sura and fellow-conspirators against Catiline; Jugurtha, the Numidian king, who had rebelled against Rome; and the suspected conspirator Seianus—a covert allusion to Lampridius's punishment for switching his allegiance to the victor, Euric?⁹⁰ The terrifying catalogue of all who were executed in the Tullianum prison for high treason is corrected only at the last moment by the addition of a more appropriate comparison, with the unexplained death of the younger Scipio, victor over Carthage and Numantia. This death proves to be *factum paricidale*, a crime perpetrated on the *pater familias*, as Scipio was murdered, like Lampridius, in his own home.⁹¹

The *peripeteia* dividing the Sidonius letter into two parts consists of diametrically opposed and intrusive remembered images. In contrast to the light-hearted poetic reminiscence of the literary circle, the attack on Lampridius is described in prose. It is an artistic remake of and pendant to Pliny's account in a prose letter (*Ep.* 3.14) of the murder of the ex-praetor Larcius Macedo,⁹² but the topic is magnified.⁹³ Visualization strategies of murder are designed in compliance with the rhetorical instructions of Pliny's mentor Quintilian,

⁸⁸ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.9.1 (on Lampridius and Euric): *Sed hoc tu munificentia regia satis abutens iam securus post munera facis*. See Harries 1994, 240–41 and Mratschek 2017, 316–17; compare Gualandri 1979, 148–49 and Wolff 2015, 193 on Lampridius's ability to write in various genres.

⁸⁹ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.11 (Lampridius): *Nam domi pressus strangulatusque servorum manibus obstructo anhelitu gutture obstructo, ne dicam Lentuli Iugurthae atque Seiani, certe Numantini Scipionis exitu periit*.

⁹⁰ See above (note 88). Note the praeteritio *ne dicam*. Compare Sall. *Cat.* 55.5 (on Lentulus): *Vindices rerum capitalium . . . laqueo gulam fregere*. See also Liv. *Per.* 67.4: *In triumpho C. Mari ductus ante currum eius Iugurtha cum duobus filiis et in carcere necatus est*. Compare Plut. *Vit. Mar.* 12.2–4; Claud. *De VI Cos. Hon.* 381 (Iugurtha in the Tullianum); Ios. *Ant.* 18 6.6 (181–82); Cass. Dio 58.11.4–5; Tac. *Ann.* 5.9 (execution of L. Aelius Seianus and his children). Sidonius must not have read Plutarch to know Iugurtha's and Scipio's fate, thus Zoeter 2018, 27, 99–100.

⁹¹ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.11 (on Lampridius). Scipio's conflict with the Gracchae led to circulation of rumors about his sudden death in 129 BCE (App. *B. Civ.* 1.20: μετὰ δέϊπνον) and conjecture that he had been strangled by his enemies (Plut. *Vit. Rom.* 27.8). Among those suspected were the women of his family; see Astin 1967, 240–41.

⁹² Thus, for example, Wolff 2015, 193 among other places; it is not a mere “imitation,” however, but a meaningful differentiation from his model. On Sidonius, *artifex lector* of Pliny, see Mratschek 2020a, 257–59; on his new epistolographical canon Gibson 2020.

⁹³ By means of the rhetorical figure of *amplificatio*. On this epistolary practice, see White 2010, 95–96 and Gibson 2020.

binding together author and audience in a shared process of imagining and intense identification with the victim.⁹⁴ The historical background was an exemplary punishment par excellence. Tacitus describes in his *Annales* (14.42–43, especially 14.43.2) how the murder in 61, under Nero, of the urban prefect L. Pedanius Secundus was followed by the killing of 400 slaves in the victim's city palace—a judgment rejected by Pliny's forensic argumentation for exile (*Ep.* 8.14.12) in a trial following a second contemporary murder five years after that of Macedo.⁹⁵ The interplay with the role model invites the readers to compare for themselves.⁹⁶ The crime story in Sidonius runs parallel with the account given in Pliny: both victims were violent-tempered, sadistic characters;⁹⁷ both had been warned, by omens or horoscopes;⁹⁸ both were found lying face down on the floor pavement.⁹⁹ Pliny's Larcus Macedo also seized one of the slaves by the throat.¹⁰⁰ He had lain motionless on the floor, giving the impression of being quite dead; but he was only in a state of suspended animation, and he duly saw the slaves punished.¹⁰¹

