Writing to survive: A commentary on Sidonius Apollinaris, Letters Book 7, volume 1: The episcopal letters 1-11

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Citation for published version (APA):
Letter 2

‘A Merchant of Clermont, or: All’s Well That Ends Well’

Introduction

1 Overview

- An entre’acte

This letter is about the tradesman Amantius, lector in the church of Clermont and Sidonius’ usual letter-bearer to and from Marseille. It narrates how he contrived to marry a rich and socially superior girl from Marseille. Sidonius is greatly amused at the shrewd lover who never loses sight of his career.

After the heavy tone and content of the first letter of the book, the second one is deliberately light-footed by way of contrast. In the structure of book 7 this letter is more than just an intermezzo. It is a dramatic device to get the action going, and, by way of contrast, to intimate the horrors of war and the humiliation of the peace which lie ahead. The other way round, amid the perils surrounding him (and at the moment of publication: in his precarious position as a bishop under Visigothic rule), the author wants to impart to his readers a shared feeling of optimism-despite-everything.

- Laughing stock and mirror image

Amantius’ dramatic function is that of laughing stock as well as secretly admired mirror-image. He is associated with merrymaking – which can turn into sarcasm. Several years later, he delivers letter 7 – about the betrayal of Clermont – to the same bishop Graecus. He is introduced as follows: ‘Here is Amantius again. I should like to crack a few jokes through him, but my pleasure is spoil’d’ (7.7.1). The contrast with bitter political reality could not be greater: ‘How long is this swindling of yours going to last?,’ is Sidonius’ attack on Graecus.

For the ‘Merchant of Clermont’ (thus Mathisen 2003/1: 47) All’s Well That Ends Well, but for Clermont, and the Roman heritage it stands for, this merrymaking is singing in the dark.¹⁴²

Reading on in book 7, and reaching the speech in Bourges on the nomination of bishop Simplicius there, one is once more inevitably reminded of Amantius, this time by way of a mirror image. Everything Amantius is praised for tongue-in-cheek in letter 2, everything which in his case is really above his station and a daring exploit, is a matter-of-course when it comes to the nobleman Simplicius: the right attitude towards juniors and seniors, his young age and being already a father, his modest means, adult initiatives, building and maintaining a network with ease, providing for his children. Amantius is Simplicius in a distorting mirror, but Sidonius admires him for it.¹⁴³

¹⁴² See the introduction to letter 7, section 3 Key words, and the comment on 7.7.5 praestigiae.
¹⁴³ See the introduction to letter 9 contio, section 4 Laudatio, and the comments on 7.9.17, 21, 22.
The figure of Amantius fulfills a third function. He is also the embodiment of the theme of survival, which pervades Sidonius’ correspondence. That is probably what most endeared him to Sidonius: his fighting spirit and inventiveness – even against the law.

- Literary technique and dating

The introduction and commentary discuss the literary technique which Sidonius uses to tell this light-hearted story. It takes the form of a ‘Milesian tale’ combined with elements from comedy. The letter is a stylistic tour de force, showing Sidonius’ playful side.

In discussing the chronology of the story, I also attempt to establish when Graecus’ episcopate started.

2 Date

Loyen 3: 214 has dated this letter to the beginning of 471 AD, because it seems to have been written not long after Ep. 6.8 (which must be from end 470-beginning 471, right at the start of Sidonius’ episcopacy), and because Sidonius evidently was not yet preoccupied with the war. Mathisen 1990: 135, however, thinks it a ‘reasonable suggestion’ that the letter was written shortly after the ordination of its addressee, Graecus, but forgets that 6.8, which necessarily precedes it, was written by Sidonius in his function as a bishop, therefore after 470. In all probability Loyen was right.

3 Addressee

As successor to Eustachius, Graecus was the sixth bishop of Marseille. We can determine the years of his episcopate only approximately. Mathisen 1990: 137 has as the approximate ordination date 451/63 (closer to 463) and the last attestation in 475. But his tenure cannot have begun before February 464, because Eustachius is then mentioned for the last time, as one of the addressees of the third of Hilarus’ letters concerning the question of the episcopal nomination in Die (MGH Epist. 3: 30 f.; see my introduction to letter 1, sect. ‘Addressee’). He was in office when Sidonius was in the prime of his episcopate (the date of Ep. 6.8 which is dedicated to him). For the wording of 7.2.9 (Graecus, as a dignus heres, has executed Eustachius’ testamentum) to be relevant, it should mean that the consecration had taken place in fairly recent years (I suggest: after 467, see conclusion of the section ‘More About Amantius’). Heinzelmann 1982 says: ‘c. 470’.

In the first half of the seventies, he received the presbyter Lucidus’ letter of excuse, as a result of the council of Arles on predestination and free will. It is probable that he had attended the council, together with Mamertus of Vienne (Ep. 7.1), Megethius of Belley (?)(Ep. 7.3), Fonteius of Vaison (Ep. 7.4), Basilius of Aix (Ep. 7.6) and Euphronius of Autun (Ep. 7.8). Graecus’ name is not among the co-signatories of the letter of Faustus which led up to it, but

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144 Because of the later revision, and everything it entails regarding the letter’s function in the structure of the book (see preceding section), this argument for the date is questionable. For this problem, see General Introduction, par. 5.4.4. Chronology of the letters.

145 Mathisen 2003/1: 50 n. 31 has ‘ca. 461-470’ for Eustachius’ episcopate, but 470 seems somewhat late, because at the time of the council of Arles (470?) Graecus was no longer a junior bishop (see further on).
this may well be due to the precarious manuscript tradition of this list. In the *inscriptio* of the letter he ranks twelfth out of thirty prelates, so he was no longer a junior bishop by then. For this question, see General Introduction, sect. 4.4 The council of Arles in the early 470s.

In 475 he was appointed by the emperor Julius Nepos, with three other bishops, to negotiate with Euric, which led to the surrender of Clermont (see 7.6.10). That is the last we hear about him. The date of accession of his successor in the see of Marseille, Honoratus I, d. 494, is unknown.

He figures prominently in Sidonius’ correspondence as an addressee. If we follow Loyen’s dating, the first letter was *Ep*. 6.8, a letter of recommendation for Amantius, the protagonist of the letter we have under consideration here. Then came *Ep*. 7.2 of 471, *Ep*. 9.4 of 473, giving heart to Graecus in adversity, *Ep*. 7.10 of 474, when Sidonius at the height of the siege could not leave the town, and finally *Ep*. 7.7, written about June 475, ‘the epitaph of the Western Empire’ (Stevens 1933: 160). Clearly Sidonius was closely connected with Graecus during his episcopate. In fact, Graecus is unique, apart from Sidonius’ school friend Magnus Felix, in having as many as five letters dedicated to him. The uncles Apollinaris and Simplicius also received five letters, but not all of these as sole addressees. See Bellès 1: 15 f.

Called by Sidonius *flos sacerdotum gemma pontificum*, ‘you’re the tops’, in *Ep*. 9.4.2, in *Ep*. 7.7.4 he is the object of Sidonius’ anger because he has bartered the freedom of Clermont for his own Marseille: *iam non primi comprovincialium coepistis esse, sed ultimi*, ‘you’re the pits’. The fact that it was precisely Graecus who received that letter, may be interpreted as the proof of a strong relationship.


### 4 More about Amantius

- **Tradesman**

As a modest tradesman Amantius was socially definitely second-class, *sordidus*, not *liberalis*. (Compare what Cicero wrote at *de Off*. 1.150 f. about ‘the means of livelihood which are unbecoming to a gentleman and vulgar’, *inliberales … et sordidi quaestus*. The retail dealers, *qui mercantur a mercatoribus quod statim vendant*, are rated very low, for they cannot do without cheating, *nihil enim proficiant, nisi admodum mentiantur*. Not valued much more highly are the *mercatores* or *negotiatores*, wholesale merchants, unless they trade on a really big scale, with extensive overseas imports and an important home market: *mercatura autem, si tenuis est, sordida putanda est; sin magna et copiosa … non est admodum vituperanda*. Amantius did not come anywhere near that level.) Based in Clermont he earned a living as a broker in the trade in the harbour of Marseille (*Ep*. 6.8.1), transporting home to his principals what he had bought from the incoming freighthers. He is exactly the kind of man who, to the mind of his contemporaries, can be expected to cheat now and then for benefit, and to have his way by impertinence. See for this hierarchy of occupations, Nemo 1998: 326.

Mathisen 2003/1: 47 ff. has fitted this in with the increasing poverty of the time: ‘Late Antiquity saw the social and economic degradation of a number of petty aristocrats and moderately wealthy decurions-cum-landowners, as barbarians, bishops, and senators strengthened their own hands at the expense of those unable to protect themselves. Those
who had the patronage of more powerful magnates could hope to survive, even if sometimes in reduced circumstances. Others faced total ruin. The case of Amantius is instructive’ (47). This is explained on p. 52: ‘The niggardly parsimony that Sidonius attributes to Amantius’s father could have been a necessary result of the hard times on which the family had fallen, hard times that had forced at least one of his sons to create a new career for himself. Amantius, perhaps using his family connections, had built up a thriving business as a purchasing agent. He no doubt also saw his office of lector … as a means of making new business contacts, perhaps akin to joining the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club in the modern day. Yet regardless of how Amantius eventually was able to make the best of things, his new position as an itinerant merchant-cum-messenger very probably was a step or two below what he might have had reason to expect a generation before.’

Sidonius is greatly amused at the shrewd lover who never loses sight of his career. As Harries 1994: 214 and 215 has remarked: ‘The rules of the Church did no preclude the acquisition of wealth on the part of minor clergy by dubious means’, and ‘Sidonius took it for granted that his clergy would engage in business’. Accordingly, Sidonius goes to great lengths to help Amantius to become a mercator splendidus (6.8.2).  

- Family man, an approximate chronology

Based in Clermont, travelling to and fro between Clermont and Marseille, and bringing home what he had laid his hands on, one day he managed to add a bride to his conquests and bring the ‘booty’ home (cf. Ep. 7.7.1 aliquid, ut moris est, de manubiis civitatis domum reportaturus), next to beget a stately row of children. Loyen 3: 189 n. 9 sketches the chronology of Amantius’ escapades. Although Ep. 6.8 dates from the end of 470, his adventures in Marseille (still under the previous bishop Eustachius, who received him there on his first arrival, Ep. 7.2.4) must have taken place several years earlier, because of the number of his children (Ep. 7.2.8 mater … de nepotum numerositate gaudebat).

We can try to give a more detailed outline of the chronology. We have at our disposition the following data:

- Bishop Graecus saw Amantius probably for the very first time, when he brought the previous letter (end 470); in any case he did not know his background; the whole of the story must have taken place under his predecessor Eustachius, who is last mentioned in February 464; Sidonius calls Amantius Eustachius’ client (sect. 9) and bids Graecus take over the patronage, just as he has settled the rest of Eustachius’ inheritance; as said above, this suggests that Eustachius had not died all that long ago.

- Sidonius calls Amantius puer, when he runs away from home (sect. 3, but see my comment there), adulescens, when he marries the girl (sect. 7) and iuvenis, when talking about him at the moment of writing. We must realize that these terms were used with much flexibility, but this scheme will do for a rough approximation: a puer is up to the age of 15-17 (though there are examples of 19, 20 or even older); an adulescens is 15-17 until past 30; a iuvenis is an adult man from 20 to about 40-45 (adulescens and iuvenis indeed are often interchangeable); see below my comments ad loc.

146 I think anachronistically, Rousseau 1976: 359 explained: ‘Sidonius was moved in this particular case to be amused and lenient, not because the marriage had proved profitable, but because it was a happy one.’
- Amantius was a *lector*, for which the usual age was 10-12 to about 20 (see below on sect. 1, *scilicet ut lector*); he was *lector* when he presented himself to Graecus in 470, but already held this position when Eustachius helped him on his way (sect. 7) 147.

- The minimum age for marriage is 12 years for women and 14 for men; see OCD s.v. Marriage law; Treggiari 1991: 39 ff.

- When Amantius arrived in Marseille as a *puer*, the girl next door was no longer an *infans* (sect. 6), but she was not yet marriageable.

- End 470, Amantius had more than one child (sect. 8), which allows for a date for the marriage in 468 or earlier.

A tentative chronology, then, would be:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>470</td>
<td>Amantius, aged 20 or younger, <em>iuvenis</em>, takes the first letter to Graecus and tries to make up with his mother-in-law;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>468 or earlier</td>
<td>Amantius, aged 18 or younger, <em>adulescens</em>, marries the girl at the first possible moment, aged 12;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>467 or earlier</td>
<td>Amantius, aged 17 or younger, <em>puer</em>, runs away; he comes under the protection of bishop Eustachius and is gradually accepted in Marseillaise society; he meets the girl, no longer <em>infans</em>, aged 11 or younger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chronology has provided us, incidentally, with a plausible terminus post quem, ca. 467 AD, for the death of Eustachius and the start of Graecus' episcopate.

5 A touch of comedy

After the first letter of book 7 has introduced us to the danger and panic of Clermont at war, the second brings relief with a piece of comedy in the vein of Terence and the picaresque and erotic 'Milesian' stories – the kind of stories with which the Gallic gentlemen used to entertain each other at dinner (called *inter bibendum narratiunculae* by Sidonius, see below section 6 *Style*). The scope is scaled down from the strategic issues of a city and their religious implications, to the amorous adventures of a shrewd member of the city's lower clergy, the tradesman Amantius.

The bishop whose sense of duty led him to introduce the Rogations is the very same who takes interest in the reconciliation between the *lector* and letter-bearer and his mother-in-law. Not life and freedom are at stake, but money and love. And the bishop has a great time, laughing tongue-in-cheek at the success of a little cheating ... with a permit he himself has signed. At the same time he takes the opportunity to straighten things out between himself and his colleague in Marseille.

147 There is an inconsistency here between letters 6.8 and 7.2. See below at sect. 7, *quia lector*. Letter 6.8 suggests a much younger age for Amantius.
The trading route from Clermont to Marseille is (still?) open (cf. 9.3.1 f. for a quite different situation): no dangers anywhere. Marseillaise society is as aware of exciting newcomers as any society ever was. There is plenty of time to woo a young girl and pocket her cash and more. A mother-in-law is willy-nilly won over by her grandchildren. All is well that ends well.

Sidonius himself points out to his readers which genre he has chosen here to prove himself master of, when towards the end he mentions the *fabula Milesia vel Attica* (sect. 9).

- **Fabula Milesia**

The Milesian tales (Μιλησιακά) were short and lewd erotic tales, probably so called after their original setting, the town of Miletus. The godfather of the genre was one Aristides, of whom nothing is known and who presumably lived around 100 BC. The story goes that a copy of his work came into Roman hands after the battle of Carrhae (Plut. *Crass.* 32.4-6) and that is was translated by Sisenna (Ov. *Tr.* 2.443 *vertit Aristidem Sisenna*), probably the historian, praetor in 78 BC, whose position, as Ovid subtly adds, was not impaired by the stories’ indecent content. Tales of this kind were to prove fertile for the Latin novel. They appear as inset stories in Petronius’ *Satyricon* (e.g. the Ephesian widow, 111-112) and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. The latter starts straightaway with the announcement: *At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram*. The best known – and longest – story in it is the one of Cupid and Psyche (4.28 – 6.24).

Fusillo in DNP 8: 168 f. s.v. ‘Milesische Geschichten’, points out that the references to *Milesia* in later Latin literature, among which the current letter, are not unequivocally interpretable as references to either novels or shorter digressions. Sidonius, indeed, did not have in mind any specific reference, but wanted to define his tale as one more specimen of this tradition of pointed story-telling.

The specific traits of the Roman novel are novella-like episodes with either a parodistical-satyrical (Petronius, Apuleius) or a serious-idealizing character (*Historia Apollonii regis Tyrii*) (see DNP 10: 1108 ff. s.v. ‘Roman’, esp. 1114). We will see that Sidonius’ version of the genre veers toward realism, with an ironic undertone. It is not the realism of the *mimus* (for its contribution to the novella see Walsh 1970: 28), but of sophisticated comedy.


- **Fabula Attica**

A ‘Greek play’ – a term coined for the occasion by Sidonius – is a comedy by Greek playwrights such as Menander, and their Roman rivals like Plautus and Terence. Sidonius was familiar with these plays and has told us how he and his son read and compared them (*Ep. 4.12.1 nuper ego filiisque communis Terentianae Hecyrae sales ruminabamus; ... ipse etiam fabulam similis argumenti, id est Epitrepontem Menandi, in manibus habebam.*).\(^{148}\) Terence

\(^{148}\) For this practice, derived from rhetorical teaching, an interesting parallel is Gel. 2.23, who compares a comedy by Caecilius to its original by Menander - and is impressed by the latter’s superiority. Cf.
especially had acquired a canonical status in later Antiquity (in this letter he is cited in 7.9.19
domi habuit unde disceret). For the literary models of late Antiquity, and Sidonius in particular,
see General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

As we will see, it is more the general mood of youthful rebelliousness against paternal
authority, falling in love and shrewdness to reach one’s amorous (and financial!) goal, along
with the choice of words from the idiom of Roman comedy, than the reference to any special
intrigue in the comic repertoire, which contributes to the overall impression of a successful
novella ‘all’attica’.

See Chadwick 1955: 315 f. for a discussion of the story of Amantius, and 306 ff. of Sidonius’
‘gift of brilliantly crystallizing the broad essentials of people and situations in a brief phrase,
often with a touch of humour’ (309).

• Other related stories

The reader of Sidonius’ narrative may have remembered the story of Thrasyllus, which is
told at length by Apuleius, Met. 8.1-14. It may be considered its counterpart. Like Amantius,
Thrasyllus woos a young girl and manages to be welcomed by her family, but in all other
respects he is his opposite. He is rich, blunt, thick-headed, cruel. The girl rejects him, and
finally, like Samson, he is blinded and kills himself.

A similar story is told in Greg. Tur. Franc. 4.46 of one Andarchius from Marseille, who by
fraud wins the daughter of Ursus, citizen of Clermont. There, too, the future mother-in-law is
deluded by false prospects of rich contributions to the family capital, and she is just as
credulous: promisit mulier haec simpliciter credens. But Andarchius is an utterly unsympathetic,
vioent character. He pushes the matter too far and comes to a sticky end. This kind of story
evidently comes as a corollary of the traffic of people and merchandise between urban
centres.

6 Style

Sidonius is a veritable stylistic chameleon. After the intricacy and high-flown language of the
first letter, he is perfectly well able to apply an altogether different register in the second one.
The choice of words is predominantly classical, enriched by suggestive, archaic, quotations
from comedy, and with a natural late-antique ‘flavour’. The syntax – though throughout
unobtrusively refined – in the main is simple. For the function of archaisms in Sidonius,
especially from comedy, often combined to create a ‘comic’ atmosphere, see Monni 1999, esp.
37 ff.

The letter belongs to the category which Sidonius himself called litteras … ioco lepidas (9.3.3).
It is an elaborate example of the kind of diverting stories (e.g. fables by Aesop, novellas from
Petronius or Apuleius, or anecdotes from daily life) which the aristocrats were expected to
deliver at social occasions, both for fun and instruction: 2.9.6 inter bibendum narratiunculae,
quam cognitu hilararemur institueremur, quia eas … laetitia peritiaque comitabantur. For this
lusus component of social relations, and consequently correspondence as well, see La Penna

4.12.1-2)’.
1995, esp. 16 f. for this letter. For the nobles it is a way of marking the superiority of their class (33 f.).

On these aspects, see also General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

7 Manuscripts

This letter figures in MFPC, and is missing in LNVTR, like letter 1. For the manuscript tradition, see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts.

8 ‘You’ and ‘I’

The case concerning ‘you’ and ‘I’ in this letter is relatively complicated. The addressee generally is in the second person plural, except 1 oneras. I surmise that oneras is direct, a lively entry into the letter, together with the emphatic vocative consummatissime pontificum. However, in what follows he is treated in ‘soft focus’, his individuality is blurred. Graecus has no responsibility for what had happened, and therefore he is addressed in low profile.

The personality of the sender, on the other hand, is rendered in a direct and clear-cut way: Sidonius is the one who has to account for himself. This explains such ‘clashes’ as vobis a me (sect. 2) and produxi, ut … recipieritis (9). The intrusion of the plurals perstringamus and videamur (2) is open to interpretation. I take it that perstringamus is chosen to suggest prudence: the author does not want to hurt the feelings of the addressee in telling the story, hence also ‘soft focus’. This plural entails the plural videamur, which, besides, is an interesting clausula (the famous ‘esse videatur’). With regard to rhythm, however – and euphony, for that matter – I do not feel that it plays an important role (if any) in the choice between singular and plural in this passage or in others. Singular instead of plural, or vice versa, would have been just as acceptable, at least on a technical rhythmical level.

Apart from this, I consider sect. 4 vestra moenia as inclusive (Graecus and the other Massilians), the cases of 2 tabellarii nostri and 8 noster Hippolytus as inclusive (‘your and my’; conventional familiarity in letters), and 2 sermoni nostro, noster sermo (cf. 3.9.1, 4.12.4, 7.11.2), and 10 memor nostri as conventional phrases in epistolography.

For a comprehensive discussion of the use of the first and second person, see General Introduction, sect. 5.6 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

9 Epitome

To Graecus, bishop of Marseille.

Sect. 1 - 2: ‘You flatter me when you say you are looking forward to an important letter of mine. In fact, I owe you my apologies for my previous, misleading letter, because I had been skilfully deluded by its bearer. Only afterwards did I gather that he had prospered in Marseille out of all proportion to his standing. That would make a nice story, if well told. With your permission, I might give it a try myself, as I must now be perfectly clear about what I know of him. Besides, literary theory says that the choice of a subject is up to the author, so what is more logical than taking the bearer of the letter for its subject?’

Sect. 3 – 8: ‘He was born in Clermont from a decent family, which had been mainly employed in the service of the church. His father was too strict and parsimonious. The son ran away from home without a penny. But he had all the luck of the world in Marseille. Your
predecessor took a shine to him and helped him to find lodgings. The boy had engaging manners and was exceptionally chaste. It did not take long before he had entered the highest circles of society, by which he gained prestige and money. Next to his lodgings a rich widow lived with her little daughter. He managed to win the girl’s heart by giving her little presents, and so, as soon as she had reached the marriagable age, the two got engaged. The marriage contract recorded all kinds of property which, in reality, he did not possess. Having pocketed the inheritance of his late father-in-law and quite a lot of money from the girl’s mother, he came home with his bride. The pair already had some children, when the mother-in-law – too late – discovered the fraud. It was at this point I wrote my previous letter, which our man took with him on his way to her, to explain one or two things to her.’

Sect. 9: ‘There you have your story, a comedy almost. Sorry for the length of the letter, but now you know everything. You will understand the man is important to me. I beg you to extend your patronage to him, just as you have dealt with the rest of your predecessor’s inheritance.’

Sect. 10: ‘I have complied with your wish. If the letter should not be as perfect as you had hoped for, you should not have asked a man of small talent like me to write it.’

Commentary

Section 1

Oneras, consummatissime pontificum, verecundiam meam, multifaria laude cumulando si quid stilo rusticante peraravero.

The contrast to the opening of the first letter could not be more marked. There Sidonius goes in medias res to raise the alarm, here he takes his time for a polite introduction to an amusing story. We are treated to a split vision of war and peace, with the outcome of book 7 as yet left open.

We find the usual forms of epistolary courtesy: verecundia, which pretends to accept any compliment only reluctantly, and urbanitas, which belittles any personal merit. See General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

onomas ... verecundiam meam, multifaria laude cumulando: ‘you overwhelm my modesty with a load of manifold praise’ (Anderson): Cf. Ep. 9.14.3 ne ... verecundiam ... laudibus nimiis ... premamus. The turn of phrase is used incidentally in classical authors, e.g. Liv. 4.13.13 laudibusque haud immersitis onerarent, Phaed. 5.5.20 multis onerant laudibus, and had become habitual in Pliny, cf. e.g. Plin. Ep. 1.8.5 onerabit hoc modestiam nostram, 1.14.10 non onerare eum laudibus, 9.13.21 laude cumularet. As is to be expected, it is also found in Symmachus, Symm. Ep. 4.26 verecundiam tuam nimio laudis excursu non oportet onerari, 7.60.1 onerabat verecundiam meam, quod prior scripseras, cf. 8.22.2. Cf. Ennod. Opusc. 3.94 crescente laudum cumulo.

149 Fernández López 1994 assigns this letter to a subcategory of its own, 3.2.3.1, ‘Places and persons: elaborate description’, and analyses it on pp. 204-29. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
The start of the letter is direct and emphatic, marked by the initial position of the verb (followed by a pause): ‘you really overwhelm me’, ‘you do overwhelm me’ (the focus is on the verb). For the three possible functions of ‘verb initial’, see my comment on 7.9.5 referit historia saecularis. For a survey of opening sentences in Sidonius in relation to the theme of the letters, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.2 Opening sentences.

For a discussion of oneras and the use of the second person in this letter, see below on sect. 2 iubetis.

The adjective multifarius, ‘various’, is used since the second century, see first Gel. 5.6.1 (but varia lectio multae variae); the adverb multifariam, ‘in many places’, however, is found before that. Multifarius comes close to ‘lavish’, like multiplex: see my comment on 7.9.20 multipliciter obserata. The phrase multifaria laus was possibly coined here by Sidonius, to return exclusively in Cassiod. Compl. in lac. 8 sapientiam vero salutarem multifaria laude concelebrat, and Psalm. 88 l. 238, beati populi multifarias laudes aggreditur.

consummatissime pontificum, ‘most consummate of pontiffs’: Eighteen letters start in this way, addressing the recipient for extra emphasis with the vocative of his name, or, more often, a polite form of address. We find three types: (1) with domine: domine maior (5 times: 1.1, 2.3, 4.3, 4.17, 8.4), domine fili (two times: 9.1, 9.16), 7.17 domine frater; (2) with vir/papa: 1.4 vir amplissime, 1.11 vir disertissime, 8.2 vir peritissime, 9.9 vir sacratissime, 8.13 papa beatissime, 8.14 papa venerabilis; (3) the name with a further qualification, or the qualification alone: 5.17 Eriphi meus, 7.16 unice in Christo patrone, 8.5 amicitiae column Fortunalis, 8.8 Gallicanae flos iuventutis, and our case. No fewer than half of these cases occur in the books 8 and 9, published last, which may be a result of the process of editing. In addition to what Köhler 1995: 102 and Amherdt 2001: 117 have said about domine maior, I feel, when evaluating the addressees in each case, that type 1 is the most intimate, to such dear friends as Constantius (1.1), Felix (2.3) and Claudianus Mamertus (4.3) (for the same conclusion see Fernández López 1982). Type 2 aims at respect, either because the addressee is less familiar or for reasons of precedence (e.g. to Sidonius’ spiritual father, Faustus, in 9.9). Type 3 adapts itself to the occasion, from gratefulness (7.16) to teasing banter (8.8). In our case, Sidonius, as I have argued above in the introduction, has a special relationship with Graecus. They both like a playful exchange of letters, like this one, but Graecus is also the addressee of the bitterest of all, 7.7. Book 7 encapsulates the whole emotional range in between, and Graecus is at both ends. Consummatissime pontificum addresses him with mocking grandeur. Consummatissimus is said twice elsewhere of bishops of the highest status, 4.17.3 consummatissimum virum, of the (unknown) bishop of Trier, and 8.15.1 maximum consummatissimumque pontificem, of Annianus, bishop of Orléans. Both are put there on the same level as the doyen of Gallic bishops, Lupus of Troyes. Sidonius also has 5.1.1 consummatissima ... gloria. The superlative is very rare and may perhaps be regarded as (southern) Gallic usage, because it also occurs in Cassian. Conl. 3.19.16 consummatissimo viro similis (first quarter fifth cent.), but in no other writers.

For pontifex, ‘bishop’, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.3 Modes of address.

si quid ... peraravero. ‘when I am going to scribble something’, appropriately maintains the metaphor of rusticante. The application of ‘to plough through’, ‘to furrow’, for incising a wax tablet is specific to Ovid, e.g. Am. 1.11.7 f. ad dominam peraratas mane tabellas / perfer. In Sidonius’ correspondence it is found three times, of which 5.17.10 Epiphanius noster vix suprascripta peraraverat, is also about writing, viz. Sidonius’ secretary Epiphanius jotting
down an impromptu epigram. The verb is not used by patristic authors, and after Sidonius it emerges only in medieval literature. Cf. the more usual synonym *exarare* which is found since Cic. *Att*. 12.1.1 *hoc litterarum exaravi*, and occurs three times in Sidonius, e.g. 1.5.10 *hoc ipso tempore, quo haec mihi exarabantur*.

The fut. exact. *peravero* should have prevented translators from interpreting it as ‘every time that I scribble anything’ (Anderson), ‘mes compositions’ (Loyen). It is about the story Sidonius is going to write. For the fut. exact., which tends to become equivalent to the fut. simplex (same shift in the potential coni. perf., with its almost identical paradigm, to coni. praes.), see Van den Hout 1999: 4 ad Fronto 1.10-11 *dixerim ... incusavero*, LHS 2: 323. Mossberg 1934: 24 has put together the possible variants of *consecutio* in the future in Sidonius. For the temporal (and colloquial) character of *si* with ind. fut. exact. see LHS 2: 664. Cf. *Ep*. 1.11.3 *si dixeritis*, ‘as soon as you have recited’.

The situation is the usual, polite, one: the addressee has requested a piece of writing (i.e. Graecus, sect. 2 *quoniam iubetis ipsi*) and praises the intended author lavishly in advance (here Sidonius, *oneras … laude*). The author says yes, or refuses. Compare two situations of this kind, by way of examples: *Ep*. 4.22.1 *reverentia summa, summo et affectu talem atque tantam sententiam amplector*: Sidonius pockets the compliments that accompany the commission of a historical work (which he refuses), and 9.2.1 *quae tamen litterae plurimum nobis honoris, plus oneris imponunt*, the same for a piece of theology.

**stilo rusticante**, ‘in my boorish style’: One finds the same excuse and form of self-denigration *Ep*. 4.18.3 *carmen ... tam rusticanum est tamque inpolitam, 8.16.3 in hoc stilo, cui non urbanus lepos inest, sed pagana simplicitas, 9.3.6 *donate venia paginam rusticantem*, and 9.9.10 *simpliciter ista nec rusticice* (where *rustice* is pejorative compared to *simpliciter*). In *Ep*. 4.3.1 Sidonius pays Claudianus the compliment that, exposed to his consummate literary judgement, even giants like the Varros and the Plinies *rusticabuntur*. From the circle of Sidonius’ acquaintances one might cite as an example Ruric. *Ep*. 1.4.2 *paginulae meae non laudi aptae sed vituperationi ineptia rusticitatis aptatae*, ‘my poor letter which does not qualify for praise, but is liable to criticism because of its silly boorishness’.

Amherdt 2001: 408 f., ad *Ep*. 4.18.3, mentions the complex *rusticanus/rusticus/paganus* and the opposition town-countryside from which it originates: ‘*urbanus* désignant la perfection dans les manières et le langage, *rusticus* le contraire’. The notion is treated in a wider context by Kaufmann 1995: 260 ff., as part of his discussion of ‘Gebildete und Ungebildete – Die soziale Sicht des Sidonius’. Amherdt 2004 discusses the problem of Sidonius’ contempt for anyone who does not share his supreme values in politics and literature, the *rusticus*.

Köhler 1999: 417, when discussing among others letter 7.2, explores the assumption that *rusticans* might be used here in an equivocal way, meaning also ‘pagan’: ‘Sidonius liebte den Doppelsinn; so ist es vielleicht nicht abwegig, in diesem Ausdruck einen Hinweis darauf zu sehen, daß er hier ein Genus der heidnischen Literatur benützt hat, das zu seinem Stand als Bischof nicht so recht passen will.’ I am afraid that the literary evidence for a straightforward formula of courtesy is too strong to see any ambiguity here. The suggestion of a possible clash between comedy (not pagan literature as such) and Graecus’ spiritual status comes only in sect. 2, *salva vestrarum aurium severitate*. 
atque utinam reatu careat, quod apicum primore congressu quamquam circumscriptus veritati resultantia tamen et diversa conexui;

atque utinam to introduce a wish since earliest Latin, see TLL 2: 1078.67; also Ep. 7.10.1.

reatu careat, ‘may it be forgivable’: Reatus meaning ‘guilt’ is later Latin. It is encountered in this sense since Apul. Met. 1.16, 3.6 etc. and always so in Sidonius, e.g. Ep. 4.9.4 in reatu investigando, 6.1.1 putris et fetida reatu terra. In professional legal discourse it means ‘the condition of being accused’, e.g. Ps. Quint. Decl. passim, Ulp. Dig. 50.4.3.10 quod pater in reatu criminis alicuius est. See Mossberg 1934: 83 f.

Reatu carere is found in later Christian writers, such as Aug. c. Iulian. 6.16 omni reatu omnium malorum caret, Salv. Ep. 4.27 reatu cares, Ennod. Opusc. 3 p. 364 l. 18 f. Hartel qui reatu carent.

apicum primore congressu, ‘at the first written contact’: The letter in question is Ep. 6.8.

Amantius was the bearer of the letters 6.8, 7.2, 7.7 (sect. 1 nugigerulus noster) and 7.10 (sect. 1 consuetudinarii portitoris).

Apices basically are the forms or outlines of letters, e.g. Gel. 13.30.10 litterarum apices, hence in later Latin ‘a letter or any other writing’ (TLL 2: 227.81 ‘i.q. epistulae, rescripta’), as a fairly common synonym of litterae, e.g. Sidon. Ep. 6.8.1 apicum oblator, Cod. Iust. 2.7.25.4 per augustos apices. Köhler 1995 ad 1.11.3 apicibus auratis, remarks that the term apices was in common use for letters as well as documents in the imperial chancellery.

For the phrase primore congressu cf. Ep. 3.13.11 ne congressu quidem primore, ‘not even by way of slight acquaintance’ (Anderson). Sidonius probably found it in Symmachus, who has the remaining three attestations, e.g. 4.46 eosque in primore congressu penetrali familiaritate dignare, where the addressee is required to offer serious patronage, though he meets the letter-bearer for the first time. Primoris combines the notions ‘first’ and ‘tentative’, ‘superficial’, cf. Gel. 2.7.6 primore aspectu, ‘at first sight’.

Sidonius more than once stresses the fact that a letter-bearer is entrusted with a second letter, obviously he has proved to be trustworthy with regard to the first, see 4.5.1 Gozolas vester ... apicum meorum secundo gerulus efficitur, 9.8.1 gerulus antiquus ... cui iure repetita credantur officia, quandoquidem prima sic detulit. It is therefore remarkable that Amantius is given a second letter after his dubious conduct in the case of the first one.

At first sight, we must accept that the first letter written by Sidonius to Graecus was the recommendation letter for Amantius. In view of the frequency and the intensity of their correspondence since then, and the eminent position of both men in southern Gaul in general, it is strange if they did not know each other before Sidonius became bishop. There are two ways out of this problem. The first is to take apicum primore congressu as meaning ‘the first official written contact’ after Sidonius had become bishop. A case in point is letter 6.7, where Sidonius’ brand new episcopacy marks a new stage, a new official start, between him and bishop Fonteius, although they had been friends from childhood. See the introduction to 7.4, to the same Fonteius, ch. ‘Addresssee’. The second possibility is to interpret it as ‘the first written contact in casu Amantius’.

quamquam circumscriptus, ‘albeit deceived’, i.e. ‘though it was not my fault’: Circumscriptus means ‘deceived’, ‘taken in’, not ‘dans la première lettre ... si limitée fût-elle’ (Loyen). Semple 1930: 39 f. already had got this right. Of course the first letter was short, because it was a letter of recommendation (see below). Amantius has deceived Sidonius, just like he had his
mother-in-law: sect. 8 peracta circumscriptione legitima, ‘when this legal fraud had been completed’. Circumscriptus/circumscriptio is a keyword in this letter. Sidonius asks Graecus to pardon him for unintentionally having told him lies. Amantius has duped his mother-in-law intentionally. The words enclose the story, in a ring construction.

Circumscribere and circumscriptio do not occur elsewhere in Sidonius. They underline the special character of the lighthearted theme of swindle elaborated in the current letter. For the meaning ‘cheat’, ‘fool’, cf. e.g. Juv. 10.222 f. quot Basilus socios, quot circumscripterit Hirrus / pupillos.

veritati resultantia tamen et diversa, ‘indeed at variance with the truth and opposed to it’: For resultantia, cf. Ep. 5.17.1 a vero longe resultantia, for the dative, 8.14.8 si difficultas itineris intersiti resultant optatis, ‘if the distance thwarts our desire (for a frequent correspondence)’. This metaphorical sense of the verb emerges as late as Plin. Ep. 8.4.3 labor, ut barbara et fera nomina ... Graecis versibus non resulinent, ‘an effort to make the outlandish names fit into Greek verse’.

For diversa, cf. Boeth. Cons. 5.3.18 opinio fallax, ab scientiae veritate longe diversa.

Tamen is inserted to balance quamquam: the fact that he was duped is no excuse for the fact that what he had written was at variance with the truth.

conexui, ‘I invented’: For the meaning ‘writing fiction’, ‘inventing stories’, see Sen. Dial. 11.8.3 non audeo te eo usque producere, ut fabellas quoque et aesopeos logos, intemptatum romanis ingenii opus, solita tibi venustate conectas. The other occurrences in Sidonius’ correspondence, four in all, have the usual meaning ‘to connect’.

Anderson in his note has – correctly I think –: ‘Perhaps “appended”. See Ep. 6.8.2 init., which seems to show that this is so.’ There, however, the words inter dictandum mihi ista suggesta sunt prove that he did not ‘append’ the case for Amantius’ trustworthiness, as it were as an afterthought, but that it was suggested to him whilst he was writing the letter of recommendation. Anderson’s ultimate translation, ‘spun’, and Loyen’s, ‘avoir rassemblé tout un tissu de faits’, are correct.

ignorantiae siquidem meae callidus viator imposuit.

Here we have the clue to the understanding of this letter. The words are a clear reminiscence of Mart. 3.57.1 from the epigram:

Callidus imposuit nuper mihi copo Ravennae:
cum peterem mixtum, vendidit ille merum.

‘Lately a cunning innkeeper deceived me in Ravenna: though I asked for mixed wine, he sold it undiluted.’

(The joke being that Ravenna was so short of water that wine was cheaper.)

Amantius has turned out to be much less sincere than Sidonius had supposed at first, on the authority of mutual acquaintances, when writing letter 6.8. The reminiscence from Martial is all the more apt, as both the copo and Amantius belong to the world of commerce. (For Sidonius’ use of literary reminiscences, see General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.)

Bellès 3 in his note ad loc. has summarily pointed out that callidus is a juridical terminus technicus, adding that the use of this kind of terms is widespread among ecclesiastical
writers. It is worthwhile to follow this track a little further. The context for behaviour which is labelled *callidus* is the civil procedure of *dolus*, ‘bad faith’, and the criminal one of *stellionatus*, ‘deceitful or underhand dealing’. Just. Dig. 47.20 is dedicated to *stellionatus*. In par. 4 it has this definition: *de periurio, si sua pignora esse quis in instrumento iuravit, crimen stellionatus fit*, ‘when anyone swears in a written instrument that property pledged belongs to him, thereby committing perjury, it becomes *stellionatus*’ (transl. S.P. Scott, *The Civil Law*, Cincinnati, 1932). Par. 3.1 stipulates it concerns fraudulent actions, *per calliditatem*. So, *callidus* is used in *malam partem*: ‘crafty’, ‘cunning’, ‘wily’. From legal sources cf. e.g. Ulp. Dig. 42.5.31.1 *fraudulenta ... et callida conversatio*, from patristic literature and the Vulgata e.g. Hil. in Matth. 3.3 *fallax diabolus et ad traducendum artifex callidissimus*, and *lub 36.13 simulatores et callidi provocant iram Dei*, where *callidi* is the rendering of Greek ὑποκριταί.

Mathisen 2003/1: 52 was puzzled by the fact that Sidonius knew so little about one of his parishioners, and apparently made scant effort to find out. Or were Amantius’ escapades in Marseille ‘ancient history’, as far as Sidonius was concerned? I think that aloofness and the pretence, at least, of not knowing trivial business, is part of the persona of the nobleman.

nam dum solum mercatoris praetendit officium,

*mercatoris ... officium*, ‘the obligations of a trader’: Sidonius should have known better. A tradesman is not the most trustworthy of persons, cf. Ennod. Ep. 6.2 *hunc quidem honestas commendat et peregrinus ab officio mercatoris pudor insinuat*, ‘exceptionally, this (letterbearer) is recommended by his honesty; his decency – so unusual for someone who is engaged in the trade – is endearing.’

*pseudแดด*it, ‘pretended’: Amantius does not lie, but tells only half the truth, the other half being that he is after a wife and an inheritance.

litteras meas ad formatae vicem, scilicet ut lector, elicuit,

*formata*, ‘(letter of) recommendation’, is defined by TLL 6/1: 1109.83 ff. as ‘epistula ecclesiastica, canonica (significat epistulas varias ecclesiasticas, gr. κανονικὰ γράμματα)’. *Epistula formata*, or *litterae formatae*, was a letter of recommendation by the bishop and an indispensable condition for clerics to be allowed to travel abroad and to participate in holy communion elsewhere. See Griffe 3:101. This rule was stipulated in the canons of several councils, e.g. ‘Arles II’ can. 13 and Angers (453 AD) can. 1, see Conc. Gall. 1: 116 and 137.

*ad vicem*, ‘to serve as’, ‘by way of’, is first cent. AD and after: Plin. Nat. 24.179 *ad tegularum et imbricum vicem*, Eugipp. Vit. 15.1 *ad vicem soli*, ‘by way of floor’. Other nuances of meaning are: ‘like’, ‘(just) as’, e.g. Gel. 1.15 *maiores natu a minoribus celebantur ad deum prope et parentum vicem*, Cass. Inst. 1 praef. 1 *ad vicem magistri*, ‘as a teacher’, and ‘instead of’, ‘in exchange for’, which is a favourite of Symmachus’, e.g. Ep. 3.29 *ad vicem tantae gratiae*. See also Mossberg 1934: 97 f.