Improbable, thought the enlightened Sidonius, as he read Pliny's account of Macedo's apparent death. Mental visualization of a murder victim can lead

⁹⁴ Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.31 with Webb 2016, 210–14: “Will the victim not be terrified when he finds himself surrounded and cry out or plead or run away? Will I not see the blow and the victim falling to the ground? Will his blood, his pallor, his dying groans not be impressed in my mind?”

⁹⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 14.43.2 (L. Pedanius Secundus): . . . *consulari viro domi suae interfecto per insidias serviles* . . . Compare 14.44.2 and 4: Senators as *tuti inter anxios, non inulti inter nocentes—omne magnum exemplum* (punitive example to all). On the murder of Afranius Dexter, consul in 105 (Plin. *Ep.* 8.14), see Whitton 2010.

⁹⁶ As in Pliny's panegyric, a “model for the genre” of late antique panegyrics, see Rees 2012, 28; Kelly 2015; compare with Genette 1987, 9 and Peltari 2014, 162, 46–47 on paratexts.

⁹⁷ Sid. *Ap. Ep.* 8.11.4 (on Lampridius): *Leviter excitabatur . . . adstruebamque meliora, quatenus in pectore eius iracundia materialiter regnans, quia naevo crudelitatis fuerat infecta, praetextu saltem severitatis emacularetur*. See also Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.1: . . . *superbus alioqui dominus et saevus*.

⁹⁸ Portents of doom in Sid. *Ap. Ep.* 8.11.9: the blood-red horoscope (*sanguinaria genitura*) and the reddening of the planet by bloody flames (*cruentis ignibus inrubescentes*). On the consultation of African astrologers 8.11.9–10: *Illud sane non solum culpabile in viro fuit, sed peremptorium, quod mathematicos quondam de vitae fine consuluit . . . hunc nostrum temerarium futurorum sciscitatorem et diu frustra tergiversantem tempus et qualitas praedictae mortis innexit*. Compare Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.6–8, especially 6: *Cum in publico Romae lavaretur, notabilis atque etiam, ut exitus docuit, ominosa res accidit*.

⁹⁹ Sid. *Ap. Ep.* 8.11.12: . . . *quia post facinus ipsi latrones ad pavimentum conversa defuncti ora pronaverant* . . . Compare Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.2: *Abiciunt [servi] in fervens pavimento, ut experirentur, an viveret*.

¹⁰⁰ Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.2: *Repente eum [Larcium Macedonem] servi circumsistunt, alius fauces invadit . . . alius os verberat*.

¹⁰¹ Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.2–3: *Ille [Macedo], sive quia non sentiebat, sive quia se non sentire simulabat, immobilis et extensus fidem peractae mortis implevit . . . Ita et vocibus excitatus et recreatus loci frigore sublati oculis agitatoque corpore vivere se . . . confitetur*.

to a psycho-traumatological phenomenon known as “self-doubling of the subject.” The brain’s experiencing center detaches itself from the empirical self and sees the frightening scene with the eyes of an external observer.¹⁰² With the observation of a forensic pathologist, Sidonius describes the physical state of the corpse. He mocks Pliny’s fantastic tale of suspended animation with a rhetorical question:

Who can be so devoid of any human powers of perception, who so blind in both eyes, that he is unable to recognize at first glance whether a lifeless body bears the marks of violent death—cyanosis (*livida cutis*), the livid discoloration of the skin, and the protruding eyes (*oculi protuberantes*)?¹⁰³