*scilicet ut lector*, ‘which was only natural, because he is a lector’: In the ancient church the *lectores* were entrusted with part of the readings and chants. It was the first grade of an ecclesiastical career. It was open to children from as young as 10-12 years, who at the same time studied with the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor*. It did not imply celibacy, which was only compulsory if, from the age of about 20, one chose to devote oneself to clerical life, beginning
as a subdeacon. See Griffe 3: 96 ff., DACL 8/2: 2241 ff. s.v. ‘lecteur’ and ODCC 963 s.v. ‘lector’.

Sidonius in *Ep. 4.25.4* writes about such a young *lector*: *lector hic primum, sic minister altaris, idque ab infantia*, ‘he had been a reader, and, as such, a servant of the altar, as indeed he had been from infancy’ (Anderson). Amantius will have been fairly old for a *lector*, when he got his permit from Sidonius to try his luck with Graecus in Marseille, as has been demonstrated above.

*Ep. 4.12.2* tells about yet another *lector* whom Sidonius employed to bring his letters, and who had lost the reply: *lectorem, inquit, Constantem nomine pro foribus vidi a dominis Simplicio et Apollinare redeuntem; dedit quidem litteras quas acceperat sed perdidit quas recepit.*

**sed quas aliquam gratiarum actionem continere decuisset.**

Sidonius should have thanked Graecus for the bounty accorded to Amantius in previous years in Marseille. Of course, if Amantius had really become as prominent as Sidonius wants to make us believe later on (sect. 4-5), Graecus would at least have heard about him, but that does not seem to bother Sidonius. He is intent on paying the compliment.

*gratiarum actionem*, ‘speech of thanks’, a formal speech, often delivered to an emperor or other high official. See Mathisen 2003/1: 49 n. 29, TLL 1: 439.77 f. The phrase fits in with the formality, as it were with a knowing wink, of this introductory section.

**plus Massiliensium benignitate provectus est, quam status sui per censum seu per familiaria forma pateretur**

*beneignitate*, ‘generosity’: Hellegouarc’h 1963: 218 ‘la propension à faire des dons et des cadeaux’.

*provectus est*, ‘was advanced’: *provectus est* Mohr: *profectus est* codd. Mohr’s conjecture is absolutely convincing and has been adopted by all subsequent editors.

*status sui ... forma*, ‘the rule of his social position’: Our phrase is ranged by TLL 6/1: 1076.31 ff., s.v. *forma*, under the heading: ‘fere i.q. ordinatio, dispositio, status’, along with e.g. Ov. *Pont*. 1.10.17 *is status est, ea rerum forma mearum*. I prefer to take it as a synonym of *regula*, ‘rule’, ‘norm’, which is juridical Latin, e.g. Ulp. *Dig*. 2.14.10 pr. *ante formam a divo Marco datam*. It occurs also passim in the canones of the councils, e.g. *Conc. Taurin*. a. 398, sect. 1 (Conc. Gall. 1: 55 l. 24) *haec igitur ... vitae eius forma servabitur*, ‘so this will be the regulation for his life’. See Heumann-Seckel s.v. *forma*, e. For comparison Van den Hout 1999: 30 ad Fronto 10.20 *formam*.

*sui*, ‘his’, instead of *eius*: *Suus* and *eius* are interchangeable in Sidonius and in late Latin in general. The same is true of *se* and *is/ille*. See LHS 2: 175 f. Further examples from Sidonius in book 7 are 7.6.6 *pectori suo*, and 7.9.18 *personam suam*. See also Köhler 1995 ad 1.2.1 *formae suae*, and Amherdt 2001 ad 4.23.2 *desperationem suam*.

*seu per censum seu per familiaria*, ‘considering either his means or his origin’: Cf. Sidon. *Ep. 5.10* *ut sileam de genere vel censu*, ‘not to mention his lineage and his means’ (Anderson), also of a social climber. Cf. Ambr. *Ep. 7.36.23* *nobilis genere, censu dives*. Outside Sidonius the collocation *census - familia* is not found. For his variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.
Section 2

quaetamen ut gesta sunt si quispiam dignus relator evolveret,
tamen, ‘at least’, expresses the concession, after the preceding sentence which outlined a promising story, that only a competent narrator could do justice to it - and, implicitly, that such a man is not available, almost: ‘If only we had a good storyteller among us’. For tamen qualifying the preceding sentence, see Spevak 2005: 218 ff.

quispian dignus relator, ‘a qualified storyteller’: Quispian, ‘some’, is often used by Sidonius, cf. e.g. 7.8.1. According to LHS 2: 196 it was probably already an archaism in old Latin. The preference later Latin writers have for it can be traced to its revival in the archaists.

Relator is a hapax for Sidonius. The meaning ‘narrator’ is postclassical. It is often found with adjectives such as dignus and idoneus, cf. e.g. Ambr. Ep. 6.1 gratiarum vestrarum ... idoneum relatorem, Ennod. Ep. 6.29 fidelis relator, and Cass. Psalm. 18 l. 306 tantorum sacramentorum relator dignus.

Sidonius is the only one to join relator and evolvere, ‘to unfold’, ‘tell’, cf. Ep. 1.5.1 sinisteritatum suarum relationes evolvere, which is unique as well. Here again we have variation technique.

sed quoniam iubetis ipsi
iubetis, ‘you demand’: Iubetis is plural, but addresses Graecus alone. See Introduction, section 8 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

The verb iubere, together with the assent of Sidonius to tell the story as required, is an instance of the so-called iubes-pareo motif. It is frequent in letters which accompany a literary work, especially poetry. The topos has four elements: 1. the idea of writing did not originate with the author; 2. he writes under orders; 3. he belittles his own work (urbanitas); 4. he asks for something in return. Well known examples are Cic. Orat. 1-2 and Plin. Ep. 1.1 (cf. ibid. 6.15 for a joke on the topos). Sidonius begins his collection of letters as follows: Ep. 1.1.1 diu praecipis …ut …uno volumine includam, to continue : 1.1.3 sed scilicet tibi parui. See Köhler 1995 ad loc., and Amherdt 2001: 224 and 399 f. Cf. Janson 1995: 106. Among many variations on the theme in Sidonius, one might point out 4.18.3 annuo iniunctis, and Ep. 7.17.1 and 3 ut iniunxeras …persolvimus.

ipsi Luetjohann: ipse codd. Luetjohann’s conjecture is followed by all subsequent editors. It must be right. One does not find a singular attribute with ‘illogical’ vos in Sidonius. It is not unusual for scribes to mistake e for i, or the other way round, e.g. 1.6.3 enervis V: inervis LN, 2.9.9 it M: et L, 6.12.5 munere codd.: munere Luetjohann. See below 7.2.9 herede codd.: heredi Anderson. Cf. Mossberg 1934: 10 f.

Ipse is admitted once with a plural by Morin in the Corpus Christianorum edition of Caes. Arel. Serm. 84.1 sicut ipse nostis (addressed to fratres carissimi), without further justification. It is used freely in the Middle Ages of one person who is addressed with the pluralis reverentiae, e.g. Bern. Claraval. Apol. 4 ipse eos optime nostis, Ep. 239 nostis ipse (cf. Ep. 427 vos ipsum), and later authors.
ut aliquid vobis a me laetum copiosumque pagina ferat,

vobis a me, ‘for you from me’: Although the entire section is plural (see above on iubetis), me is singular, probably for reasons of euphony, to avoid vobis a nobis.

laetum copiosumque, ‘rich and eloquent’, are two almost synonymous t.t. from oratory ‘rich’, ‘florid’, and ‘copious’, ‘eloquent’. Quint. Inst. 10.1.46 has the opposition laetus ac pressus, ‘rich and concise’, while in 10.1.106 he contrasts densior ille, hic copiosior, ‘the one terser, the other more copious’. Cf. Macr. Sat. 5.1.19 where Virgil’s versatile style, eloquentia Maronis ... nunc brevis, nunc copiosa, is compared to nature: terra ipsa hic laeta segetibus et pratis, ibi silvis et rupibus hispida, ‘the earth itself which here is lush with crops and meadows, there rugged with woods and rocks’. Cf. Rufin. Hist. 2.9 tulit ... multorum sanctorum segetem satis laetam, produxit copiosam piorum vineam. Thus we have here the literary concept of copia, as opposed to brevitas. For that reason the translations of laetum by Anderson and Loyen (‘cheerful’ resp. ‘plaisante’) are less likely.

The phrase laetum copiosumque, in its redundancy, is itself a case in point. A letter ought to be short, but this one is going to be florid and long - for which, of course, the author will offer his excuses at the end, in sect. 10. For redundancy, and Sidonius’ opinions about style, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

pagina, ‘letter’, already in Cic. Att. 6.2.3 quoniam respondi postremae tuae paginae prima mea. See Köhler 1995: 126 f. ad 1.2.1 epistularis pagina. In the corpus of this study we have 7.11.2 intuitu paginae praesentis, ‘on account of this letter’, but also other nuances, 7.9.4 paginam ... adiunctam, ‘the text in attachment (of the speech in Bourges)’, and 7.9.6 paginae decretalis oblatu, ‘by presenting your written resolution’.

date veniam, si hanc ipsam tabellarii nostri hospitalitatem comicis salibus comparandam

date veniam, ‘pardon me’: Politeness, urbanitas, requires the author to beg pardon for his imperfect product. See General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

tabellarii nostri hospitalitatem, ‘the stay of our letter carrier’: Tabellarius is one of a range of words Sidonius uses, meaning ‘letter carrier’: baiulus, gerulus, oblator, portitor, pugillator. See Grupe’s Index 481 s.v. tabellarius, and Amherdt 2001: 206. For the inclusive, and familiar, use of noster, ‘between you and me’, for letter-bearers, see the Introduction to the current letter, section 8 ‘You’ and ‘I’; cf. Ep. 7.2.2 tabellarii nostri, 7.7.1 nugigerulus noster.

Hospitalitas means ‘stay’, ‘sojourn’. The same Ep. 2.9.2 cum restat hospitalitatis ordo reserandus, ‘... the events during my stay ...’, and e.g. Bened. Reg. 61 quia tempore hospitalitatis potuit eius vita dignoscì, ‘... during his stay ...’. Hospitalitas, meaning ‘hospitality’, + gen. obj., as claimed by Anderson: ‘this same reception accorded to our mail-carrier’, and Loyen: ‘l’hospitalité réservée à notre messager’, is without parallel. Moreover, it is not the hospitality offered to Amantius which is so special, it is his clever (and comical) way of exploiting the opportunities of his stay.

comicis salibus comparandam, ‘which will bear comparison with the jests of comedy’ (Anderson): Here is a second clue to the understanding of the current letter: it will be a piece of comedy.
Sidonius himself read both Greek and Roman comedy and, with his son, compared their form and content, as we have seen in the introduction, section ‘A Touch of Comedy’. As to Roman comedy, Terence in particular was taught in schools. His canonical status, on a par with Virgil’s, is also recognized by Sidon. Carm. 13.36 pro Vergilio Terentioque. Sidonius did not neglect Plautus either: Ep. 1.9.8 Plautini Pyrgopolineis imitator. See also General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

salva vestrarum aurium severitate perstringamus,

salva vestrarum aurium severitate, ‘with all respect to your grave ears’ (Anderson): The high ecclesiastical rank of the correspondent and his literary discernment, which in this type of correspondence are two sides of the same coin, should prevent him from being troubled by literary trifles of questionable ethical character. Among the synonyms of severitas are censura and examen. Compare such cases as Ep. 4.3.1 cum in examen aurium tuarum quippe scriptus adductur, ‘… to be judged by your ears …’, and 7.9.1 aurium ... occupare censuram, ‘to be heard by your critical ears’. Cf. 7.7.4 veniabilis sit, quaesumus, apud aures vestras veritatis asperitas. The same phrase in a non-formulary context: Aug. Ep. 142.3 salva severtate iudicii. For Sidonius’ variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

perstringamus, ‘we pass over cursorily’, ‘touch on’: For the verb cf. e.g. Cic. Ver. 4.105 rei magnitudo me breviter perstringere atrociatem criminis non sinit. It occurs one more time in Sidonius’ correspondence, Ep. 2.2.20 (a long letter) quae tamen ... nec cuncta perstrinxit. (Due to a printer’s error the Budé edition has pestringamus.)

Although Graecus has asked for a long and copious letter (and is going to get his way), Sidonius formulates with ceremonious restraint that he will only cursorily hurt the saintly ears of the bishop with this profane story. For the restraint expressed by the plural perstringamus, whereas the author elsewhere in letters refers to himself in the singular, see my discussion above at sect. 2 iubetis.

ne secundo insinuatum non nunc primum nosse videamur.

‘to get rid of the impression that I knew the man the first time, whom I now introduce a second time’

insinuatum, ‘introduced’, ‘recommended’: For the verb cf. Ep. 1.10.1 eum ... mihi insinuas, and several times elsewhere in the correspondence: in book 7 alone 7.4.1 insinuare quoscumque iam paveo, and 7.11.2 Petrum ... portitorem nostri sermonis insinuo. Cf. e.g. Symm. Ep. 1.40 amicum meum promptus commendator insinuo. Introducing somebody is one of the traditional functions of the letter (already Cic. Fam. 5.5.1 litteras ... commendaticias), see Sykutris 1931: 199 f. and Fernández López 1994: 135 ff. See General Introduction, par. 5.1.1 A bird’s eye view and 5.3.1 Classification.

non CPF Mohr Bellès: n** M¹ : nos Leo Luetjohann Loyen: I retain the manuscript reading, against Leo: ‘I am going to introduce this man a second time (and tell his true story), because
I do not want you to think that this is *not* the first time I have got to know him (truly).’ ‘I am going to introduce him a second time. I will now tell you who he really was. Shame on me I didn’t know that before. But I *must* tell it, because I want you to know I am honest. I *really* didn’t know him well enough on the first occasion.’

The change entailed by Leo’s conjecture *nos* is slight and, in principle, greatly simplifies the thought: ‘I now introduce this man a second time. I do not want you to think that I did not know him before.’ Whether it is correct, however, is a matter for debate. In my opinion it says exactly the opposite of what Sidonius means. Sidonius *did* not really know him before, as a matter of fact. He has said so himself, alleging his *ignorantia: ignorantiae siquidem meae callidus viator imposuit*. That is why Anderson, Mohr and Bellès retained *non* – which is also the reading of M¹ (for *n* = *non* see Cappelli: 229). Anderson translates: ‘I do not want to look as if introducing a man for the second time and not now knowing him for the first.’ Mohr, praef. p. xxxii, paraphrases: ‘Ut videatis nos secundo insinuatum nunc primum nosse.’

Sidonius *does* confess his initial ignorance: ‘I now have got to know him really for the first time, and I do not want to conceal that.’ That is precisely the reason why he has decided to tell *this* story, whereas he might have chosen any story.

To Sidonius, art is everything. There is no content without form. The concern with form, the desire to formulate a conceit, a parallelism, etc., is more important than immediate transparency of meaning. In fact, we should say it enhances the meaning, for it adds essential respect for the perspicacity of the reader.

In the current letter the opposition *primus* – *secundus* remains present, see below, sect. 4 *attamen primus illi in vestra moenia satis secundus introitus*. For a similar formal constraint, see the opposition *vetus* – *novus*, dealt with at 7.9.25 *novam sententiam meam ... vestram veterem*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

**simul et, si moris est regularum ut ex materia omni usurpentur principia dicendi,**

**simul et**, ‘moreover’, ‘there is a second reason’: There are two reasons for choosing this subject, Sidonius tells Graecus: (1) it is necessary as a *retractatio* because of his own former ignorance and the duping of his correspondent which this entailed, (2) it is an obvious choice as it is about the bringer of the message himself.

**si moris est regularum**, ‘if it is in line with rhetorical rules’: Mohr has done a lot of harm by doubting the authenticity of *regularum*. Editors one after the other have come to feel unsure about its correctness and have spent a lot of inventiveness on finding alternatives. Mohr himself, praef. xxxii, thought of *saecularium*, ‘laymen’, Semple 1930: 40 f. proposed *rabularum*, ‘ranting speakers’, ‘tub-thumpers’, Warmington in his app. crit. suggested *regularumque*, and Watt 1999: 13 thought up <a>*retalogum* (sic), ‘storytellers’. Brakman 1904: 15 f. thought the ‘pleonasm’ of the original text justifiable. The manuscript reading was also retained by Anderson, Loyen and Bellès.

The meaning of this sentence is straightforward: ‘If the official rules of oratory prescribe that one may derive one’s topic from any subject matter, then why in *this* case should I go out of my way to find a subject, especially as I am going to write only an informal account?’ The point is in the opposition between *regularum* and *sermocinaturo*, between formal oratory and...
informal conversation. If free choice of subject matter is allowed in serious cases, then it is allowed \textit{a fortiori} in more trivial matters.

There were, probably, two sides to Mohr’s perplexity: \textit{moris est} is construed here with the genitive, not of a person but of an abstract noun, and what exactly is the meaning of \textit{regula}?

The perplexity concerning the first question could have arisen because he did not take into account later Latin and patristic usage. In classical Latin \textit{moris est} is used with nouns indicating persons or proper names, either with genitive or with dative, e.g. Cic. \textit{Ver. 1.66 moris esse Graecorum, Vell. 2.37.5 Pompeio moris erat}. Later Latin, however, also has cases like \textit{Ambr. Fid. 3.9 moris est scripturis divinis, Hier. in Eccl. 12.12 moris est scripturarum} (et passim), ‘it is usual in the Scriptures’, Vigil. \textit{Thaps. c. Arian. 1.11 (fifth cent.) ecclesiasticae semper moris est disciplinae}, ‘it is common ecclesiastical discipline’. (For \textit{moris est} itself see LHS 2: 62 and Mossberg 1934: 61.)

As regards \textit{regula}, Sidonius himself shows the way in \textit{Ep. 9.3.5 ubi te inter spiritales regulas vel foreneses medioximum quiddam contionantem … ambiebamus}. The situation is that Sidonius describes how he came to be present at the dedication of a church in Lyon, presided over by bishop Faustus. Faustus made a much admired address, ‘steering a middle course between the rules of religious and forensic usage’ (Anderson). Both disciplines had their own vocabulary, style and reasoning. This complex is summarized in the word \textit{regulae}.

That \textit{regulae} in Sidonius is about formulating and style, can also be seen in \textit{Ep. 0.14.1 omissa epithalamii teneritudine per asperrimas philosophiae et salebrosissimas regulas stilum traxi}, ‘… I have applied the unpolished and jerky philosophical jargon’. (In his commentary Ravenna 1990 should have given attention to this topic. The adjectives \textit{asper} and \textit{salebrosus} belong to stylistic vocabulary: Cic. \textit{Orat. 20 aspera ... oratione}, ‘unpolished’, ‘rough’, Quint. \textit{Inst. 11.2.46 resistens et salebrosa oratio, ‘jerky’, ‘uneven’). Cf. \textit{Ep. 2.9.2 in usum regulamque Latini sermonis}, ‘the theory and the usage of Latin speech’ (Anderson).

\textit{Regula} as ‘rule’, ‘standard’, applied to the domain of oratory was not his invention. It is found before him in Petr. 2.7 \textit{semelque corrupta eloquentiae regula stetit et obmutuit} (of the nefarious influence of Asianism on style), and Quint. \textit{Inst. 1.6.44 sic in loquendo non si quid vitiose multis insederit pro regula sermonis accipiendum erit}. Savaron has referred to Macrobr. \textit{Sat. 1.4.1 ut regulis placet} (about correct usage), and Claud. \textit{Mam. Anim. praef. philosophomenon regulis} (an excuse for philosophical jargon comparable to Sidonius).

\textit{ut ex materia omni usurpentur principia dicendi},

\textit{ex materia omni usurpentur}, ‘is taken from any subject matter’: \textit{Usurpare ex}, meaning ‘to borrow, derive from’, is not often found. Cf. Aug. \textit{Ep. 36.5 quid est autem alogia, quod verbum ex graeca lingua usurpatum est?} It indicates here the \textit{inventio}, finding the thoughts appropriate to each of the five \textit{partes orationis}. See Lausberg: 146 ff.

\textit{principia dicendi}, ‘the starting point for a speech’: The phrase indicates the beginning of a speech (\textit{exordium, prooemium}), as in Cic. \textit{de Orat. 1.121 experior, ut ... exalbescam in principiis dicendi}, or, more specifically, as it does here, the function of the \textit{exordium} to find a starting point or theme, cf. Cic. \textit{de Orat. 1.142 ut debetur (sc. orator) reperire primum quid dicere}. See e.g. Cic. \textit{de Orat. 2.315 principia ... dicendi, defined as the exordium, Rep. 1.56 dicendi principia, devoted in this case to the principle ‘a love incipiendum’, Man. 3 (going to praise Pompey’s}

Quint. Inst. 4.1.52 shows the future orator that the elements of the prooemium can come from myriads of places (quid, apud quem, pro quo, etc.) and instructs him to let himself be guided by his talent when making the final choice: ipsa illum natura eo ducet ut sciat, quid primum dicendum sit, where primum dicendum is equivalent to our principia dicendi.

Loyen’s rendering ‘les éléments du discours’ is therefore beside the point.

cur hic quoque quodcumque mihi sermocinaturo materia longius quaeratur expetaturque
hic quoque, ‘now also’, ‘in this case too’: The general rule of being free to choose one’s subject, also applies in the special case of being asked by Graecus to write something diverting.
quodcumque mihi sermocinaturo, ‘(why) in the preparation of a casual screed (should) I’ (Anderson): Quodcumque here is the same as qualecumque, ‘no matter what kind of story’, or – in the key of topical modesty – ‘a trifle’. As for mihi, the dativus auctoris is regularly encountered in Sidonius, e.g. Ep. 1.5.3 cantatas ... nobis, 1.5.10 mihi exarabantur.