In the Lampridius case, it was determined immediately that death was by strangulation. The murderer was secured at dawn, but the culprits turned the body face-down to simulate death from a sudden overwhelming hemorrhage (*sanguinis . . . superaestuans fluxus*).¹⁰⁴ And it was by means of a Virgilian, not Plinian, allusion that the crime scene with its dark blood stains was characterized as an accursed site like the tomb of Polydorus.¹⁰⁵ An educated reader typical of the elite audiences catered for by Lupus and Sidonius would have been familiar with the narrative techniques and stances of the authors and would have been able to see by comparison where Sidonius chose to deviate from his model, thus outdoing his original by introducing his personal assessment and a competing self-definition. However, the murder of Lampridius eventually proves not to be the “bloodless death” that Hanaghan postulates: the horoscope omen of a bloody nativity (*sanguinariae geniturae schema*) is indeed fulfilled—*after* the victim has died from asphyxiation—through the rupture of blood vessels resulting from penetration of the mucous membranes by subcutaneous hemorrhages.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² On depersonalization as a self-protection mechanism, see Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 85–87.

¹⁰³ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.11: *Nam quis ab hominum tam procul sensu, quis ita gemino obtutu eluminatus, qui exanimati cadavere inspecto non statim signa vitae colligeret extortae?*; 8.11.12: *Etenim protinus argumento fuere livida cutis, oculi protuberantes et in obruto vultu non minora irae vestigia quam doloris.*

¹⁰⁴ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.12 (see note 99 above): *Inventa est quidem terra tabo madefacta deciduo . . . tamquam sanguinis eum superaestuans fluxus exinanisset.* Compare 8.11.11 (on the murderer): . . . *quod nefas ipsum cum auctore facti parricidalis diluculo inventum.* Pliny’s Macedo (Ep. 3.14.4), however, was revived with difficulty but died within a few days (3.14.4).

¹⁰⁵ Note the alliteration *terra tabo* in Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.12. Compare Verg. *Aen.* 3.28–29 (Polydorus’ tomb): . . . *huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttae et terram tabo maculant.* See Zoeter’s quotation without any explanation at Zoeter 2018, 103.

¹⁰⁶ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.9 (see note 98 above). See also Hanaghan 2019, 124, who emphasizes the contrast between Lampridius’s horoscope and his “bloodless death.”

Emotional Overload and Self-definition

The well-read Sidonius was also familiar with Pliny's aphorism *non sine ultionis solacium*, according to which the victim had the consolation of being able to witness the execution and so be avenged during his lifetime (*vivus*), in a spectacle otherwise enjoyed only by the dead.¹⁰⁷ Sidonius knew the aphorism and told his readers that he knew it. As in Pliny, the prompt arrest led to the execution of the murderer and his accomplices,¹⁰⁸ but Sidonius's interpretation was different. The learned bishop's Christian riposte drew a clear line between himself and his classical model and found that Lampridius must be held responsible for his own death on grounds of having engaged in consultation of astrologers, a proscribed practice that also contravened the precepts of the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁹ Although Sidonius defines astrological prophecies as for the most part false and therefore delusory (*maxume falsa ideoque fallentia*), Lampridius was in a literal sense caught up by "the nature of the death prophesied for him" by the astrologers.¹¹⁰ Here an abrupt change of paradigm can be observed, for in his earlier life as a layman Sidonius had praised Anthedius, head of the Bordeaux circle, for his expertise in astrology, regarding it as a part of philosophy in the ancient education canon of *artes liberales*.¹¹¹ The avenging of the murder—as Sidonius, now a bishop, writes (*Ep.* 8.11.13)—benefits the living more than the dead. For "retribution is not a remedy but at best a solace." *Non est remedium sed solacium vindicari* was

¹⁰⁷ Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.4: *Ipse paucis diebus aegre fociatus [Macedo] non sine ultionis solacio decessit, ita vivus vindicatus, ut occisi solent.*

¹⁰⁸ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.11: *Haec in hac caede tristia minus, quod nefas ipsum cum auctore facti parricidalis diluculo inventum;* 8.11.12: *Sed protinus capto qui fuerat ipsius factionis fomes incensor antesignanus ceterisque complicibus oppressis.* Compare Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.4: *Quorum [servorum] magna pars comprehensa est, ceteri requiruntur.*