Sermocinari, subst. sermocinatio, ‘conversation’, ‘informal talk’, describes the style in which correspondence is conceived, see Köhler 1995: 277 ad 1.9.7 pro me ... sermocinetur. Cf. Iulius Victor Ars 27 epistolis conveniunt multa eorum, quae de sermone praecepta sunt, ‘much of what is prescribed for polite conversation is applicable to correspondence’. Correspondence is, in the words of Cic. Phil. 2.7 amicorum colloquia absentium, ‘a conversation between absent friends’. Hence sermo, ‘conversation’, comes to mean ‘correspondence’ in epistolographers, see the next clause (sermoni … sermo), and e.g. 3.9.1 servatur nostri consuetudo sermonis, ‘we keep up the custom of our correspondence’, 7.11.1 litterarum consuetudo sermonis, ‘the habit of writing letters’, 7.12.1 prima sermonum officia, ‘the honour of the opening letter’. See Cugusi 1983: 73 and General Introduction, sect. 5.1 Epistolography.

The verb sermocinari is also used for speaking in public in an informal way, distinct from the more official style inherent in judicial and forensic proceedings. See 7.9.1 orationem, quam videor ad plebem Biturigis in ecclesia sermocinatus, with my comment. Cf. Cic. Inv. 2.17.54 in consuetudine scribendi aut sermocinandi (conversation on a par with writing), Cato Orat. 126 quem ego denique credo ... cum spectatoribus sermocinaturum (speaking in public). See the definition in Quint. 3.4.10 Plato in Sophiste judiciali et contioniali tertiam adiecit προσομιλητικήν, quam sane permittamus nobis dicere sermocinatricem: quae a forensi ratione disiungitur et est accommodata privatis disputationibis, cuius vis eadem profecto est, quae dialectice, ‘Plato, in his Sophistes, has added to the judicial and deliberative a third kind which he calls prosomiletikon, and which we may allow ourselves to call the sermocinatory sort, which is distinct from the oratory of the forum and suited to private discussions, and of which the nature is the same as that of dialectics or logic’ (transl. J.S. Watson, 1856, adaptation as found at http://honeyl.public.iastate.edu/quintilian/).

For a different opinion, see Lausberg: 407 ff. and 543, for whom sermocinatio is ἠθοποιία, ‘character sketch’. 

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quaeratur expetaturque, ‘be sought and looked for’: For doublets, here motivated by the long search (longius), see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

nisi ut sermoni nostro sit ipse pro causa, cui erit noster sermo pro sarcina.

‘so let the subject of my letter be the selfsame man who is going to have it in his backpack’

nisi ut answers longius, ‘why look further and not choose …’: The constellation, although unique, is a variant of the well known type quid/nihil aliud nisi ut etc., ‘what/nothing else but …’, e.g. Cic. Fin. 4.13.34 nihil aliud agere, nisi ut etc.

sermoni nostro sit pro causa, ‘serves as the subject of my letter’: For sermo, ‘letter’, or ‘story’, see the previous clause, sermocinaturo. Esse pro, ‘serve as’, is like e.g. Cic. Ver. 3.82 ut ipsius voluntas ei posset esse pro lege, Sen. Ben. 2.18.8 venenum aliquando pro remedio fuit. Sidonius likes this type of construction with pro, see my comment on 7.3.2 pro ritu.

sarcina, ‘rucksack’, ‘backpack’, is the first lexical hint at a subsequent theme in the story, namely that of a military expedition. Sidonius characterizes Amantius as a person who by nature is always on a campaign of conquest, be it (formerly) as a Don Juan or (then and now) as a businessman. Sarcina could be an echo of Juv. 3.160 f. quis gener hic placuit censu minor atque puellae / sarcinulis impar?, ‘here (viz. in Rome), has one ever seen somebody accepted as son-in-law if he had less money and an asset inferior to the girl’s one?’ (sarcinulae ironically for ‘property’). Instead of departing in full marching kit, Amantius takes this light-weight letter. Cf. my comment on sect. 3 nihil est enim viatico levi gravior, ‘nothing is heavier than light baggage’. Cf. also the pun in 3.7.2 mementoque viatorum manus gravare chartis, quatinus amicorum cura relevetur, ‘and take care to load the arms of travellers with letters to lighten the anxiety of your friends’.

Note the word order. It is partly parallel (pro causa – pro sarcina), partly chiastic (the verb esse and sermoni nostro – noster sermo).

Sections 3 - 8

The sections 3 to 8 tell the story of Amantius’ conquests in Marseille. The narration shows a high degree of stylistic features characteristic of what Bakker 1997 has called the diegetic and mimetic narrative modes. In the narrative analysis which follows I will use their presentation and application to a comparable piece of narrative in a letter of Pliny, the well known ‘ghost story’ of Ep. 7.27, by Kroon 2002.

In Latin narrative texts the diegetic mode is associated with the following features:

See esp. pp. 28 ff. for the terminology. He defines a diegetic mode which ‘is meant to capture a way of presentation of historical material in which the narrative is overtly mediated, with the historian in the role of annalist or evaluator.’ In the contrasting mimetic mode ‘the historian recedes in favor of a remote observer on the spot’, which develops the possibilities of ‘immediacy’ and ‘foreground description’. As Kroon 2002: 191 has said, the most important parameter in distinguishing narrative modes ‘is the parameter of relative distance between the experiencing and the reporting of events in the narrated world’. 
- use of the perfect tense, sometimes in alternation with the imperfect
- use of complex clause structures
- use of connectives and other explicitly text-structuring devices, e.g. causal and adversative connectives
- use of particles and other devices that may indicate ‘modality’ of ‘subjectivity’
- use of deictic adverbs which indicate distance, e.g. *ibi* instead of *hic*, *tum/tunc* instead of *nunc*
- use of summarizing and generalizing nouns or phrases, often containing abstract nouns and/or verbs with a low degree of specificity.

Characteristic features of the *mimetic* mode include:

- use of the historical present, the historical infinitive, or of ellipsis of the verb
- use of relatively brief and non-complex clauses, usually occurring in a cluster
- frequent initial position of the verb
- frequent occurrence of animate subjects
- asyndeton
- lack of devices that indicate a specific modality or a subjective judgment by the narrator; absence of metacommunicative comment
- use of deictic adverbs which indicate proximity, e.g. *hic* and *nunc*
- lack of an obvious foreground-background structure
- use of indirect speech
- use of fine-grained detail.

The diegetic-mimetic distinction should be conceived of as a continuum rather than as a binary opposition. Narrative texts usually display a steady alternation between more diegetic and more mimetic sections.

In the context of this commentary I do not aim at an exhaustive analysis, but rather I will use the narratological framework to get a grip on the main structure of the story.

Section 3 tells of Amantius’ youth. We find: ellipsis of the verb, non-complex clauses, mainly animate subjects, asyndeton, detail. The mode is mimetic, except for the last sentence, which is in the perfect tense and contains a maxim (*nihil est enim viatico levi gravius*) by way of authorial comment.

Section 4 tells of his arrival and first introduction in Marseille. Again we find the characteristics of the mimetic mode: ellipsis of the verb in the first half, historical infinitive in the second, non-complex clauses, mainly animate subjects, asyndeton, detail. The historical infinitive takes over the moment Amantius becomes active in Marseillaise society (continued in section 5). The narrator intrudes in two diegetic flashes: an apostrophe of the addressee (*qui vobis decessit*) and a comment on the behaviour of the main character (*prout aetatis ratiomitteret*).

Section 5 tells of his being accepted by the high society of Marseille. The historical infinitives continue throughout, as do non-complex clauses and asyndeton. The mimetic mode is almost left in two summarizing clauses (beginning with the anaphoric *sicque* and *perque haec*), but they keep the historical infinitive. *Deinceps* and *tunc* are also cursory intrusions of diegetic elements.

Section 6 tells how Amantius meets a girl and woos her. The narrative mode becomes overtly diegetic. *Forte accidit ut* marks the transition. After that we have the imperfect throughout (providing ‘background’), and sentences become more complex. The author again comments (*siquidem ea aetas infantulae, ut adhuc decenter*).
Section 7 tells of the marriage contract. The start is diegetic: authorial recapitulation (anni obiter thalamo pares: quid morer multis?), and characterization of the bridegroom, the bride, the bishop and the mother-in-law (an asyndetic colometric sequence; notice that asyndeton can also be found in the diegetic model!). Then the story continues in the historical present (mimetic mode); the sentence structure becomes more complex.

Section 8 tells of Amantius’ return to his home town, and of the misgivings of his mother-in-law. The sentence structure gradually becomes more complex, with explicit text-structuring devices (e.g. résumés in abl. abs., connections like tunc demum … quando). Abstract nouns appear (facilitatem, munificentia, etc.). After two initial historical presents the narration is continued in the perfect tense. Thus the finale is in the diegetic mode.

We may conclude that the narrative is made up of four successive phases: 4-5, 6-7a, 7b, and 8, respectively a broad mimetic introduction, the marriage and portrayal of the couple in diegetic perspective, a short relaunch of the story in the mimetic mode, and its conclusion in broad, diegetic strokes. The author remains present in the mimetic parts also by making short comments, and by not refraining altogether from explicitly structuring the narrative. We may add to this one last aspect, the author’s presence throughout, due to the use of qualifying, ‘subjective’, adjectives, like secundus (4), opportunis (5), blandus (6), superiorem (7), sollemni (8). He does not disappear altogether behind the story, but keeps in contact with his reader. He is not an invisible dramatist, but a self-conscious narrator.

To conclude this introduction I refer to the analysis of Köhler 1999: 414 f., who discusses Sidonius’ account of the story of Amantius within the framework of an assessment of the historical infinitive in Sidonius (applied also in the narrative episodes of Ep. 1.7 and 1.11). She draws attention to the superior way in which he lends profile to the narration through acceleration and deceleration, and careful use of tempus change: ‘Die Funktion des Historischen Infinitivs ist dabei, innerhalb einer bestimmten Situation eine Explikation oder eine Reaktion, auch eine Verbreiterung zum Zweck der Charakterisierung darzustellen, oder die Inzidenz einer neuen Handlung vorzubereiten oder zu bezeichnen.’ (415). They suspend time, and the reader is made to look at the scene in a way akin to the ekphrasis. The object is not a statue or a villa, but a scene on the comic stage. The focus is on details, according to the late antique ideal of descriptio per partes: Sidonius ‘macht damit einen alten lateinischen Sprachgebrauch für sein modernes Stilideal fruchtbar’ (416).

As far as our story is concerned, the historical infinitive does, indeed, suspend time in the episode in which Amantius is accepted by the upper ten of Marseille. The focus is on the interaction between the members of society and the newcomer, regardless of the time it took.

For further reading on narrative modes and the historical infinitive, see the bibliographies of Kroon and Köhler.

**Section 3**

The author first describes Amantius’ antecedents: his place of birth, his forefathers and father, and his material circumstances. This closely adheres to literary theory, for which see the laudatio of Simplicius in the speech in Bourges, 7.9.17-24, with my comment.

An illuminating parallel – proof of the homogeneity over time of rhetorical schooling – is Auson. Grat. act. (= 21) 36, who writes about himself: patriam non obscuram, familiae non paenitendam, domum innocentem, innocentiam non coactus, angustas opes, veruntamen libris et
litteris dilatatas, frugalitatem sine sordibus, ingenium liberale, animum non illiberalem, victum vestitum supellectilem munda, non splendida, ‘my birthplace, a city not unrenowned; my family, of which I have no need to be ashamed; my unblemished home; my life passed of my own free will without a spot; my scanty means (though enriched with books and learning); my simple yet not stingy tastes; my liberal intellect; my not illiberal spirit; the unostentatious refinement of my diet, my dress and the appointments of my house’ (transl. H.G. Evelyn White, ed. Loeb).

Amantius

Arverni huic patria

Parentes natalibus non superbis sed absolutis

Sicut nihil illustre iactantes, ita nihil servile metuentes

Contenti censu modico sed eodem vel sufficiente vel libero

Cf. Auson. Epiced. (= 5) 7 non opulens nec egens, parcus sine sordibus egi.

Arverni huic patria;

Arverni huic patria, ‘he comes from Arverni (Clermont)’: For the Auvergne and its capital, present day Clermont(-Ferrand), see ad 7.1.1 miseri Arverni. For the phrase, cf. Ov. Met. 5.494 Pisa mihi patria est, Trist. 4.10.3 Sulmo mihi patria est, Plin. Nat. 16.141 huic patria insula Creta. One can imagine that Sidonius had at hand Trist. 4.10, likewise an (auto)biography, and for one moment sets side by side Ovid, the tenerorum lusor amorum (Trist. 4.10.1), and our Amantius, the pauper adamat us and nost er Hippolytus (sect. 8), who even appears to have a significant name. For the lusus of playing on names in Sidonius’ circle, see Mathisen 1991: 29 ff., who in Mathisen 2003/1: 51 n. 35 remarked: ‘Curiously, Sidonius makes no attempt to play upon Amantius’ s name (i.e., “Lover”). Perhaps he thought the point was obvious.’ The play is not made explicit - the name is not even mentioned in this letter - but it is there all the same.

parentes natalibus non superbis sed absolutis,

natalibus non superbis, ‘not upper crust’: Superbus here has the positive meaning ‘a source of pride’, as e.g. Verg. A. 11.340 f. genus huic materna superbum / nobilitas dabat. In general in Sidonius superb us and superbia have an unfavourable connotation: Ep. 4.14.3 tamen nihil de superbia tumet, 7.8.1 turbidus per superbiam, 8.7.2 illi qui superbissime opinabantur solo se censu esse censendos, 8.13.1 sine superbia nobilém – the opposite of the required verecundia and pudor (see Amherdt 2001: 45).
absolutis, ‘independent’, in the parallel from Ausonius: non paenitendam, ‘not to be ashamed of’, ‘decent’. It is not so much ‘perfect’, ‘accomplished’ (Anderson: ‘irreproachable origin’, Loyen: ‘de famille parfaite’), for they are certainly not top-notch, as ‘of independent means’, ‘free from bondage’, cf. e.g. Ps. Ven. Fort. Vita Med. 4 (sixth/seventh cent., MGH AA 4/2: 68.6) mater (viz. of bishop Medardus) vero Romana, nomine Protagia, absolutis claruit servitute natalibus, ‘... a descent free from slavery’. TLL 1: 177.59 ff., in addition to ‘perfectus’, has ‘nulla re indigens’ as a possible translation of absolutus, but unfortunately does not support this usage separately; it is probably later, and weakened.

et sicut nihil illustre iactantes, ita nihil servile metuentes,

et is explicative, expatiating on the previous phrase. For doublets and variation in Sidonius, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

nihil illustre iactantes, ‘boasting no grandeur’ (Anderson): The phrase is common when one has reasons to be proud of one’s descent, e.g. Prop. 2.13.9 f. non ego sum formae tantum mirator honestae, / nec si qua illustris femina iactat avos. Cf. Hor. Carm. 1.14.13 quamvis ... iactes et genus et nomen inutile, Ov. Ep. 16.51 genus et proavos et regia nomina iactas.

nihil servile metuentes, ‘not afraid of being thought of as slaves’: The family belonged neither to highest nor to the lowest social class. The phrase is construed parallel to nihil illustre iactantes, and deviates slighty from its usual context, which is one of danger, war etc., which come unexpectedly, e.g. Curt. 5.4.27 nihil tale metuentibus, ‘expecting nothing of the sort’, Sal. Iug. 91.4 nihil hostile metuentes, and Sidon. Ep. 1.7.6 deferimus igitur nihil tale metuenti totam ¤perimachiam† (the future victim is unprepared).

contenti censu modico sed oodem vel sufficienete vel libero;

contenti censu modico, ‘content with modest means’: See Hor. Carm. 2.15.13 census ... brevis, Man. 4.507 (sign of the zodiac Aries rising) non contenta suo generabit pectora censu, Ambr. Off. 2.15.73 sunt enim plerique etiam viri qui tenues sint censu, contenti quidem exiguo ad sui usum, etc.

vel sufficienete vel libero, ‘sufficient and unencumbered’: For vel – vel = et – et in later Latin, see my comment on 7.1.6 vel ... vel.

Census liber, ‘property free from debt’, is Sidonius’ own, but cf. e.g. Cic. Fam. 13.76.2 possessionem ... liberam et immunem, and Epist. Pontif. 583.3 p. 202 Thiel possessio ... triginta solidorum redituum liberorum. See TLL 7/2: 1283.74 ff. In the Ausonian angustas opes ... sine sordibus, the same aspect of ‘living on modest means, but without the shame of skimping’ is highlighted. Anderson and Loyen rightly translate ‘free from debt’, ‘unencumbered’, although Anderson had some misgivings - unnecessarily, I think (note 4 ad loc. ‘The word might mean “more than sufficient”, “comfortable”, “ample”, “abundant”.’).

Mathisen 2003/1: 49 n. 30 adds that this observation was important, as it meant that the family was not directly dependent on some potentate.

militia illis in clericali potius quam in Palatino decursa comitatu.

militia illis ... decursa, ‘they held offices’: Miltia is ‘(public) service’, ‘career’, see Köhler 1995: 218 ad 1.6.1 militiae Palatinae, and Amherdt 2001: 180 ad 4.4.1 militiae clericali. It is loosely used of any service given to emperor and state, and in a narrower and technical sense of a
subordinate career in the army, militia armata or militaris, at the court, militia Palatina, or in the civil administration. The career of the son is determined by that of his father (Cod. Theod. 8.4.28, Cod. Iust. 12.23.5). See LRE 377 ff. on the tenure of offices.

Sidonius, like other Christian writers, also applies it to the service of the church in the phrase cited above and Ep. 6.1.3 militiae Lirinensis, ‘being a monk at Lérins’. Cf. among others Aug. Ep. 60.1 militiae clericatus. However, the metaphor of the ‘battle of faith’ is often predominant, e.g. Ambr. Vid. 8.50 secundum mysterium vero fidei militiae ecclesiae victoria est, and, for that matter, in militiae Lirinensis as well, ‘service at Lérins’.

The verb decurrere is related to a military career in, e.g., Cod. Iust. 6.27.20 militiae ordine ac labore decurso, Cod. Theod. 12.1.184 post decursa stipendia. Cf. Sidon. Ep. 6.1.3 in apostolica sede novem iam decursa quinque annia (on the model of militiae Lirinensis, thus defining a spiritual career in military terms). See Gualandri 1979: 111 n. 15.

comitatu, ‘retinue’, ‘service’, esp. from the late third century the whole of the civilian staff and military personnel that accompanied the emperor. See Bowersock et al. 1999: 386, s.v. comitatus, TLL 3: 1796.64 ff. ‘inde a Constantino i.q. comites, palatium, sedes imperatoris’. See e.g. Auson. Ep. (= 27) 12 l. 26 f. in comitatu degimus ambo aevo dispari, Amm. 16.6.1 in comitatu Augusti, Cod. Theod. 6.15.1 (a. 413) sive in provinciis sive in sacro comitatu. The expression Palatinus comitatus as such does not occur elsewhere.

pater istius granditer frugi et liberis parum liberalis

istius = huius: See ad 7.1.6 populus iste Vienensis.

granditer frugi, ‘very sober’: The adverb granditer occurs from Cyprian onward, e.g. Cypr. Ep. 33.2.1 semper gloriose et granditer operati sunt, and often in the phrase granditer dicere, ‘to speak loudly’ or ‘impressively’. The comparative already in Ov. Ep. 15.30 quamvis grandius ille (= Alcaeus) sonet. But the meaning is gradually weakened to ‘exceedingly’, ‘very’. In Sidonius, who has granditer no fewer than seventeen times (prose only), it can also be used to qualify an adjective; this is not the case in anyone else before or after him in antiquity: Sidon. Ep. 3.4.1 granditer anxius, 9.9.1 votivum ... granditer, and in our phrase. See Wölfflin 1884: 94, and my comment on 7.7.1 ioculariter. Notice the opposition to parum, which follows.

liberis parum liberalis, ‘scarcely generous towards his children’, is a suitable characterization of the role of the father in a story that is grafted on comedy; just look what Terence wrote: Ter. Ad. 57 f. pudore et liberalitate liberos / retinere satius esse credo quam metu.

‘Bring up your children with decency and generosity; don’t terrorize them,’ the uncle says. The father in question, however, has only one way of bringing up: don’t let them have it their way, like Amantius’ father. The role of the more liberal uncle in Terence is played next by bishop Eustachius. The phrase was evidently well known, because it is also cited by Mar. Victorin. Defin. p. 22.2 Stangl (fourth cent.) ex hoc est illud Terentii ‘pudore ac liberalitate liberos retinere satius esse credo quam metu’.

Liberalis is not about money alone, which is sufficiently covered by frugi and parsimoniam, it is about a generous, broad-minded way of living. Cf. Sidon. Ep. 4.24.3 voce liberum, facie liberalem, which is imitated in Greg. Tur. Iul. 9, who renders facie liberalem with vultu hilarem.

The father here falls below the aristocratic standard which is voiced in Tac. Amm. 3.8 sueta erga filios familiarum nobilis liberalitate. See below in sect. 7 solus, tenuis, peregrinus, filius familias,
and the inverse of this portrait, the figure of Simplicius in the speech held in Bourges (7.9.12 and 21-22). See the Introduction to this letter, above ch. ‘Content and Purpose’.