¹⁰⁹ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.9: *Illud non solum culpabile in viro fuit, sed peremptorium, quod mathematicos quondam de vitae fine consuluit;* 8.11.13: *Atque utinam hunc finem, dum inconsulte fidens vana consultat, non meruisset excipere! Nam quisque praesumpserit interdicta secreta vetita rimari, vereor huius modi catholicae fidei regulis exorbitaturum et effici dignum, in statum cuius respondeantur adversa, dum requiruntur illicita.* Exorbitare functioned as a typically Christian term; see Gualandri 1979, 118. Compare the warning of Caesarius of Arles (*Serm.* 13.3 [CCSL 103: 66–67]), "not to consult soothsayers" (*caraios aut aruspices et divinos vel sortilogos*), magicians, or diviners interpreting divine and human fate; see Bailey 2016, 123.

¹¹⁰ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.10: *... hunc nostrum temerarium futurorum sciscitatorem . . . tempus et qualitas praedictae mortis innexuit.* Wolff 2015, 194–95 rightly takes the view that astrology was a "character flaw" in Lampridius (also Hanaghan 2019, 121–25) and a "paradox" with regard to Sidonius, the friend of Anthedius (see note 111).

¹¹¹ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 22, *praef.* 2–3: *Illum scilicet Phoebum Anthedii mei perfamiliarem cuius collegio vir praefectus non modo musicos quosque verum etiam geometras, arithmeticos et astrologos disserendi arte supervenit.* See Demandt 2007, 568. Compare the listing of astrological terminology in *Ep.* 8.9, noted by Gualandri 1979, 153–54.

his creative riposte in the discourse with the Plinian quotation.¹¹² Lupus, the recipient, had had a rhetorical education;¹¹³ he and his aristocratic peers in the senatorial class or the episcopacy appreciated the distinction. But Sidonius's epistle, which looks at first sight like a simple warning of the dangers of astrology using the deserved death of Lampridius as a cautionary example, offers a deeper understanding of the author's self and his perception of the world around him.¹¹⁴

The letter's ending (*conclusio*) too is fundamentally different. Pliny announces that his letter was too short, and accordingly he includes as an addendum the evil portent of the same bath being the fateful scene first of a chance blow that almost knocked Macedo over, then of his murder.¹¹⁵ Sidonius converts Pliny's narrative prelude into what is essentially a portrait: in part a meaningful self-portrait of the author but in part also a portrait of the violent and frightening state of society that creates a framework for the murder via ring-composition.¹¹⁶ Unlike Pliny, he apologizes for the excessive length of his letter; and he also goes one better than his model by appending a bizarre punchline in the form of a metaphor: his empathy with his strangled friend (*amor*) ran so deep that his own throat contracted convulsively from anguish (*angorem*) and he could no longer exhale once he finished speaking (*Ep.* 8.11.14): *angorem silentio exhalare non valui*.¹¹⁷ The oxymoron emphasizes the psychological effect of compassion on the living Sidonius, who physically felt the violent choking seizure of the throat as it must have been felt by his murdered friend; but the result was different.

¹¹² Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.13: *Secuta quidem est ultio extinctum, sed magis prosunt ista victuris. Nam quotiens homicida punitur, non est remedium sed solacium vindicari*. See also Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.4: *Non sine ultionis solacio decessit, ita vivus vindicatus, ut occisi solent*.

¹¹³ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.2: *Et si a te instructio rhetorica poscatur, hi Paulinum, illi Alcimum non requirunt*. This Lupus, because of the reference to his wife (8.11.1), is generally held not to be St Lupus, bishop of Troyes, but a rhetor of senatorial rank and native of Agen (accurately in Mathisen 2020, 106 "Lupus," against the rest of literature) from his father's side and of Périgueux on his wife's, and may have been identical with the recipient of a letter from Ruricius (1.10); see *PLRE* 2: 694, "Lupus 2."

¹¹⁴ Thus Zoeter's commentary on *Ep.* 8.11; see Zoeter 2018, 30–33, 88–97, 106–9, especially his summary at 120. See Hanaghan's reading (2019, 125) of Lampridius's predilection for astrology in relation to Sidonius's self-fashioning.