The word play liberis ... liberalis is applied to excess by Sidonius’ correspondent Ruricius in Ep. 1.2 liberum ... liberalum ... liberalitatem ... libertatem. See Hagendahl 1952: 77. For wordplay in Sidonius and his circle, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

**quique per nimiam parsimoniam iuveni filio plus prodesse quam placere maluerit.**

The same thought, ‘rather giving profit than pleasure’, is encountered in Ep. 7.9.22 a bono viratu aemulis suis magis prodesse cupiens quam placere, severis patribus comparandus, qui iuvenum filiorum non tam cogitant vota quam commoda, ‘... not what they ask for, but what is good for them’.

**iuveni filio**, ‘his young son’, stresses the boy’s vulnerability, without defining his exact age, which may be fairly young, as it is here (see next entry), or appreciably older, as in Liv. 23.8.3 filium iuvenem adduxit. On the element of moderation to be observed in education, because youth cannot but err from time to time, see Plin. Ep. 9.12 which culminates in the reminder cogita et illum puerum esse et te fuisse.


Prodesse and placere return in the theological context of divine pedagogy: Ambrosiast. in Rom. 8.27 haec petit, quae scit deo placere et nobis prodesse, Ps. Aug. Med. 36 (to God) da quod nosti tibi placere, et mihi prodesse.

**maluerit**, ‘preferred’, is a defining subjunctive.

**quo relictó tunc puer iste vos petiit nimiis expeditus,**

**puer iste**, ‘this boy’, anaphoric, the iuveni filio from the previous sentence. For Amantius’ age, see the Introduction, ch. ‘More about Amantius’.

**vos petiit**, ‘he went to you’, to Marseille (then still without Graecus), but also ‘he attacked’.

There is clearly a military metaphor in what follows: expeditus, impedimentum, viaticum, (sect. 4) introitus, accursus, (sect. 5) excubiae, (sect. 8) receptui in patriam cecinit, invictus. Amantius’ youthful drive and enthousiasm, together with his undeniable entrepreneurship and lack of scrupulosity, are almost a raid on the community of Marseille, crowned by the carrying off of his bride.

It is interesting to compare a story which is quite different, but nevertheless has the same feel of youthful ruthlessness, viz. Cic. Flac. 18 adsolicens bonus, honesto loco natus, disertus cum maximo ornatisimmoque comitatu venit in oppidum Graecorum, postulat contionem, locupleites homines et graves ne sibi adversentur testimonii denuntiatione deterset, egentes et leves spe legationis et viatico publico, privata etiam benignitate prolectat, ‘a respectable young man, fromm an honourable background and eloquent, arrives with a large and splendid retinue at a town in Greece. He asks for an assembly. He frightens wealthy men of authority from opposing him by summoning them to give evidence; he tempts the needy and irresponsible by the hope of being employed on a commission and by a public grant for their expenses, and also by his own private liberality’.

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expeditus, ‘travelling light’, ready for action, i.e. here ‘without money’. Sidonius creates a subtle paronomasia (Hagendahl classes 2 and 3; see my comment on 7.1.6 et accidisse prius) with the following impedimentum, both at the end of the clause.

quod erat maximum conatibus primis impedimentum;

impedimentum, ‘hindrance’: For the praedicative nom. impedimentum instead of the usual dat. fin. impedimento see Löfstedt 1956, 1: 194-99 The dative is initially the usual choice, the nominative is ‘die gewählteren und mehr emphatische Ausdrucksweise’, cf. e.g. Enn. Scen. 46 Vahlen eum esse exitium Troiae, pestem Pergamo. But later Latin tends to prefer the nominative. See also LHS 2: 99 f. Cf. 7.8.2 praepedimento and my comment.

Notice the intertwined chiasmus of conatibus primis inside maximum ... impedimentum. The first part of the story, Amantius’ childhood, is expressly marked, also by means of the following maxim.

nihil est enim viatico levi gravius.

The paronomasia expeditus – impedimentum is repeated and intensified by the oxymoron levi gravius: ‘Nothing is heavier than a light load.’ The formulation in itself is quite ordinary, cf. e.g. Plin. Ep. 1.22.1 nihil est enim illo gravius, sanctius, doctius. viatico levi, ‘a light load’: Vaticum is ‘provision’, ‘allowance’ for the journey; one should think here of money as well as relations. In social and political life levis means ‘lacking authority or influence’, ‘powerless’ (TLL 7/2: 1208.41 ff.), as opposed to gravis, ‘important’, ‘influential’. Cf. e.g. Cic. Agr. 2.45 grave est ... nomen imperi atque id etiam in levi persona pertimescitur, Tac. Ann. 4.36 leves ignobiles poenis adficiebantur. In the above cited passage of Cic. Flacc. 18, the locupletes homines et graves, ‘the rich and important’, are first pacified, then the egentes et leves, ‘the poor and unimportant’, are helped out with viatico publico, ‘public grant of money’. Pl. Trin. 684 (I am not going to give you my sister without a dowry, for) numquam erit alienis gravis, qui suis se concinnat levem, ‘never will he be respected by others who makes himself despised by his own relatives’, shows the indispensability of money if one wants to be respected by others. The collocation viatico levi is Sidonius’ own.

Section 4

attamen primus illi in vestra moenia satis secundus introitus.

primus ... secundus: Wordplay on secundus, ‘second’, and ‘successful’. Compare a similar pun in Apul. Met. 6.13 nec tamen apud dominam saltem secundi ['second'] laboris periculum secundum ['favourable'] testimonium meruit, about Psyche whose hard work cannot reconcile Venus. Cf. secundo ... primum in sect. 2 above.

satis, ‘very’, or somewhat less emphatic: ‘fairly’, ‘pretty’, ‘quite’. See Löfstedt 1911: 73 ad Pereg. 2.7 satis admirabile: ‘Das steigernde satis, besonders bei Adjektiva und Adverbia, das bekanntlich von ältester Zeit bis ins Spätlatein häufig vorkommt.’ Cf. Carm. 24.81 satis secundus. See also Ep. 7.11.1 satis ostrepit, for its occurrence with verbs, cf. e.g. satis scio, satis constat.
introitus, ‘arrival’, but also: ‘hostile entry’, ‘invasion’, e.g. Cic. Off. 2.81 clandestino introitu urbe est potitus. Throughout the story Amantius’ actions are likened to a campaign of conquest, with irony and admiration.

sancti Eustachii, qui vobis decessit, actutum dicto factoque gemina benedictio;

sancti Eustachii: Eustachius (also: Eustasius) was bishop of Marseille in the sixties, between Venerius and Graecus. He is mentioned as one of the addressees in pope Hilarus’ letter 11 on the consecration by Mamertus in Die, as mentioned above in the Introduction, ch. ‘Addressee’, and by Gennadius in the chapter on Musaeus, presbyter in Marseille, liturgist, who wrote a sacramentarium for him: Gennad. Vir. ill. 79 (80) sed et ad personam sancti Eustachii episcopi ... compositum sacramentorum egregium et non parvum volumen (see Griffe 3: 171).

Sanctus, ‘holy’, ‘virtuous’, is a common epithet for bishops, see my comment on 7.1.6 sacrosanctae informationis. See also O’Brien 1930: 117 f. ‘(Gr. ἅγιος) Sanctus is used much more frequently than the superlative sanctissimus. It is addressed to all ranks of ecclesiastics, and to many of the laity.’ For illustrations in Sidonius, cf. e.g. of a bishop 4.18.4 sancti pontificis, 7.3.2 papa sancte, 7.13.1 sanctum episcopum, of lower clergy (i.e. abbot) 7.17.4, of a saintly woman 6.2.4. Sidonius’ use of it is by no means confined to this ‘technical’ ecclesiastical meaning. Connotations range from ‘decent’, said of mural paintings (Ep. 2.2.7), to ‘impeccable’, used of a reception (Ep. 2.9.6). See the monograph on sanctus, Delehaye 1927.

qui vobis decessit, ‘who was your predecessor’, litt. ‘who gave way to you’: Cf. Sidon. Ep. 1.5.5 dum succedenti Aemiliano nautae decedit Venetus remex, ‘as our oarsmen from the Veneto handed over to the shift from Aemilia’, a meaning akin to expressions like 2.2.1 iam ver decedit aestati, ‘already spring has given way to summer’. An alternative solution is the translation ‘who died and was succeeded by you’, litt. ‘who died in your interest’. Decedere, ‘die’, is frequent in later Latin; in Sidonius’ letters 2.8.1, 3.5.2, 4.24.5, 4.25.1, 7.2.9 (q.v.) and 8.15.1 - a total of six occurrences out of thirteen. Cf. the ambiguous, and debated, Cic. Att. 1.6.2 pater nobis decessit a. d. VIII Kal. Dec., ‘dad left us on 24 November’.

The words are echoed infra 9 vos vero Eustachium pontificem tunc ex asse digno herede decessisse monstrabis, as one of the internal references of this letter.

actutum, ‘promptly’, is principally archaic (e.g. Naev. Trag. 22, Pl. Am. 354 and passim), occurs a couple of times from Augustan poetry onward (e.g. Verg. A. 9.253), is found in several instances in Apuleius (e.g. Met. 5.24), after him in some isolated cases only, mainly poetry (e.g. Iuvenc. 2.389, Auson. Ep. (= 27) 19b.28), but is again firmly established in Symmachus (five times) and even more so in Sidonius’ prose (nine times); it is absent from patristic prose.

dicto factoque, ‘in word and deed’: The two form a pair from the beginning: Enn. Ann. 314 Skutsch sed quid ego haec memoro? dictum factumque facit frux; ‘… a frugal person suits the action to the word’. In Sidonius see Ep. 9.9.16 cuius ita dictis vita factisque dupliciter inclaruit. There he writes dupliciter, here gemina (see variation technique, in General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style).
hospitium brevi quaesitum, iam Eustachii cura facile inventum, celeriter aditum, civiliter locatum.

A four-part succession of *commata*, accelerating toward the end. The predilection for colometric enumerations is not exclusive to late antique and medieval taste (the theme of Roberts 1989, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*), but is already a charasteristic trait in Pliny’s style, e.g. *Ep*. 2.3.3 *prohoemiatur apte, narrat aperte, pugnat acriter, colligit fortiter, ornat excelse. postremo docto delectat adficit*, and is also present in Cicero, e.g. *Pis*. 1. Note the even greater acceleration at the end of the clause.

civiliter locatum, ‘was let in due form’: The adverb *civiliter* is not unusual, but a hapax in Sidonius. It is chosen because of the rhyme with *celeriter*. I prefer the juridical meaning, as Dalton did: ‘in due form’, cf. e.g. Ulp. *Dig*. 45.1.38.9 *possidere civiliter*, Amm. 27.7.5 *questus est comes Diodorum ... adversus se civiliter implorasse iuris auxilium*, Aug. c. Iulian. 3.108 non *accuso furem, ablata civiliter repeto*. See TLL 3: 1218.61 ff. III ‘de iure civili’. The phrase *civiliter locare* is Sidonius’ own invention.

Anderson: ‘courteously’, Loyen, Bellès: ‘at a reasonable price’, ‘at a bargain’, and the TLL itself, prefer TLL 3: 1219.6 ff. IV ‘de cultu et humanitate’. I have not been able to find corroboration for this option in the sphere of financial transactions.

iam primum crebro *accursu* excolere vicinos, identidem ab his ipse haud aspernanter resalutari.

iam primum, ‘right from the start’: Everything happens with speed and energy, see above *actutum*.

*excolere*, etc.: Notice the historical infinitives which are used to tell this part of the story, the conquering of the society of Marseille; see above, the introduction to sections 3-8.

*accursu* codd. Bellès: *accursu* Mohr, Anderson, Loyen. Mohr’s conjecture is not only unnecessary, it masks a little joke and blurs the view of the metaphor of conquering which runs through the whole story. Of course, *accursus*, ‘visit’, would be the obvious word for the reader to expect. Sidonius uses it in a similar society context in *Carm*. 23.441 (but elsewhere prefers *occursio* for ‘meeting’, ‘visit’: *Ep*. 7.10.2, 7.11.1, q.v. my comment). But what the reader gets is *accursus*, ‘attack’, ‘onset’, cf. e.g. Plin. *Nat*. 11.83 of a spider, Tac. *Hist*. 2.43 in battle. I therefore propose to retain the manuscript reading, although of course Mossberg 1934: 60 is right in stating that *occ-* and *acc-* are easily confounded by scribes.

*excolere ... resalutari*, ‘he paid visits ... and received return visits’.

*haud aspernanter*, ‘without condescension’: There is one more occurrence of *aspernanter* in the letters: 7.9.3 ut omnes non aspernanter audirent. It is mainly found with *acci(per)ere* and synonyms, e.g. Amm. 31.4.3 *quaes res aspernanter a nostris ... accepta est*, Salv. *Gub*. 27 *superbe et aspernanter accipere*. See TLL 2: 826.24 ff. s.v. *aspernor*.

Adverbs ending in –*ter* occur frequently in archaic Latin, and are cherished by archaizing and later authors in general. See Amherdt 2001: 120 f. ad 4.3.1 *Latialiter*. 
agere cum singulis, prout aetatis ratio permitteret:

*aetatis ratio*, ‘consideration of their age’: He approached his seniors differently to his peers. For *ratio*, ‘taking into account’, see my comment on 7.11.1 *ratio temporum regionumque*. For *aetatis ratio*, cf. e.g. Cic. Planc. 52 (you, as a young man, ventilated your opinion) *apertius quam vel ambitionis vel aetatis tuae ratio postulabat*, and several times in Pliny’s correspondence, e.g. Ep. 2.14.14 *nos tamen adhuc et utilitas amicorum et ratio aetatis moratur ac retinet*, ‘but I am being delayed and held back by the interest of my friends and the idea that I am as yet too young (to retire).*

grandaevos obsequiis, aequaevos officiis obligare.

*obsequiis ... officiis*, ‘marks of respect ... personal services’ (Anderson): *Obsequium* and *officium* indicate the respect due to, and services done for, social partners. *Officium* is the word par excellence for any concrete expression of *amicitia*: from writing letters and visiting someone, to defending him in court. See Hellegouarch 1963: 152 ff. The differences in social position are clearly marked in Ep. 2.8.1 *cui debuerit ... persona minor obsequium, maior officium*, *aequalis affectum: obsequium* from the inferior to the superior, *officium* vice versa, and *affectus* between equals. But generally the notions are almost synonymous, cf. 1.9.1 where the obligation to *recolere, quid officiorum ... debeat*, ‘reflect upon the duties one owes’, leads to *obsequium alioquii*, ‘the homage of a letter’.

For *officiis obligare* cf. Cic. Fam. 13.18.2 *nunc plane ago teque ita existimare volo, quibuscumque officiis ... Atticum obstrinxeris, iisdem me tibi obligatum fore.*

Section 5

*pudicitiam prae ceteris sobrietatemque sectari, quod tam laudandum in iuventute quam rarum.*

*pudicitiam*: Chastity (or its absence ...) is an important theme of comedy, e.g. Pl. Amph. 838 f. (a woman) *non ego illum mihi dotem duco esse, quae dos dicitur, / sed pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupidinem*. Young men are allowed a fair measure of freedom to sow their wild oats, e.g. Ter. Ad. 101 f. *non est flagiti etum, mihi crede, adulescentulum / scortari*. Chastity is most often presented as a theme in regard to women or married couples (‘*domus’*), e.g. Apul. Met. 7.6 *uxor eius ..., rarae fidel atque singularis pudicitiae femina*. The liberties young men are allowed to take should not lead to unacceptable social consequences: Cic. Cael. 42 *detur aliquid aetati; sit adulescentia liberior; ... dum modo illa ... praescriptio moderatioque teneatur: parcat iuventus pudicitiae suae, ne spoliet alienam, ne effundat patrimonium*, etc.

Thus, everything considered, Amantius is rather an exception.

*sobrietatem*, ‘sobriety’, is first found in V. Max. 6.3.9 *violatae sobrietati poenas pendisse.* Sidonius uses it three times.

Both moral qualities recommend Vettius’ household and manners in Ep. 4.9.1 *servat inlaesam ... domus ... pudicitiam; ... humanitas grandis grandiorque sobrietas*. Cf. Verg. G. 2.524 *casta pudicitiam servat domus*. The theme of sexual purity is, of course, also the concern of the bishop: Sidon. Ep. 8.14.4 *ad suaveolentiam pudicitiae ... impellitis* (of a bishop correcting sinners and inducing them to live ‘in an odour of chastity’).
The topical flavour of all this is clear from the catalogue in Macr. Somn. 1.8.7 temperantiam sequuntur modestia, verecundia, abstinentia, castitas, honestas, moderatio, parcitas, sobrietas, pudicitia.

sectari, ‘to aim at’, ‘pursue’: Among the examples of its use in a context of amorous affairs, lust and their opposite virtus, are Pl. Mil. 621 f. ea te facere facinora, / quae istaec aetas fugere facta magis quam sectoris solet, Sen. Dial. 7.14.3 qui sectatur voluptatem omnia postponit, and Tac. Ann. 1.80 neque ... eminentis virtutes sectabatur, et rursum vitia oderat. See also my comment on 7.9.9 sectatae anachoreseos, ‘having pursued the life of a hermit’.

quod tam laudandum in iuventute quam rarum, ‘which in early manhood is as commendable as it is rare’: This could be an echo of Pliny: Plin. Ep. 2.7.3 rarum id in iuvene, 8.23.3 rarum hoc in adolescuntibus nostris. Cf. id. 7.31.6 pulchrum istud et raritate ipsa probandum (about loyalty), 9.30.4 si unum aliquid (se. facit), minus quidem, laudandum tamen: tam rarum est etiam imperfectae liberalitatis exemplar.

For Sidonius too what is excellent is rare and all the more valuable: Ep. 2.10.6 natura comparatum est ut in omnibus artibus hoc sit scientiae pretiosior pompa, quo rarior. Cf. Paneg. 2.20.2 humanitas inquam, quae tam clara in imperatore quam rara est, and Cassiod. Var. 4.4 humilitas, quae tam clara quam rara est.

summatibus deinceps et tunc comiti civitatis non minus opportunis quam frequentibus exubis agnoscere innotescere,

summatibus, ‘the leading citizens’, more specifically the decuriones (or curiales). From the third century onward the so-called ‘flight of the curiales’ took place, as the decline in welfare of the towns and the increased pressure of taxes imposed by the state made it increasingly unattractive to shoulder the burdens of local government and euergetism. By 400 AD, bureaucratic positions in the central government had become a less cumbersome and more prestigious alternative, which gave the holders senatorial rank (honorati). To turn the tide, laws were enacted which tried to force ex-town councillors back to their cities. Town councils remained in existence well into the sixth century (cf. Iust. Novell. 38 pr.), but most of them were small and poor. As a stable element, they kept functioning in the barbarian kingdoms, although their powers were reduced by the authority of the comes civitatis. See LRE: 737 ff., Wolfram 1988: 214, and Heather 2005: 115 ff.

For summates indicating the members of the curia, cf. Symm. Ep. 1.64.2: the treasury of the town has been robbed, the treasury statute requires a summatibus civitatis to replace the money, but they cannot; indeed, it would be a shame, si opes ab inopi curia poscerentur. Cf. Symm. Ep. 10.49.3 summates Aricinae urbis. The word summas functions both as an adjective and as a noun. The latter use, found here, is late Latin, cf. e.g. Amm. 26.6.1 summatibus proximus. Figuring in comedy, e.g. Pl. St. 492 summates viri, summas was reintroduced by Gellius 6.3.7 non pauci ex summatibus viris. Sidonius has three more instances, all of them adjectives: Ep. 3.11.1 summates viri,’leading men’, 7.14.1 inter summates viros, 9.6.2 puellam moribus natalibusque summatem, ‘classy’.

comiti civitatis, ‘town chief’: This seems to provide the earliest evidence for the office of comes civitatis, a uniquely Gallic administrative post that is a product of the very last years of the empire.
Under Visigothic rule a reduction in the administrative importance of the province and its governor took place, and a corresponding increase in that of city-based officials. The ruler now had a representative in the city itself, the *comes civitatis*, one for each *civitas*, who, together with the *defensor* and the *iudex*, had the overall responsibility to enforce law and order. The office seems to date back to the reign of Euric (*Cod. Euric. 322 vel ad comitem civitatis aut iudicem*). It does not appear indisputably in the *Breviarium* of 506 AD, and the council of Narbonne (can. 4.9), 589 AD, is the only other early reference. *Comites* were appointed by the Visigothic king, but were not necessarily Goths. See LRE: 258, with n. 50 on pp. 1120 f., Wolfram 1988: 214 f. and CAH 14: 231, 234 and 445.

In the 460s, however, at the time when Amantius met bishop Graecus, Marseille was still under Roman jurisdiction. So, what of a *comes civitatis* in the empire? There are two options: 1) there was a *comes civitatis* in Marseille in the 460s, 2) Sidonius is deploying his vocabulary anachronistically from the perspective of the 470s. Given the care with which the letters were prepared for publication we can ignore a third option, namely that Sidonius has made a mistake; this means that neither of the two other possibilities can be ruled out. If one prefers the second option, one needs to determine which other office Sidonius is referring to anachronistically. The *defensor civitatis*? But why create confusion and call the *defensor*, who still existed in the Gothic kingdom, *comes*? The first option seems the best. It might be a position put in place some time around the reign of Majorian to act as a check on the ambitions of the local urban aristocracies in southern Gaul, on whose support none of the emperors after Avitus could rely. (I thank Professor Michael Kulikowski for the latter suggestion, and for an enlightening discussion of the problem in general.) Cf. Wolfram 1988: 214 ‘After modest beginnings in the late Roman period he became the most important government official of the kingdom of Toulouse’ (my italics).