¹¹⁵ Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.8 (on the *ominosa res*): *Ita balineum illi quasi per gradus quosdam primum contumeliae locus, deinde exitii fuit*.

¹¹⁶ The thought sequence loops back from the end (8.11.14) to the beginning; compare Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.3: *Lampridius orator modo primum mihi occisus agnoscitur, cuius interitus amorem meum summis conficeret angoribus, etiamsi non eum rebus humanis vis impacta rapuisset*.

¹¹⁷ Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 8.11.14: *Longiuscule me progredi amor impulit, cuius angorem silentio exhalare non valui*. Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 15.29 identifies its poet's throat and tongue as lyre and plectrum (*linguae plectro lyra personet oris*).

Sidonius diagnosed himself as showing all the symptoms triggered in a trauma victim by flashback, the reactivation in memory of the actual murder, as if in slow motion. These include the catatonoid paralysis or freezing that momentarily disables all processing of experience, from the physical reaction of breath inhibition and the emotional reaction of feelings of impotence and depression to the cognitive reaction of aphasia, as the consequence of a severe shock to his sense of self and reality.¹¹⁸ Overwhelmed by the feeling that, with his friend's loss, he had lost a part of his own self, Sidonius had suffered a wipe-out of everything other than this one trauma (*ista sola*).¹¹⁹ Modern neurological research has shown that in many cases it may not be possible to completely verbalize the traumatic event, because the sudden flood of emotion in the upper right hemisphere (amygdalum) is accompanied by a reduction of activity in the left hemisphere (hippocampus), which generates words and symbols and is thought to be the seat of memory.¹²⁰ During the acute phase of overstimulation the fragmented sense-perceptions of the right half of the brain cannot be coordinated with processing on the linguistic level in the left half. For Sidonius, for the author at a time of crisis, the writing and reading of letters therefore became, literally, a means of coping with existence: indeed, his only remedy (*remedium*).¹²¹ Where the voice of the poet Lampridius (the voice of "Orpheus") and of his own ("Apollo's") Muse would fall silent,¹²² Sidonius *had* to write, if he was to overcome the depression that had taken hold of him (*animum meum tristitudine gravem*) and not succumb to the deep sadness in his troubled heart (*confuso pectori maeror . . . plurimus erat*).¹²³ And in so doing he became the paradigm for his whole epoch.

¹¹⁸ Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 84–88.

¹¹⁹ Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.14 (see note 117 above). On perception images "frozen" into the memory, see Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 172, on bereavement feelings 153.

¹²⁰ Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 94–95 tab. 8: "Attributes of the Hemispheres." On bodily reactions during the shock-and-sinking-in phase, such as "frozen states," breathlessness and aphasia, see 95–96 and 170–72.

¹²¹ Hanaghan 2019, 88 accurately observes the narrative manipulation of time: Sidonius's "Erzählzeit" envisages Lupus's "Lesezeit" of his epistle, and his "Lesezeit" of Lupus's anticipated answer would alleviate Sidonius's grief. Compare Van Waarden's (2010 and 2016) "Writing to Survive." Gibson 2020 sees in Books 7–10 "the hardest and darkest material" of the letter collection but "without Pliny's pessimism."

¹²² In life Sidonius (Ep. 8.9.5) called Lampridius *poeta vel vocalissimus*, "the loudest-voiced poet." See Stoehr-Monjou 2013, 147.

¹²³ Emphasized by the triple parallelism in Sid. Ap. Ep. 8.11.14: *Neque enim satis mihi aliud hoc tempore manu sermone consilio scribere loqui vovere libet. Vale. On fatal rigidity and paralysis as the sole topic of the existential debate, see Ep. 8.11.14: Tu interim . . . citius indica, saltem ob hoc scribens, ut animum meum tristitudine gravem lectio levet. Namque confuso pectori maeror . . . plurimus erat, cum paginis ista committerem sola.*

Conclusion: The Rhetoric of Silence as a Source of Poetic Creativity

Sidonius's relationship to the Muses, a research desideratum in the currently ongoing discussion initiated by Schlapbach and Pollmann, conforms more closely, notwithstanding his subsequent episcopate (from 469 to 485), to the classical pattern of the Greek and Roman world than to its philosophical-Christian counterpart.¹²⁴ Philip Hardie has recently stressed contrast and continuity of the programmatic rejection of the Muses as a refusal to "sing or write on a particular subject or in a particular genre": "The divine authority makes a difference as to the source of what is taught through the allegories."¹²⁵ The invocation of Mars rather than Apollo in his eulogy for the martial Majorian, similarly of the Holy Spirit rather than the Muses in his thanksgiving to Bishop Faustus of Riez, who had baptized him, and the identification of the nine Muses with the canon of liberal arts (*disciplinae*), an allusion to scholarly writings of the presbyter and philosopher Claudianus Mamertus—all these are choices made with the recipient in mind and remain exceptional.¹²⁶ Sidonius felt the physical presence of the Muses around him.¹²⁷ As with Horace, upon whom Melpomene confers immortality, his poetry is wholly the gift of the Muses (*talia dona Gratiarum*): to his correspondents he seems to be virtually "redolent of the Muses."¹²⁸ Endowed with the

¹²⁴ See the brief conspectus in André 2009. Early Christian poetry, in contrast to Sidonius, tended to reject the pagan goddesses as a source of inspiration (for example, Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 10.115: "*sine numine nomina*"), turning instead to Christ (*Carm.* 15.32), to the personification of philosophy (Boeth. *Cons. Phil.* 1.1.11), or to the Muses as allegory of the *artes liberales* (Aug. *de ord.* 2.15.42). See Schlapbach 2014 and Pollmann 2017, 59, 220–34 ("Possibilities of Authorization in Christian Poetry"); see also Fielding 2017, 34–35, 134–36, 209–10; Miller 1986, 163; Mratschek 2002, 219; Murray 2010, 603; and Shanzer 2005.

¹²⁵ Hardie 2019, 18 and 209 note 62. Cameron 2011, 206 is right to emphasize that earlier scholarship exaggerated the divide between Christian and mythological or pagan imagery; see also Shanzer 2005 and Hardie 2019 on the continuities between "Classicism and Christianity."

¹²⁶ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 5.373: *Pro Musis Mars vester [i.e. Maiorianus] erit. Carm.* 16.5–6 (to Bishop Faustus): *Magis ille veni nunc spiritus, oro, pontificem dicture tuum.* See also Gennad. *de vir. ill.* 86: *Faustus . . . composuit librum De Spiritu Sancto.* Replacements of the deities of inspiration are in line with the topics; see Miller 1986; Köhler 2015, 124–25; on rationalization, see Sid. Ap. *Ep.* 5.2.1 (with Shanzer 2005, 88–93 and Schlapbach in this volume): *Novem quas vocant Musas disciplinas aperiens esse, non feminas.*

¹²⁷ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 1.9–10: *Castalidumque chorus vario modulamine plaussit, / carminibus, cannis, pollice, voce, pede. Carm.* 23.500–501: *Post quas [thermas] nos tua pocula et tuarum / Musarum medius torus tenebat.* See also *Ep.* 5.17.9, where Sidonius is surrounded by the *chorus Musarum*. See also André 2009, 211–12 and Mratschek 2020b, 223.

¹²⁸ Melpomene, the Muse of singing and sister of Thalia, inspires Horace with Apollo's "swan-song" (Hor. *Carm.* 4.3.20–23): *. . . donatura [Pieris] cycni, si libeat, sonum. / Totum muneris hoc tui est, / quod monstror digito praetereuntium / Romanae fidicen lyrae; / quod spiro et placeo, si placeo, tuum est; Sid. Ap. Ep.* 5.17.1: *. . . qui tibi [Sidonius Eriphio], ut scribis, Musas olemus.*

timelessness of poetic inspiration, Sidonius's Muse as patroness of intellectual life and guardian in politics presides over the performance of poetry by virtue of her knowledge of past, present, and future, as well as her capacity to confer everlasting fame.¹²⁹ In conformity with Quintilian, she is not only invoked at the beginning of a poem (*Carm.* 35), but also goes into action at a key point (*ad aliquem graviorem . . . locum*) to heighten the climax at the final punchlines (*Carm.* 12–13).¹³⁰