A hint at the same office or title may be seen in Sidon. *Ep*. 5.18.1 *Haeduae civitati te praesidere coepisse libens atque cum gaudio accepi*. Cf. the office of *comes Trevirorum* under – at least nominal – Roman authority held by Sidonius’ correspondent Arbogastes (*Ep*. 4.17). Sidonius’ own title of *comes* (*Ep*. 1.11.13 *comes Sidoni*) seems to have been honorific only and ‘zeigt seine wiedergewonnene Stellung in der nächsten Umgebung des Kaisers’ (viz. Majorian), see Köhler 1995: 4 and 325 ad loc.

*tunc*, ‘finally’: After the penultimate stage of the *decuriones*, the final and crowning one is reaching the *comes*. This seems slightly preferable to the solution proposed by Mossberg 1934: 89 n. 2, who interprets *tunc* as an attributive adverb with *comiti*, ‘the then *comes*, as in *Ep*. 8.14.2 *in illo quondam coenobio*.

*excubiiis*, ‘by being constantly at their service’: In line with the ‘military’ choice of words in this letter, *excubiae* is appropriate here, but we should keep in mind that in later Latin there is a shift in meaning from ‘watch’, ‘guard’, to ‘office’, ‘service’. Cf. e.g. Cass. *Var*. 5.41.5 (*vir* *ad* *excubias tamen palatinas electus* (of a non-military career in the palace administration), and *Cod. Theod.* 6.23.4.2 *cum continuos tredecim annos inculpatas excubias peregerint* (of the *decuriones* and *silentiarii* in office). This use is signalled only by Blaise s.v. Compare the shift in meaning of *militia* (above, sect. 3).

In Sidonius *excubiae* has the connotation of working hard. Instances range from ‘hard work (by night)’ to military watch and pseudo-military monastic hardship: *Ep*. 6.12.3 *omito illa, quae cotidie propter defectionem civium pauperorum inrequietis toleras excubiis precibus expensis* (the bishop toiling, praying and paying for his community), 8.3.2 *ab excubiis ad devorsorium*. 
Sidonius who leaves the place where at night he works on the translation of The Life of Apollonius, 3.7.4 *a muralibus excubis, 6.1.3 post desudas militiae Lirinensis excubias.*

**agnosci innotescere familiarescere:** A pure climax in number of syllables and meaning. Dalton rendered it with the plastic paraphrase: ‘He began by receiving nods, went on to acquaintance, and ended in intimacy.’ The verb *familiarescere,* ‘to get intimate’, is a hapax in Latin.

**sicque eius in dies sedulitas maiorum sodalitatibus promoveri;**

**sicque,** ‘and so’, ‘consequently’: LHS 2: 473 ‘Die kakophonien Verbindungen *sicque, tuncque, hocque u.ä. sind erst nachklassisch bzw. spätlateinisch.’ As *sicque* is first found in Ov. Fast. 4.848 *sic’ que ‘meos muros transeat hostis’ ait,* this statement should not be taken too literally. Its first occurrence in patristic literature is Lact. Inst. 6.25 *sicque de iustitia locutus est.* Cf. Sidon. Ep. 1.2.4, 4.21.6.

**sedulitas maiorum sodalitatibus promoveri,** ‘his insistence was more and more successful due to the acquaintances he made in higher circles’: *Promoveri* is ‘to make headway (in an activity, study, etc.);’ cf. for this construction with abl. Sidon. Ep. 1.9.6 *multa tibi seria hoc ludo promovebuntur,* ‘many serious concerns of yours will be greatly advanced by this sportive performance’, and 4.6.3 *dabit ... talia vota divinitas dignis successibus promoveri,* ‘the Divine Power will by and by allow such desires as yours to be carried out with the success which they deserve’ (the translations are Anderson’s).

Strangely enough, modern translators follow Anderson in translating our phrase as: ‘His assiduity gained him promotion to higher and higher circles every day.’ This, however, would require *in* + abl. or acc., cf. e.g. Gel. 5.10.7 *cum ... in studio ... facundiae abunde promovisset,* Apul. Met. 1.3.21 *quod nihil in suos amores ceteris artibus promoveret.* Apart from that, it is tautological with respect to the previous sentence.

**maiorum,** ‘the upper class’: See my comment on 7.1.6 *maioribus.*

**sedulitas ... sodalitatibus:** The similarity in sound is, as always, alluring for Sidonius. Cf. Carn. 23.480 *sedulitas sodalitasque,* Ep. 1.4.1 *tibi ... apud principis domum inspecta sinceritas,* *spectata sedulitas, admissa sodalitas laudi fuere.* Sedulitas is the t.t. for insistence in social intercourse, trying persistently to come into contact with someone. Its aim is *sodalitas.* Cf. Cicero’s situation when he tries, in vain, to win the confidence of the *tribuni plebis:* Agr. 2.12 *cum familiariter me in eorum sermonem insinuarem ... excludebar. .... finem feci offerendi mei ne forte mea sedulitas aut insidiosa aut impudens videretur,* ‘when I tried to intervene in their discussion in a familiar way, I was excluded … I stopped offering help lest my insistence should be mistaken for an ambush or impudence’. For the love of wordplay, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

**fovere boni quique certatim,**

A flashy young man, the darling of the town, is a beloved subject in stories, as in Apul. Met. 4.26 *speciosus adolescens inter suos principalis, quem filium publicum omnis sibi civitas cooptavit,* ‘a flashy young man, the first among his equals, whom all the town chose as its common son’.

Amantius uses the same tactics which the reader will come across regarding Simplicius, 7.9.22 *gratiam non captat omnium sed bonorum,* q.v. (cf. also 7.8.3). What is *noblesse oblige* in the aristocrat Simplicius, is sly behaviour in Amantius, a man from the people. The topos is
made relevant for the structure of the book through its successive applications to these socially opposed characters. Amantius is Simplicius’ (and behind him, Sidonius’) carnival mirror. See also below, on sect. 7 adulescens, solus, tenuis, peregrinus, and Introduction, sect. 1 Overview.

fovere, ‘supported’: Cf. e.g. 6.3.2 cuius si peregrinationem prompto favore foventis, 9.14.9 faventes audient cuncti, cuncti foventes. See also my comment on 7.8.3 qui fidem foven Arrianorum.

boni quique, ‘the upper ten’: The boni are the men of property and standing, the leading citizens; cf. already Cic. Att. 8.1.3 bonorum, id est lautorum et locupletum. For the self-conscious community of aristocrats in Gaul, see Mathisen 1993: 10-13. See also Amherdt 2001: 191 ad 4.5.2, and in my corpus 7.8.3 and 7.9.6 (with comment).

For the positive and plural boni quique, instead of classical superlative and singular optimus quique, cf. e.g. Apul. Apol. 3 bonus quisque, Pl. 2.7. The plural in later Latin almost completely superseded the singular, though it did occur previously, and as early as Pl. Most. 155 optumi quique. Originally it required a superlative, gradually a positive became the norm, e.g. Lucr. 5.1415 pristina quaeque, Sal. Or. Macr. 19 ignavi cuiusque, Tac. Ann. 12.43.1 invalidus quisque, and generally from Apuleius and Tertullian onward. See LHS 2: 170.

votis omnes, plurimi consiliis, privati donis, cincti beneficiis adiuvare;

cincti, ‘officials’, opp. privati: The correct reading has been preserved by the second hand of M and Vaticanus 3421. All other manuscripts have the lectio facilior cuncti. Cf. Sidon. Ep. 1.9.4 cinctus ... discinctus, ‘im Amt ... ohne Amt’, Köhler 1995 ad loc. Cf. 1.7.3 potestate discinctus, and 5.7.3 cinctis iura, discinctis privilegia. Cf. Cass. Var. 9.24.2 iudicem cingens, ‘investing a judge’.

perque haec spes opesque istius raptim saltuatimque cumulari.

raptim saltuatimque, ‘by leaps and bounds’ (Anderson), effectively synonyms, see Mossberg 1934: 90. Saltuatim is opposed to gradatim, ‘gradually’, in Sidon. Ep. 4.3.9 novum scribendi morem gradatim appeto et veterem saltuatim dedisco. Saltuatim is among the archaic words exploited again by the archaists. It is attested for Sisenna, ap. Non. p. 247 L. and reintroduced by Gel. 9.4.9. In Sidonius also 8.3.1. See Mannheimer 1975: 172 and Gualandri 1979: 173 n. 98.

Section 6

forte accidit, ut deversorio, cui ipse successerat, quaedam femina non minus censu quam moribus idonea vincentur,

idonea, ‘first-class’, ‘prime’, is a juridical term: ‘having the money to meet obligations, solvent, substantial’ (OLD s.v.), e.g. Papin. Dig. 16.1.27.1 cum personam mulieris ut idoneae sequuntur, with abl. resp. Ulp. Dig. 25.3.5.26 ipsi si idonei facultatibus sunt.

census ... moribus, ‘income ... character’: Character and social status are the single most important requisites in a future member of a family. Symmachus, when asking for the hand of his correspondent’s daughter on behalf of his son, writes: Ep. 9.7 licet noverim futuros generos moribus aestimari. et tamen huic post ornamenta naturae, etiam census ad honestatem redundat. The importance, and vulnerability, of the character of a (step)mother is typically worded by Apul. Met. 10.2 noverca forma magis quam moribus ... praepollens.
A similar combination of character and social status, but outside the family circle, is found in Sal. Cat. 39.6 quoscumque moribus aut fortuna novis rebus idoneos credebat.

vicinaretur, ‘lived next to’: Vicinari, ‘to be neighbouring, near’, is late Latin. Sidonius uses it rather often (seven times in all), e.g. Ep. 2.11.1 si nobis pro situ spatisisque regionum vicinaretur. In Ep. 6.9.1 quia vicinaretur innocentiae festinata correctio, the meaning is ‘to come close to’, ‘resemble’. Cf. contemporaries, such as the medical author Cael. Aur. Acut. 2.6.27 vicinantia capiti loca.

cuius filia infantiae iam temporibus emensis necdum tamen nubilibus annis appropinquabat.

The girl is no longer an infant, but she is not yet marriageable. Girls reached marriageable age at 12 (boys at 14) and married at an average age of just under 20, but earlier in the leading circles. See the entries on Roman marriage law in DNP 3: 897 f. s.v. ‘Ehe’, and 5: 257 f. s.v. ‘Heiratsalter’, and OCD s.v. ‘Marriage Law’.

As has been shown in the introduction, the girl will have been slightly under 11 when Amantius met her and they married not long after.

The motif of the girl next door who reaches marriageable age is also seen in Apul. Met. 10.23 sed ubi flos aetatis nuptiale virgini diem flagitabat, followed by vicinam puellam.

infantiae iam temporibus emensis, ‘who had already left behind her the state of infancy’: Cf. V. Max. 5.5 in isdem incunabulis infantiae tempora peregi. For emetior in the sense of ‘to live out’, ‘complete’, cf. e.g. Sen. Ep. 93.7 aevum ignobile, Nat. 5.18.8 annos suos, Amm. 19.11.2 aestate nuper emensa, Mart. Cap. 5.456 tempus emensum est.

necdum = nondum, ‘not yet’: See my comment on 7.1.1 necdum.

nubilibus annis, ‘marriageable age’, is not as common as one might think. Before Sidonius it only occurs in Ov. Met. 14.335 haec ubi nubilibus primum maturuit annis. After him e.g. Hist. Apoll. rec. B 29 ad nubiles tuos annos ad vota persolvenda non remeavit, Boeth. De disciplina scholarum 4 germanae nubilibus annis affini (compare our appropinquabat) quanto citius obtemperandum est. The adjective more often qualifies a person, e.g. Cic. Quint. 98 filiae nubili dotem conficere, Verg. A. 7.53 iam matura viro, iam plenis nubilis annis.

huic hic blandus (siquidem ea etas infantulae, ut adhuc decenter)

huic hic, ‘her he’: Huc refers to the girl. This succession is only found in comedy, cf. Ter. Ad. 638 quid huic hic negotiati?, and Hec. 808 quid huic hic est rei?

blandus, ‘kind’, ‘winning’: The word is characteristic for the attitude of adults towards little children, cf. e.g. Hor. S. 1.125 ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi doctores, and Aug. Serm. 302.1 blandientis est hoc, non aedificantis, about a father who gives his boys nudes and ludicra instead of the real thing, the inheritance, for which they are too young. Sidonius himself has Ep. 3.2.1 quam te blandum pueri ... metiebantur, ‘how winning the children considered you’ (Anderson).

infantulae, ‘dear girl’, is an Apuleian innovation: Met. 10.28. The word is chosen here as a term of endearment. The girl was no longer an infans, as the author has just told us.

The conciseness of the phrase siquidem ... decenter, with twofold ellipsis of the verb, is striking.
nunc quaedam frivola, nunc ludo apta virgineo scruta donabat;

frivola, ‘poor stuff’, ‘trinkets’, is a hapax in Sidonius and he is unique in using it of toys. It is defined in Isid. Orig. 9.7.26 prope autem frivola vocantur fictilia vasa inutilia, and Gloss. 2.433.13 σκευάρια εὐτελῆ πάνων: frivola, ‘very cheap, unpretentious utensils’. Of household goods and furniture in general, e.g. Juv. 3.198 f. iam poscit aquam, iam frivola transfert / Ucalegon, ‘… his paltry possessions’.

ludo ... virgineo, ‘a girl’s play’: Cf. e.g. Claud. Rapt. Pros. 3.162 cunctaque virgineo sparsa oblectamina ludo. Cf. Lact. Inst. 2.4.13 non a virginitus, quorum lusibus venia dari potest.


On account of the explicit nunc ... nunc ..., instead of considering frivola and scruta as virtual synonyms, one would like to be able to define a more substantial difference, e.g. ‘pots and pans’ versus ‘textiles’, ‘puppets’, as was proposed by Loyen: scruta = ‘chiffons’ and Bellès: ‘drapets’. But, as far as I can see, there is no evidence in the sources for this pregnant use.

Much more important for the interpretation is the hint we get from the fragment of Lucilius, assuming that Sidonius knew the fragment through Gellius or some compilation. In Lucilius the junk dealer is a scrutarius inprobus: he extols the virtues of his goods which in reality are worth less than nothing, a broken scraper, half a shoe sole. The adjective inprobus takes us back directly to the callidus viator, Amantius, in sect. 1, and Martial’s callidus copo, both of them smooth operators. Amantius wins the girl without spending a farthing on her (his opes, meanwhile, are considerable enough: sect. 5). ‘Big deal!’, the author suggests.

quibus isti parum grandibus causis plurimum virgunculae animus copulabatur.

parum ... plurimum, ‘scarcely .. greatly’: Parum is almost equivalent to a simple negation, see Hofmann 1951: 146. See earlier, sect. 3 parum liberalis. The wordplay parum ... plurimum also in Sen. Dial. 12.8.2 haec etiam si quis singula parum iudicat efficacia ad consortandum exulum, utaque in unum conlata fatebitur plurimum posse, Plin. Ep. 7.17.10 singulis iudici parum, omnibus plurimum, Ps. Cypr. Mart. 26 ut, etsi parum de eo dicerem, plurimum me dixisse profiterer.

virgunculae animus copulabatur, ‘the girl’s heart was won’: Virguncula, ‘cute little girl’, is found since Curt. 8.4.25 tunc in amore virgunculae ... ignobilis ... effusus est. For the diminutive -uncula, see my comment on 7.3.1 contestatiunculas. For copulare animum, cf. Ambrosiast. in Corinth. 13 animos copulant non desiderio carnis, sed spiritus. Cf. Phaedr. Fab. 13.24 nox artiore vinxit animum copula.

The author significantly focuses on Amantius’ overtures to the girl. The mother remains behind the scenes, though her consent is vital. Amantius is bold and direct: the mother’s consent is taken for granted. For the ‘normal’ situation of wooing a girl by winning over the mother also, cf. e.g. Pl. Cist. 92 f. (the girl about her lover) inde in amicitiam insinuavit cum matre et mecum simul / blanditiis, munerebus, donis, ‘then he won my mother’s friendship and mine too, with compliments, services, presents’.
Section 7

anni obiter thalamo pares: quid morer multis?

anni obiter thalamo pares, ‘meanwhile she reached the age of marriage’: The author quickens the pace of the story.

The meaning of obiter cannot be pinpointed with absolute certainty. TLL 9/2: 67.47 says: ‘adverbium notionis non satis dilucidae significare vid. aliquid simul, iuxta, insuper fieri, sc. inter primariam quandam actionem alteram.’ Our phrase is given a separate treatment in 68.29 ff.: ‘referendum vid. ad tempus modo lapsum, i.q. interim.’ Already in antiquity the word needed to be explained, cf. Gloss. 5.654.41 obiter: id est simul.

Obiter occurs five times in Sidonius’ correspondence, and in Carm. 23.328. In general it may be conveniently translated with ‘at the same time’, ‘meanwhile’ (= simul or interim). See the discussion in Mossberg 1934: 77 ff. (who, strangely enough, prefers the meaning fere, quasi for our phrase, with Forcellini), and Köhler 1995: 172 ad Ep. 1.3.2: ‘Aus dem Kontext der jeweiligen Stelle ergeben sich Nuancen vom einfachen “dabei, zugleich”, bis zum erschwerenden “noch dazu”’.

In addition, I would like to draw attention to the nuance ‘straightway’, ‘soon’, which obiter seems to have with verbs indicating motion, e.g. Ps. Quint. Decl. 10.16 ut obiter ab rogo siccis oculis revertantur, Apul. Met. 6.25 speluncam, unde multis onustos (sc. nos) rebus rursum ne breviculo quidem tempore reductos obiter reducunt (sc. latrones) (Halm’s conjecture ociter, which is adopted by Hanson 1989 (ed. Loeb), is unnecessary). One might associate with these instances Sidon. Ep. 1.5.5 atque obiter Cremonam praefectus advenit.

As to thalamo pares, ‘suitable for marriage’: Sidonius is keen on the poetic thalamus, which is applied four times in his prose (plus eight times in his poetry), against coniugium and matrimonium three time each. He is at his most confident and boldly innovative in this story. Neither par thalamo/-is/matrimonio/coniugio, ‘equal to, fit for marriage’, nor anni pares are found in any of his predecessors. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

quid morer multis?, ‘to cut a long story short’: This rhetorical question contributes to the colloquial setting letter writers are keen to suggest (see Cugusi 1983: 45 and Amherdt 2001: 46; also General Introduction, sect. 5.1 Epistolography). The narrator pretends to interrupt himself. Sidonius also has Ep. 0.22.3 quid te amplius moror?, and 2.2.20 sed non amplius moror. The first known instance is Ter. An. 114 quid multis moror?

After the rhetorical question we have a summing-up, an outline of the situation so far, before the story goes on: ‘portraits’ of the young man, his girl, the bishop and the town chief, and the future mother-in-law. For this device we might compare, e.g., Apul. Apol. 77.4 quid multis? iuvenem simplicem, praeterea novae nuptae inlecebris obfrenatum suo arbitratu de via deflectit (besides, the theme there has the same tonality as in the current letter), and Sulp. Sev. Dial. 1.20 quid multis morer? ille praepotens, ille signis atque virtutibus toto oriente vulgatus, ille ad cuius limina populi ante confluerunt, ad cuius fores summae istius saeculi se prostraverant potestates, correptus a daemone est, tentus in vinculis (note the syntactical similarity of a number of coordinate parts of the sentence).
adulescens, solus, tenuis, peregrinus, filius familias et e patria patre non solum non volente verum et ignorante discedens

The theme will return in the description of Sidonius’ candidate to the see of Bourges, Simplicius, in 7.9.21 iuvenis, miles, tenuis, solus, adhuc filius familias et iam pater. The author avails himself of the topos and the similar commatic description as one of the means to parallel humorously the lowly careerist and the promising aristocrat. See above, on sect. 5 fovere boni quique certatim, and Introduction, sect. 1 Overview.

Notice the way in which the wording of the topos is varied, esp. between filius familias et e patria patre, etc. (still a minor, he leaves his hometown without his father knowing), and adhuc filius familias et iam pater (still a minor, he is already a father himself). See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

solus, tenuis, peregrinus, ‘alone, of modest means, a stranger’: Two, three and four syllables successively. This is Behaghel’s law on a miniscale; see my comment at the end of 7.1.2 sed animositati nostrae, and on 7.3.2 sancte facunde venerabilis. Cf. a kindred enumeration, apart from 7.9.21, in 3.9.2 solus, inermis, abiectus, rusticus, peregrinus, pauper. The words are, of course, a compliment that such feats were accomplished by such a young man, relatively poor and an outsider.

filius familias, ‘a minor’: A filius familias is a son subject to the patria potestas, cf. Gaius Inst. 4.75, Ulp. Dig. 47.10.17.20. So, it is a contradictio in terminis that he should do anything patre … non volente, which, indeed, he does.

e patria patre is a paronomasia (Hagendahl class 3), characteristic of Sidonius (see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style), but not unusual elsewhere. Cf. Pl. Merc. 660 clam patrem patria hac effugiam, Sen. Med. 118 f. ereto patre / patria, and Auson. Praef. (= 1) 1.5 f. Vasates patria est patri.

ignorante, ‘not aware of’: Arjava 1996: 31 recounts the story as an illustration of the fact ‘that young men were sometimes able to conclude a marriage without the knowledge of their paterfamilias. We can only guess at the father’s reactions. Sidonius does not give any hint that the marriage might have been claimed invalid.’ Arjava recalls a comparable incident in Ambr. Ep. 35 (CSEL 82/1.238 ff.), of a son who had already married on his own initiative.

discedens, ‘leaving’, or ‘having left’: The present participle can have the meaning of the perfect, a phenomenon which developed in later Latin, see LSH 2: 386 f., Blaise 1955: 196, e.g. Sedul. Op. 4.5 Daviticae deserents civitatem, venerat etc. See below, sect. 8 emungens.