Sidonius's barren Muse (*Musa sterilis*) and the mute Apollo (*Apollo mutus*), therefore, contrary to the view advanced by Jesús Hernández Lobato in his stimulating interpretations, are associated neither with a general silence maintained by the Muses during a period of crisis-ridden instability nor with a definitive retreat into silence on the part of the poet.¹³¹ In fact, the discourse with the changing and polyphonic voices of the Muses together with his technique of allusion enables the author to create a humorously misleading series of self-portraits in brilliantly stylish images, depictions that challenged his audience intellectually and entertained it before being wound up in an unexpected concluding *pointe* or intriguing *peripeteia*. The Muse in these pieces symbolizes the liberation of artistic creativity and can be identified with the poet's voice as it manifests itself in his poems and letters. Writing about the poet's authorial "I," inspired *by* or identical *with* the Muse, proves to be a means of elucidating the world and the self: the Muse reveals the range of the emotions and sense-perceptions of the poetic persona. It is the divine power of her inspiration and his rhetoric of silence that enables him, at moments of sensory overload when the spectacle of the disintegrating Roman empire swamps him with emotion, to focus on his personal vision of the world, his authorization to produce poetry and his self-positioning in the social space as coping models.

Sidonius's Muse deploys her poetics of silence in three modes, consonant with the rhetorical triad *docere*, *delectare*, and *movere*.¹³² Seeking to avert

Compare Sidonius's epitaph (cited at note 1). On Horace as model for Sidonius's concept of art, see Mratschek 2017, 316–22.

¹²⁹ On Sidonius's eclecticism, see André 2009 and Curtius 1939, 140, in contrast to the widespread late antique conception of the "temporality" of the Muses, compared with "inspiration by the Christian God, in particular, Jesus Christ" (Schlapbach 2014 and Pollmann 2017, 233–34).

¹³⁰ Quint. *Inst.* 4, *praef.* 4: . . . *ut non solum initiis operum suorum Musas invocarent [poetae maximi], sed provecti quoque longius, cum ad aliquem graviorem venissent locum, repeterent vota . . .* See Curtius 2013, 232.

¹³¹ Invocation of the Muses and the tradition of allusive poetic writing remained vigorous well into the Middle Ages and generated meaning, as noted already by Curtius 1939 and 2013, 234–46. Similarly, Schmitzer 2015, 92: "Sidonius' Muse" is "precisely not *sterilis*," although he was here referring only to her function in preserving the classical cultural heritage.

¹³² Arist. *Rh.* 1408a10, with Quint. *Inst.* 3.5.2: *Tria sunt item, quae praestare debeat orator, ut doceat, moveat, delectet.* And Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.154: *Tria autem praestare debet pronuntiatio: conciliet, persuadeat, moveat, quibus natura cohaeret, ut etiam delectet.* Cic. *de opt. gen. orat.* 3:

the imposition of punishment, the eloquent Muse (*Musa loquax*) uses persuasive strategies (*docere*) from the politically loaded imagery of myth and of sacrosanct monuments in Rome to conjure up before Emperor Majorian's inner eye, for the event of her failure, the cruel death of the poet-god and her silence. With biting satire, the jesting Muse (*Musa iocosa*) amusingly justifies (*delectare*) Sidonius's refusal to compose cultured verse amid uncultured Burgundians, and falls silent with a warning to her poet; in so doing she complies with Horace's programmatic requirement for the literary genre (*Serm.* 1.1.24): *ridentem dicere verum*.¹³³ With his ekphrasis of the slaying of Lampridius the poet appeals to the emotions (*movere*) to bring about a triangular relationship with the addressee and the audience: Sidonius Apollinaris, in the role of Apollo Musagetes, condemns to silence his especially beloved and very own Thalia (*dilecta nimis et peculiaris . . . Thalia*), the Muse of enjoyment, and he identifies so intensely with the victim that he himself succumbs to aphasia.

Through a closely-knit weave of subtle allusions and mythological images creating links between present, past, and future, myth and history, the "silence of the Muses" evokes existential borderline situations that confront the author and his cultured readership in the crisis-ridden Gaul of the time—Lyon rebelling against the emperor, the Burgundian occupation of the city, the irruption of violence into the intact world of the Gallo-Roman landowners. Sidonius's verbal paradox turns out to be an expression of a paradoxical worldview;¹³⁴ More vividly than anything else, Sidonius's vision of Apollo's hanging and his reaction to the murder of Lampridius—the violent constriction of his own throat—demonstrate how important writing was to him as a coping mechanism for survival amid the very present perils of a *mundus inversus* governed by barbarian patrons. The Muse represents the poetic persona of the poet and letter-writer who is exposed to these traumas and displays his self-constructions for his highly educated audience. Triggered by the psychological pressure of emotional overload *after* the trauma, not only speechlessness but also creativity were generated.

Paradoxically, it is thus precisely the "silence of the Muse," the rhetorical topos for the poet's loss of speech, that most clearly reflects Sidonius's emotions (*timor, amor, angor, tristitudo, maeror*) and sensory perceptions (through *oculi, aures, nasus*) and the complete deprivation of physical and mental ability to react (through *manus, sermo, consilium*).¹³⁵ But this is no case of an

Optimus est enim orator qui dicendo animos audientium et docet et delectat et permovet. Docere debitum est, delectare honorarium, permovere necessarium.

¹³³ Smolak 2008, 50.

¹³⁴ According to Hardie 2019, 163 a typical feature of Christian writers.

¹³⁵ Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 13.38 (impotence and horror); *Carm.* 12.12–13 (senses); *Ep.* 8.11.14 (emotions and paralysis).

escapist man of letters taking flight into an artificial world of illusion.¹³⁶ This new understanding of traumatic memory brings us back to Hernández Lobato's melancholic idea that Sidonius's silence is playful despair. But Sidonius's self-deconstructive literary programs, wrapped in his poetics of silence, are not there to announce the unfeasibility of poetry and the demise of classical poetry in a crumbling world that has lost its "traditional didactic aspirations" and metamorphosed into "pure form" devoid of meaning:¹³⁷ the "eloquent silence" in fact subjects the author at moments of crisis to a severe testing that will afford him deeper insight into his own nature and teach him strategies for coping and survival—a solution type closely akin to the "flexible resilient coping" of traumatized people.¹³⁸ With his allegory of the silent Muse, interwoven as it is with meaningful classical allusions, versatile and powerful by virtue of Quintilian's rhetorical triad, Sidonius evokes a multi-layered world of images that empowers him to overcome his traumas from the perspective of the detached observer and to turn his readers into spectators motivated to engage with the troubles of their epoch. This is a pregnant silence, embodying innovation as well as renovation.¹³⁹

As Blaise Pascal observed in his *Discours sur les passions*,¹⁴⁰ "il y a une éloquence de silence qui pénètre plus que la langue ne saurait faire."

Rostock University
sigrid.mratschek@uni-rostock.de

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¹³⁶ A different view is advanced by Henke 2008, 156.

¹³⁷ Hernández Lobato 2017, 287: "That is why, freed from any connection to reality, poetry cuts itself off forever from its traditional didactic aspirations and gives itself over entirely to the pleasure of pure form, to aesthetic play." At 310: "topics of . . . the (in)ability of human language to convey reality." See La Penna's "reign of futility," at La Penna 1993, 732.

¹³⁸ Fischer and Riedesser 2009, 138. The flexible style of coping is characteristic of "individuals convinced of their internal self-control, committed to the goals with which they identify, and capable of coping effectively with difficult, challenging situations."

¹³⁹ See Mratschek 2020a, 237–39 and Hardie 2019, 12 referring to Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 10.17–18, with 135–62 (chapter 5) and 246 on the cultural revival.

¹⁴⁰ At chapter 47 (ed. Faguet 1959, 63), written at some point between 1652 and 1653.

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