The situation as a whole is a classic one in comedy, of which the young man’s decision in the cited passage from Plautus is but one example. In the same vein is Pl. Merc. 341: having a girl-friend, about whom the father knows nothing. Cf. Gel. 2.23.16: a girl made pregnant, and her father is unacquainted with the fact.

In Cicero’s Pro Caelio 36, we have an interesting piece of everyday comedy (or drama …), which shows elements also found in our story. The lady is in love with the boy next door, but he does not want anything more to do with her. Notice the proverbially chary father again, and the collocation filium familias patre: vicinum adulescentulum aspexisti, candor huius te et proceritas, vultus oculique pepulerunt, saepius videre voluisti: fuisti non numquam in isdem hortis. vis nobilis mulier illum filium familias patre parco ac tenaci habere tuis copiis devinctum, non potes, calcitrat, respuit, repellit, non putat tua dona esse tanti: confer te alio, ‘you saw a young man
become your neighbour; his fair complexion, his height and his countenance and eyes made an impression on you, you wished to see him oftener; you were sometimes seen in the same gardens with him; being a woman of high rank you are unable with all your riches to detain him, the son of a thrifty and parsimonious father: he kicks, he rejects you, he does not think your presents worth so much as you require of him. Try some one else’ (transl. C. D. Yonge and B. A. London, London, 1891).

puellam non inferiorem natalibus, facultatibus superiorem,

inferiorem ... superiorem: This wordplay is not repeated elsewhere by Sidonius, contrary to what one might expect. As a matter of fact, it is specific to ecclesiastical authors. After no more than four occurrences in classical and silver Latin in a technical context (language, architecture) it became popular in Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, e.g. Ambr. Hex. 2.3.10 audio firmamentum fieri praecepto, quo divideretur aqua et ab inferiore superior discerneretur. Its ‘technical’ character remained prevalent. Nowhere is it a merely stylistic adornment. Notice the litotes-like non inferiorem, to create the opposition with superiorem.

natalibus, facultatibus, ‘parentage, means’, are essential assets to a future partner in marriage. Cf. e.g. Tac. Dial. 8.3 sine commendatione natalium, sine substantia facultatum, neuter moribus egregius, alter habitu quoque corporis contemptus, Plin. Ep. 10.4.5 auget haec et natalium et paternarum facultatium splendor. For the theme, and the addition of ‘character’ and ‘looks’ to ‘birth’ and ‘resources’ in Sidonius, just as in Tacitus, see Ep. 2.4.1 familiae splendor, probitas morum, patrimonii facultas, iuventutis alacritas, 9.6.2 puellamque, prout decuit, intactam vir laudandum in matrimonium assumpsit, tam moribus natalibusque summatem quam facultatis principalis, ‘… a girl of excellent character and high birth, and also very rich’. For lineage and character, also 4.25.2 hic antiquam praerogativam reliqua destitutus morum dote ructabat, ‘one kept prating about the prior claim of his ancient lineage although bankrupt on the moral side’ (Anderson). Cf. later Ennod. Ep. 8.11 quando ad nuptialem copulum perductus homo est, cui cum magna sit lux natalium, abundantia facultatum, disciplina et pudor utrumque transgreditur?, a man marries, ‘who boasts superb lineage and has money in plenty, but above all education and propriety’.

Notice the chiasmus and rhyme in the clause.

medio episcopo, quia lector, solacio comitis, quia cliens,

medio episcopo, ‘through mediation by the bishop’: The bishop is Eustachius, Graecus’ predecessor. For medius, ‘acting as intermediary’, cf. e.g. Vell. 2.47.2 medium … inter Cn. Pompeium et C. Caesarem concordiae pignus Iulia. In Sidonius, cf. 3.1.5 vobis inter eos et rempublicam mediis.

quia lector, ‘because he was a lector’: There is an inconsistency here between letters 6.8 and 7.2. In 6.8.2 quia nomen eiusdem lectorum nuper albus acceptit, Sidonius says that Amantius has only recently become a lector and is still very young (huius ... teneram frontem, dura rudimenta). According to our passage, however, he was already lector at the time of bishop Eustachius and of a more advanced age (adultescens).

solacio comitis, ‘with help of the comes’: Solacium, ‘aid’, ‘help’ (here: ‘patronage’, see cliens), is a postclassical meaning, e.g. Tert. Virg. 9 consilio et solacio iuware, Pudic. 13 non habentes iam solacium navis ecclesiae. Its development (from fourth century onward) is towards an even...
more concrete ‘gift’ and ‘salary’, e.g. Cod. Theod. 6.30.23, Ulp. Dig. 8.4.13.1. For Sidonius see Ep. 1.9.6 praebo admittendo aditum recitatiurque solaciem recitantique suffragium, ‘… assistance when you are called on to read and support as you go on’ (Anderson). See also on 7.7.2 solata sunt.

Notice the parallel cola.

socrue non inspiciente substantiam, sponsa non despiciente personam, substantiam ... personam, ‘his means … his personality’: For the antithesis substantia – persona, i.e. one’s possessions v. the person himself, see Sidon. Ep. 5.7.1 deferre personas ... auferre substantias, the work of an informer is ‘to denounce individuals … to lift their property’. Alternatively one could stress the legal sense of persona, ‘rank’, ‘social status’, for which see my comment on 7.4.2 pontifici … personae.

The cola are parallel again, with inner rhyme and paronomasia (Hagendahl class 2).

uxorem petit, impetrat, ducit.

This is again the context of comedy, cf. Pl. Cas. 52 ff.:

pater adlegavit vilicum, qui posceret
sibi istam uxorem: is sperat, si ei sit data,
sibi fore paratas clam uxorem excubias foris.
filius is autem armigerum adlegauit suom,
qui sibi eam uxorem poscat: scit, si id impetret,
futurum quod amat intra praesepis suas.

Ibid. 106 ff.:

ego huc quod veni in urbem si impetravero,
uxorem ut istam ducam quam tu deperis,
bellam et tenellam Casinam, conservam tuam:
quo veni eam muci cum rus uxorem abduxero,
rure incubabo usque in praefectura mea.

By this advantageous marriage Amantius’ social status is enhanced. See Forlin Patrucco 1981: 146 on marriage and social mobility. His wife’s money, however, did not belong to him, strictly speaking, as later Roman law upheld the principle of separate property in marriages. See Treggiari 1991: 96, Arjava 1996: 145 ff.

conscribuntur tabulae nuptiales;

tabulae nuptiales, ‘marriage contract’, e.g. Tac. Ann. 11.30.2 redderet uxorem rumperetque tabulas nuptiales, Apul. Apol. 67 facit ... tabulas nuptiales, Cod. Iust. 5.4.9 nuptiales tabulae.

Alternatively, in later writers, cf. e.g. Firmic. 7.12.1 sine tabulis matrimonialibus, and several times in Augustine, e.g. Civ. 14.18 secundum matrimonialium praescripta tabularum.

et si qua est istic municipioli nostri suburbanitas
‘and every conceivable estate in the neighbourhood of our tiny town’

istic, ‘here’, in Clermont. For istic = hic, see my comment on 7.1.6 populus iste.
municipioli, ‘our tiny town’, is only found in Sidonius (see Gualandri 1979: 180), cf. Ep. 3.1.2 ecclesiam Arverni municipioli. Municipium is a town which is fully incorporated in the Roman empire, on the highest level with regard to duties (military assistance, taxes) and rights (citizen rights, right to vote in Rome). A civitas originally is a community which does not (yet) have full municipal status. The dissemination of the citizenship, complete by 212 AD, rendered the partial citizen rights – and the distinction civitas-municipium - obsolete. In Sidonius the usual word is civitas, which indeed in his correspondence denotes such important towns as Trier and Ravenna, cf. 1.5.5 and 4.17.3 respectively. In 4.21.6 civitatem ipsam is Clermont. Cf. Not. Gall. 12.3 civitas Arvernorum. Municipium may have a slightly negative connotation here (‘backwater’); certainly, municipalis in Sidonius does, cf. e.g. 1.11.5 non eminentius quam municipaliter natus, and Köhler 1995: 261 ad 1.8.2 municipalium ranarum.

See DNP 8: 476 ff. s.v. municipium, 2: 301 s.v. Augustonemetum, both with literature, and OCD s.v. civitas and municipium.

suburbanitas, ‘suburban estate’: Suburbanitas originally is abstract ‘nearness to the city’, here concrete ‘estate near the town’, ‘suburban villa’ (class. suburbanum). Cf. Cic. Ver. 2.7 populo Romano incunda suburbanitas est huiusce provinciae (the proximity of Sicily to the city of Rome), with e.g. Sidon. Ep. 3.1.2 cuius [= the church of Clermont] possessioni plurimum contulisti Conticiensis praedii suburbanitate, ‘… by your gift of the farm of Cuticiacum near the city’, and Symm. Ep. 2.22 nunc intuta est latrocinis suburbanitas, ‘the villa is unsafe due to bandits’. Sidonius also writes suburbanum: Ep. 2.12.2 propter quod optat exire in suburbanum (followed by: egress ad villulam iam parabamus).

matrimonialibus illic inserta documentis mimica largitate recitatur. matrimonialibus... documentis, ‘the documents of matrimony’, a variation on tabulae nuptiales, is without precedent. Matrimonialis is post-classical, e.g. Ps. Quint. Decl. 1.13 matrimonialis lectuli, and see above on tabulae nuptiales.

illac, ‘there’, in Marseille.

mimica largitate, ‘with farcical munificence’: Sidonius has mimicus one more time, 1.2.9 inter cenandum mimici sales, ‘the jests of farce during meals’.

Largitas is ‘generosity’, cf. Ep. 6.12.6 mediterranea... largitate, ‘your generosity in your midland bishopric’, and ibid. 9 tua largitas. Sirmond has pointed out Ennod. Opusc. 3.163 sit fili tui sponsalicia largitas absolutio captivorum.

The farce, of course, is that Amantius did not own these plots, but the bride’s family did not know, … and did not ask. There is a linguistic joke involved. The reader expects a noun with a negative connotation, something like the usual mimicas ineptias (Sen. Dial. 9.11.8) or mimicam verborum licentiam (Mart. 8 praef. l. 10).

TLL 8: 988.6 prefers the notion of theatrical make-believe and insincerity: ‘translate i.q. vanus, ficticus, falsus’, for which it adduces Plin. Ep. 7.29.3 quam essent mimica et inepta, and id. Paneg. 16.3 accipiet ... Capitolium non mimicos currus nec falsa simulacra victoriae.

Section 8

In this section, the end and climax of the story, the references to the comic situation are particularly clear because of the use of the specifically comic vocabulary. Gualandri 1979: 167 f. treats it in detail, among the examples of coherent (and not merely erudite) use of archaisms in Sidonius. In the following I shall pay special attention to rimatis convasatisque, emungens receptui and cecinit praestigiator invictus.

peracta circumscriptione legitima et fraude sollemni
‘when this legal deceit and solemn fraud had been completed’

circumscriptione, ‘deceit’, ‘fraud’, is a legal t.t., esp. in money transactions, cf. Sen. Con. 6.3 circumscriptio semper crimen sub specie legis involvit: quod appareet in illa, legitimum est; quod latet, insidiosum, ‘fraudulence always wraps crime in a show of legality; the obvious part is legal, the hidden is the trap’ (transl. M. Winterbottom, ed. Loeb), Cic. Flac. 74 emptiones falsas, praediorum proscriptiones cum mulierculis aperta circumscriptione fecisti. Sidonius uses it only here. With it the circle of the letter is closed. Its theme was announced by circumscriptus (sect. 1). Sidonius had been fooled by Amantius, and so had everybody else.

fraude: Fraus legis is ‘evasion of a law’, cf. Paul. Dig. 1.3.29 in fraudem (sc. legis facit) ... qui salvis verbis legis sententiam eius circumvenit.

Notice the oxymora circumscriptione legitima and fraude sollemni. Crookery and evasion of the law are no mean offences, but the playful oxymora indicate that Amantius gets away with them.

levat divitem coniugem pauper adamatus

levat, ‘carries off’, ‘steals’, is a late development of levare, fifth century and after. Sidonius is probably the first to have applied the verb in this way. Judging by the majority of the examples, it might originally even have been local idiom in Gaul. Cf. e.g.

adamatum (sc. the thief) cogatur exsolvere, Greg. Tur. Franc. 7.4 reliquos thesauros ... thesaurarii levaverunt et ad Childeberthum regem ... transierunt.

adamatus, ‘loved one’, esp. of sexual desire: Amantius, the lover, has become amatus; his calculating love is returned passionately. There is no parallel to this substantiated use, but cf. e.g. Plin. Nat. 8.155 equum adamatum a Samiramide usque in coitum, Tert. An. 55 Endymion ... a Luna adamatus fertur, Ambr. Joseph 5 denique adamatus est Joseph. The verb is also found Sidon. Ep. 5.10.2 and 9.9.12. See Salway 1994: 136 for later Roman names derived from a present participle, like Amantius (< amans), Florentius and Lactantius.

diligenter quae ad socerum pertinuerant rimatis convasatisque,

socularum MFP: socrum C. Luetjohann retained socerum, ‘father-in-law’, although he remarked ‘fortasse recte’ about the reading of C, ‘mother-in-law’. All modern editors do the same. The father was dead, the mother still a widow. That is what is suggested by the pluperfect pertinuerant. Amantius took with him everything his wife had inherited from her father.

rimatis convasatisque, ‘searched and packed’: Convasare, ‘to pack up (baggage)’, helps to lend the tone of comedy to the passage. It is found once in Ter. Ph. 190 aliquid convasem atque
hinc me conicerem protinam in pedes, resuscitated in late Latin from the fourth century, in Hier. Hilar. 34 convasatis quae a fratribus ei missa detulerat, Act. Archel. 63 (fourth/fifth cent. ?), and in Sidonius, also Ep. 1.9.8 undeque omnium laudum convasatis acclamationibus, ‘having heaped together all the compliments of the world’ - ‘un audace traslato’, as Gualandri 1979: 168 n. 87 judged; cf. Mannheimer 1975: 159. These words are written, as Sidonius himself says, ‘in a boastful tone, in imitation of the Pyrgopolinices of Plautus’, therefore also in an atmosphere of comedy, underlined by convasatis.

non parvo etiam corollario facilitatem credulitatemque munificentiae socrualis emungens
‘having coaxed his generous, kind and naïve mother-in-law into giving him also a substantial gift of her own’

corollario: A corollarium is an additional or unsolicited payment, an extra, a bounty, here probably an additional gift which the mother bestowed on Amantius from her own possessions, on top of the inheritance from her husband.

facilitatem, ‘good nature’, ‘indulgence’, often in malam partem ‘weakness’, ‘naïveté’, as in Ter. Ad. 391 inepta lenitas patris et facilitas prava, Ulp. Dig. 4.4.44 vel ab aliis circumventi vel sua facilitate decepti (a sign of inexperience).

The combination of facilitas and credulitas was found in the emperor Galba: Tac. Hist. 1.12.3 quippe hiantes in magna fortuna amicorum cupiditates ipsa Galbae facilitas intendebat, cum apud infirmm et credulum minore metu et maiore praemio peccaretur, ‘the very easiness of Galba’s temper stimulated the greedy cupidity which great advancement had excited in his friends, because with one so weak and so credulous wrong might be done with less risk and greater gain’ (transl. A.J. Church and W.J. Brodribb, London, 1877).

socrualis CF Anderson, Loyen: socralis MP Luetjohann. I prefer socrualis. We have to decide on paleographic and linguistic grounds, because only Sidonius uses the adjective. The manuscripts are unanimous in reading socrualis in both other cases: Ep. 6.2.3 munificentiae socrualis, and 8.9.2 de hereditate socruali. This is a strong argument in favour, scarcely impaired by the fact that the corollary form socra of socrus is attested in an inscription (Inscr. Orelli 4221).

Note the abstracta facilitatem credulitatemque and munificentiae instead of adjectives qualifying the person: facilem, credulam atque munificam socrum. Sidonius has left straightforward storytelling behind and now prepares for a rhetorical climax. Late-antique styling comes to the fore (see my comment on 7.1.2 animositati), overtly clashing with the colloquial, because what follows is:

emungens: Emungere, ‘to wipe one’s nose’, is colloquial for ‘to trick’, ‘swindle’, ‘defraud’. It is characteristic of comedy, esp. for the slave who plays tricks, e.g. Pl. Bacch. 701 emungam hercle hominem, ‘I’ll definitely bamboozle the old chap’, 1101 miserum me auro esse emunctum, ‘what a nuisance: I’ve been tricked out of my money’, Ter. Phorm. 682 emunxi argento senes. Cf. Hor. Ars 237 f. Davus loquitur et audax / Pythias emuncto lucrata Simone talentum. Its construction is aliquem aliqua re, as in Sidon. Ep. 9.7.1 quidam .. scribam tuum sive bibliopolam ... declamationum tuarum schedio emunxit. The part. praes. emungens again is almost perfective; see above on sect. 7 discedens.
receptui in patriam cecinit praestigiator invictus.

The military terms receptui cecinit and invictus sustain the ironic mood which Sidonius suggests throughout this story of a military expedition completed by Amantius. Combined with praestigiator, the sentence artfully ends in the picture which is central to this letter: a battle won by cunning.

For the figurative use of the expression receptui canere, cf. e.g. Plin. Ep. 3.1.11 ut primum ratio aetatis receptui canere permeserit, ‘as soon as my age will permit me to retire’ (after Cic. Tusc. 3.33). See also Otto 1890: 259 # 1510 receptus.

For invictus, ‘unbeaten’, ‘successful’, cf. 1.9.6 adstipulator invictus (also the same rhythm!), and Köhler 1995: 276 ad loc. with more parallels.

The word praestigiator, ‘one who practises deceit’, ‘a trickster’, ‘con man’, in between the two turns irony into parody (thus Gualandri 1979: 168). The word is taken from comedy, e.g. Pl. Aul. 630 edepol te, praestigiator, miseris iam accusiam modis, Anm. 830 nescioquis praestigiator hanc frustratur mulierem. The noun praestigiator only here in Sidonius. It is essential to our understanding of the underlying structure of book 7, as the notion praestigiae returns in letter 7, the letter which denounces the betrayal of the Auvergne: Ep. 7.7.5 at quosque istae poterunt durare praestigiae? Letter 7 is the absolute counterpart of letter 2, grief instead of merrymaking. Amantius, the jolly praestigiator invictus, the ‘successful swindler’, of 7.2.8, is replaced by bishop Graecus and his lot with their questionable praestigiae, the political ‘swindling’ of 7.7.5. See my comment ad loc. and the Introduction to the current letter, section 1 Overview.

quo profecto mater puellae pro hyperbolicis instrumentis coepit actionem repetundarum velle proponere

pro hyperbolicis instrumentis, ‘because of the excessive contract’: Hyperbolicus, ‘excessive’, ‘exaggerated’, returns in Ep. 4.3.4 eloquium ... quod nec per scaturrigines hyperbolicas intumescit (swollen style,) and 5.10.3 sub hoc quasi hyperbolico rhetorum catalogo (excessively flattering comparison). The word appears from the fourth century onwards, especially in Augustine and Jerome, always as an adverb, ‘figuratively’ (e.g. Aug. c. Iulian. 5.10 (PL 44: 788.39) hyperbolicos dictum, Hier. in ler. 2.100 hyperbolicce debemus accipere), except Aug, Loc. Hept. 5.17 hyperbola commendatio. It can be added to the survey of grecisms in Gualandri 1979: 145 ff.

Sirmond, with approval, mentioned Cujac’s conjecture hypobolicis, ‘donationis propter nuptias, quam hypobolum a Graecis appellari docent juris interpretes’. Liddell-Scott only has υπώβολος, ‘mortgaged’. And there is no proof of the existence of this word in Latin vocabulary. Savaron read perhyperbolicis: ‘perhyperbolica donatio, id est immensa sponsalitia donatio’. Following all modern editors, I think that the manuscript reading makes excellent sense and should be retained.

instrumentis, ‘deed(s)’, ‘document(s)’, e.g. Iust. Inst. 1.10 dotalibus instrumentis compositis, Cod. Theod. 3.5.13 si donationis instrumentum ante nuptias actorum solenitate firmatum sit. The contract in question is the contract entered into at the engagement (sponsalia), which more than once was disputed afterwards if any problems arose as to the marriage proper, e.g. Iust. Dig. 24.1.32.27 si quis sponsam habuerit, deinde eandem uxorem duxerit cum non liceret, an donationes quasi in sponsalibus factae valeant, videamus ... ideoque si sponsalia antecesserint, valet donatio. On the sponsalia see below.
coepit ... velle = voluit, ‘was minded to’: Coepit + inf. in later Latin is common as an alternative for the perfect tense, more specifically as a paraphrase of its ingressive actio. See my comment on 7.1.2 coepit initiari.

actionem repetundarum ... proponere, ‘to go to court for unlawful self-enrichment’, is clownishly exaggerated. The poor woman overstrains herself. The reader knows the predictable ineffectiveness of her belated protest. The quaestio de repetundis was a court established to secure compensation for the illegal acquisition of money or property by Romans in authority abroad. Under the empire the law came to apply to equestrian jurors and, later, to municipal senators. For private persons it was out of the question. See Heumann-Seckel s.v. repetundae.

In Ep. 1.7.7 vix illud dignabor ammittere, ut advocati mihi in actionibus repetundarum patrocinentur, Arvandus is cited defending his own, real, actio repetundarum.

actionem ... proponere, ‘take legal action’: See Heumann-Seckel s.v. actio: actio proponitur, syn. proditur, proficiscitur. The expression is frequent in juridical literature, cf. e.g. Cod. Theod. 4.5.1.1 res, quae proposita actione repetitur, 9.20.1 criminalem proponere actionem, Cod. Iust. 1.3.32.8 in provinciali iudicio proposita actione.

et tunc demum de mancipiorum sponsaliciae donationis paucitate maerere,

de mancipiorum sponsaliciae donationis paucitate, ‘the small number of personnel in the betrothal gift’: Mancipiorum refers to the (imaginary) personnel of Amantius’ fictitious suburbanitates entered into the documents (sect. 7). Mancipiorum is opposed to nepotum which follows. Ep. 3.9.2 mancipia sua ... abducta deplorat, is the only other occurrence in Sidonius.

Sponsalicia donatio, ‘betrothal gift’ also called Cod. Iust. 1.4.16 arras sponsalicias, 5.9.4.1 sponsaliciam largitatem, 5.9.4.4 sponsalicias ... facultates. Cf. Ennod. Opusc. 3.163 sit fili tui sponsalicia largitus absolutio captivorum. For its regulation see Cod. Theod. 3.5.0 De sponsalibus et ante nuptias donationibus. In drawing up a contract of betrothal, which was not obligatory, one or both of the partners stipulated their marriage portion. This contract was legally binding, but for a change in voluntas, a mutata animi sententia (Cod. Theod. 3.5.2.2); otherwise, one should have been more prudent beforehand: … si ex parte sponsae in sponsum donatio facta sit; nullis causis ulterius requirendis, ne forte mores aut origo dicatur, vel quicquam aliud opponatur, quod sibi quisquam non convenire existimat, quam longe ante, quam sponsalia contrahantur, haec cuncta prospici debuerint (ibidem), ‘… if a gift is made by the bride to the bridegroom; additional arguments must not be thought up, lest a discussion arises about behaviour or origin, or anything else is put forward because of which somebody is not to one’s liking, because all this should have been anticipated long before the betrothal contract was drawn up’. It is clear that our widow would not have stood a chance.

In the fourth century the dos, ‘dowry’, received a counterpart, donatio nuptialis, ‘bride gift’, which was the groom’s contribution. The bride gift gradually overshadowed, and finally replaced, the dowry in western Europe. From the sixth century onward the word dos was used to refer, not to the dowry, but to the bride gift. In Sidonius dos still has its traditional meaning, cf. 1.11.5. See Arjava 1996: 52-62 ‘Dos and Donatio ante Nuptias’.

The adjective sponsalicius is later Latin; Var. L. 6.70 has sponsalis.

Paucitate is a pun on what normally is sponsalia largitas and stands in opposition to (nepotum) numerositas.

quando iam de nepotum numerositate gaudebat.

Children were not legitimate unless the marriage had received the consent of the paterfamilias (see Treggiari 1991: 174 and 317), therefore his apparent subsequent consent excluded the legal action the widow had threatened to take. Then, her happiness at the birth of the grandchildren made up for her worry about the paucity of Amantius’ possessions.

In the case of Amantius’ aristocratic counterpart Simplicius, it will appear that concern for the children (7.9.21 intuitus parvulorum) also played a role. Simplicius is not restrained by the pecuniary interest of his children from spending a lot of money on the church. Amantius had to act as if he had a lot of money in the interest of his (future) children.

ad hanc placandam noster Hippolytus perrexerat, cum litteras meas prius obtulit.

ad hanc placandam, ‘to appease her’: Once more a characteristic situation from comedy. The conflicts that arise from youthful recklessness or revolt have to be settled, and the consent of the parents won, for the ending to be as happy as it should be. See e.g. Ter. Phorm. 784 agedum ... fac illa ut placetur nobis, 965 vereor ut placari possit.

noster Hippolytus: Amantius is loosely associated with Hippolytus as a paragon of youthful, injured innocence, again with an unmistakable undertone of irony on the part of Sidonius. Just imagine Hippolytus and a bunch of grandchildren!

Of course this is a far cry from the tragic fate of Hippolytus, devoted to the hunt, not to love, lusted after and falsely accused by his stepmother Phaedra, exiled and killed in a chariot crash. Sidonius was perfectly aware of the original myth, which he used in Carm. 7.199 ff. Hippolytus roseo sudum radiabat ab ore, / sed simul a gemino flagrans cum Cressa furore / transiit affectu matres et fraude novercas, ‘Hippolytus’ rosy face radiated brightly, but at the same time Phaedra, aflame with a double passion, exceeded a mother’s love and a stepmother’s guile’. Young Avitus, returning home from the hunt, handsome and modest at the same time, is likened to Hippolytus. It should be noted, however, that here also the incestuous part of the story has no function, despite its having two verses given to it.

I agree with Semple 1930: 41 who saw two reasons as to why Sidonius applied this simile: ‘In the first place, he has made out Amantius to be a very model of chastity and propriety (sect. 5) ... and to his half-ironical humour the title seems not to fit badly this “excellent young man” (sect. 9); and then because Hippolytus may be regarded as the classical type of injured innocence – a pose which Amantius might readily be inclined to adopt with his incensed mother-in-law, for, with all his other knowledge, this marvel also understood the mentality of women (sect. 6 ff.).’

To give even more weight to this interpretation one might look at Ep. 3.13.10 hoc fabricatu Daedalus noster amicitia culmen edificat, ‘such is the architecture with which our Daedalus builds the lofty eminences of his friendships’ (Anderson). The reputation of the mythical
architect is applied ironically to the impenetrable practices of the subject of that letter, one Gnatho, a model of untrustworthiness.

This seems to be much simpler and more to the point than Savaron’s explanation, who was at great pains to construct a parallel between Hippolytus who fled from Greece to Italy and Amantius who left the Greek colony Marseille and came back to Roman Clermont.

For noster said of the model which is cited, cf. also 5.7.7 temperat Lucrumonem nostrum Tanaquil sua.

cum litteras meas prius obtulit, ‘when he handed over my earlier letter’: Cf. sect. 1 apicum primore congressu, and comment.

Section 9

habetis historiam iuvenis eximii, fabulam Miletiae vel Atticae parem.

habetis historiam, ‘there you have the story’: Pliny repeatedly concluded a letter in the same way, e.g. Ep. 8.18.11 habes omnes fabulas urbis, 9.13.26 habes epistulam, si modum epistulae cogites, libris quos legisti non minorem; sed imputabis tibi qui contentus libris non fuisti (the same kind of excuse for its length as Sidonius; see below). Cf. Sidon. Ep. 9.11.9 ecce habes litteras tam garrulas ferme quam requirebas, 9.14.6 en habes versus. Cf. Apul. Met. 3.3 habetis itaque reum tot caedibus impiatum, reum coram deprensum, reum peregrinum (the recapitulation of a legal charge).

iuvenis eximii, ‘this excellent young man’: The adjective eximius is hapax in the correspondence. In Sidonius’ poetry one encounters Carm. 5.100 f. princeps / ... eximius (the emperor Majorian), and 23.478 f. eximii ... / ... officiositas Marini (a grand seigneur who had entertained Sidonius).

Used of excellence of qualities (e.g. Pl. Merc. 13 ibi amare occepi forma eximia mulierem) and of persons (e.g. Col. 8.8.9 eximius auctor M. Varro), there is an enormous increase of its use in the late-antique period, especially in patristic literature, in a purely honorific sense, cf. e.g. Min. Fel. 1.3 vir eximius et sanctus, Aug. Ep. 34 init. domino eximio meritoque suscipiendo atque honorabili fratri Eusebio. But it is not exclusively Christian, cf. Symm. Ep. 7.118 eximium virum.

It is against the backdrop of this omnipresent ceremonial politeness, that Sidonius can write, again ironically: iuvenis eximii. Its prominence in the ecclesiastical milieu may have added to its wittiness for two men of the church like Sidonius and Graecus.

fabulam Miletiae vel Atticae parem, ‘a comedy like the ones from Miletus or Athens’: Fabula for ‘comedy’ is used in the same pregnant way by Apul. Met. 10.2 iam ergo, lector, scito te tragediadam, non fabulum, legere et a socco ad cothurnum ascendere (the turn is ironic, the scene is between a stepmother and her stepson). For the Milesian stories and Attic comedy, see the Introduction, section 5 A touch of comedy. For the geographic circumlocution to indicate the literary genre, cf. Sidon. Ep. 9.16.3 Mytilenaei oppidi vernulas, for Sapphic verse. Loyen 3: 189 n. 10 made a mistake in associating fabula Attica with the Hippolytus of Euripides. Apart from that, fabula Attica is probably a coinage of Sidonius himself. Fabula Graeca is the usual phrase, e.g. Ter. Eun. 32 f. transtulisse in Eunuchum suam / ex Graeca (sc. fabula), Sen. Suas. 7.12 12 a quo Graecae fabulae eleganter in sermonem Latinum conversae sunt. Atticus instead of Graecus also Venant. Vit. Mart. 1.1.12 hebraicus cecinit stilus, atticus atque latinus.
Not only a story told in a letter, but a letter itself might make the impression of a piece of comedy, see Plin. Ep. 1.16.6 legit mihi nuper epistulas; uxoris esse dicebat. Plautum vel Terentium metro solutum legi credidi.

Luetjohann suggested reading fabulae. As this is not strictly necessary, it is better to follow the manuscripts, as do all editors.

I read Miletiae, as the MSS have miliciae MCP militie F. The switch t – c is common with scribes. Savaron had recognized the adjective ‘Milesian’, but restored the standard form Milesiae, followed by Luetjohann and Loyen. I follow Mommsen, as Mohr and Anderson did. Mommsen in his introduction to Luetjohann’s edition, p. lxvii, suggested reading Miletiae instead of Milesiae, referring to Carm. 23.101 where the manuscripts have Miletius ... Thales (the majority of the editors there could not suppress the urge to change the unanimous reading into Miletius).

simul et ignoscite praeter aequum epistularem formulam porrigenti,

simul et, ‘but also’, provides the same kind of two-sided reasoning as in sect. 2 simul et, si moris est etc., before the story began (see above): (1) ‘here is the story you asked for’, (2) ‘but the letter has become longer than usual, out of respect for your integrity’.

One of the most common topoi in epistolography is the requirement of brevity in private letters, e.g. Iul. Vict. p. 448,1 ff. Halm in familiaribus litteris primo brevitas observanda. See Cugusi 1983: 34 ff. for the ancient sources, and 74 f. Sidonius has, for instance, Ep. 1.2.1 in quantum epistularis pagina sinit, 2.2.20 daturus hinc veniam, quod brevitatem sibi debitam paulo scrupulosior epistula excessit. The play on the excuse for exceeding the prescribed length is part of the topos as well.

praeter aequum, ‘excessively’: Sidonius prefers this to praeter modum and uses it often: Ep. 4.3.1, 5.4.1, 7.14.1, 9.11.8. Cf. 0.22.1 aequo plusculum. It is not very common: Cic. Inv. 1.19.27 nimium ipse est durus praeter aequumque et bonum, and Symm. Ep. 1.1 nam praeter aequum censet, qui etc., is all we have.

epistularem formulam, ‘the standard for a letter’, is again peculiar to Sidonius: also Ep. 6.11.2 nam prudentiae satis obviet epistulare formulae debitam concinnitatem plurifario sermone porrigere (again an excuse for excessive length, plurifario sermone, instead of due brevity, debitam concinnitatem). For formula, ‘standard’, ‘pattern’, ‘norm’, see e.g. Cic. Opt. Gen. 20 abhorret ... a formula consuetudinis nostrae, Cassiod. Inst. 1.15.7 humanarum formularum dictionum, ‘the rules of human language’, where formula is synonym with both regula and mensura in the same sentence. See TLL 6/2: 114.69 ‘fere i.q. regula, praescriptum, norma’.

Some might prefer an alternative interpretation: ‘the form and content of this letter’, and take into account e.g. Ep. 4.10.2 non enim tanti est poliri formulas editione carituras, where Amherdt, pace TLL 6/2: 1113.61 ff. ‘fere i.q. forma ... speciatim de rebus quae verbis concipiuntur’, translates ‘phrases’. A similar case is Ennod. Ep. 2.12 aestimo te huius epistulae formulam ad plurimos destinasse et sola nominum commutazione eam per singulos sine meritorum consideratione transmittere, about a letter, epistulae formulam, which was sent to a number of addressees, just by changing the address.

porrigenti, ‘to lengthen’, ‘draw out’, cf. Ep. 1.4.3 eloquia ... porrecta (opp. brevia), 6.11.2, 9.9.2 salutatio ... succincta est; quam qui porrigit verbis non necessariis, etc.
quam ob hoc stilo morante produxi,


Symmachus often uses *stilus* for ‘correspondence’, e.g. Symm. *Ep.* 6.70 *diu ab stilo fateor temperasse*, 8.33 *scio me in scribendo tardum fuisse. consulto stilum distuli*.

**produxi**, ‘I have made long’, synonym with porrigenti.

ut non tamquam ignotum recuperetis quem civem beneficiis reddidistis.

Graecus has a right to know who it is he receives, even if the person in question, thanks to him, is already quite at home in the town. The second person plural refers to Graecus throughout the section. Note the wordplay on *recuperetis* and *reddidistis*.


**pariter et natura comparatum est**, *ut quibus impendimus studium praestemus affectum*.

**pariter et**, ‘at the same time’, ‘in addition’, adds a second explanation for this long letter. The first was that Graecus had a right to the full knowledge of who Amantius really was, because of the past: Amantius had already been accepted in Marseille before him. The second is concerned with the future: Sidonius writes at length because he has a soft spot for Amantius, and wants to recommend his protégé to the new bishop.

**natura comparatum est**, ‘nature has seen to it’: cf. Liv. 3.68.10 *natura [hoc] ita comparatum est, ut* etc.

**ut quibus impendimus studium praestemus affectum**, ‘that we bestow our affection on those in whom we take an active interest’ (Anderson). Cf. Ps. *Quint.* *Decl.* 9.9 * sustineas, adiuves, praestes affectum*. For the same idea in a more metaphysical context, cf. Juv. 15.149 f. (the creator, *mundi communis conditor*, has given us a soul) *mutuus ut nos / affectus petere auxilium et praestare iuberet*.

*Affectus*, ‘attachment’, ‘sympathy’, is one of the many words which designate friendship in social relations, like *amicitia, gratia, necessitudo, caritas* and *amor*. On this complex see Hellegouarch’s 1963: 142 ff. (who, however, for the republican period does not mention *affectus*) and Amherdt 2001: 343 on 4.14.1 *affectu nostro*. The noun occurs no fewer than thirty-two times in Sidonius’ letters alone – in my corpus (apart from 7.1.2 which is not in the context of *amicitia*) also 7.3.1 *affectu studioque parendi* (see below) and 7.4.3 *qui etiam longe positorum incitare in se affectat affectum*.

*Studium*, ‘zeal’, ‘interest’, is complementary to *affectus*: it is sympathy made concrete. Cf. *Ep.* 1.5.1 *namque huiuscemodi studium de affectu interiore proficiscitur*: the addressee has shown his interest by asking how Sidonius is doing and how his journey is going (*studium*); Sidonius interprets this as proof of real sympathy (*affectu*). Because to the unprepared reader
impendimus, without any further indication, cannot but appear as a present tense, Loyen’s translation: ‘que nous gardions de l’affection pour les gens qui ont bénéficié de nos soins’ (my italics), seems to me slightly less appropriate. For studium see Hellegouarch 1963: 174 ff.

For affectus combined with studium see also the next letter, 7.3.1 quamquam mihi animus affectu studioque parendi sollicitaretur, ‘… a feeling of sympathy and (hence) the inclination to comply with your wish’ (see comment ad loc.). Cf. e.g. Auson. Ep. (= 27) 9a l. 8 f. (I send you) paucos epodos, studio in te observantiae meae impudentissimo (where observantia replaces affectus), and Ven. Fort. Carm. 7.12.89 (we are at a great distance from each other, but nevertheless) affectu, studio, voto tua bracchia cingo (where affectus and studium are virtually synonyms).

On amicitia and epistolary usage, see General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

vos vero Eustachium pontificem tunc ex asse digno herede deceasses monstrabis,

‘you will then demonstrate that bishop Eustachius has died leaving a perfectly worthy heir’

herede codd: heredi Anderson (who, however, retains herede in his text), followed by Loyen and Bellès. Anderson n. 3 ad loc. compares sect. 4 qui vobis decessit, ‘your predecessor’. The case for eli in the manuscripts is debatable, see my comment on sect. 2 ipselipsi. Nevertheless, I prefer to retain herede. Although Anderson’s conjecture is elegant and results in a perfect reference to qui vobis decessit, a conservative view in favour of the manuscript reading is supported by Ps. Quint. Decl. min. 306 maritus peregre uxore herede decessit, ‘the husband died abroad leaving his wife as heir’. For dededere, see the discussion above at sect. 4.

The phrase is an ingenious concoction of ex asse dignus, ‘entirely worthy’, and ex asse heres, ‘full heir’. Ex asse is a juridical t.t. which occurs no fewer than twelve times in the Epistulae, sometimes combined with an adjective, as here and in 6.11.1 ex asse damnabilem, ‘entirely beyond redemption’ (Anderson), 9.2.1 ex asse turbatus, ‘completely nonplussed’, 9.14.2 ex asse vegetus, ‘completely restored’.

The definition of ex asse heres follows from the opposition in Gai. Inst. 2.259 aliquis ex asse heres institutus ... an ex parte heres institutus.

si ut propinquis testamenti, sic clientibus patrocinii legata solvatis.

Graecus was Eustachius’ heir in the sense that, as executor, he had distributed his property, as specified in the will. Now he is called upon by Sidonius to take over his patrocinium as well.

Bishops sometimes left considerable property. Griffe 3: 107 f.: ‘Les hommes d’Église qui possédaient une fortune personnelle apparaissaient comme des bienfaiteurs-nés de leur église.’ More than once, rich people were put under pressure by the population to enter the clergy. The choice of bishops could be influenced by this. One can think of Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicius Severus or the palatinus Maximus (Sidon. Ep. 4.24). Bennadius, bishop of Reims in the fifth century, left part of his possessions to the church (Flodoard. Hist. eccl. Remen 1.9). But certainly not all of the fortune of the clergy fell to the church. Salv. Ep. 9.10 f. complains that even the bishops ex quibus multi ... sine affectibus, sine pignore, non familias, non filios habentes, opes et substantias suas non pauperibus, non ecclesiis, non sibi ipsis, non denique ... deo, sed saecularibus vel maxime et divitiis et extraneis deputarent. Cf. Harries 1994: 218 f. on the
gradual accumulation of wealth, in the course of the fifth century, by churches in Gallic cities and the role of bishops in this.

**legata solvatis**, ‘you pay the bequests’: For the expression, cf. Suet. Cal. 3 legata ex testamento Tiberi ... persolvit.

The phrase which, as regards content, rounds off this letter, strongly reminds one of the final sentence of 7.1 *ut nobis inde veniat pars patrocinii, quia vobis hinc rediit pars patroni*.

**Section 10**

The last section is dedicated to a gesture of *urbanitas*. The author underlines the inferior quality of his letter. The dedicatee should have known better, when he asked an *indoctus* to write it.

**ecce parui et oboedientis officium garrulitate complevi,**

**ecce parui**, ‘there you are, I have done my duty’: Cf. Ep. 2.10.5 ecce parui tamquam iunior imperatis, 9.11.9 ecce habes litteras tam garrulas ferme quam requirebas.

**oboedientis officium ... complevi**, ‘I have performed the duty of obedience”: With Ep. 7.3.1 grandisine haec oboedientia? this is the only instance of oboedire/oboedientia in Sidonius as a code of conduct (in 4.9.1 oboedientes is about slaves).

For the phrase *oboedientis officium* and its epistolary context see 3.11.2 *loquacitatis officium*, 7.11.1 *officia verborum*, 7.12.1 *sermonum officia*. Cf. 7.9.6 *docentis officium*.

*Officium complere*, ‘to discharge a duty’, is a later development, e.g. Serv. Aen. 6.83 *hinc et defunctos mortuos dicimus, qui compleverunt vitae officia*, Cassiod. Var. 10.3 ut robustius perageretur officium quod duorum fuerat societate complendum. Sidonius uses the verb often this way, e.g. Ep. 5.15.1 quominus pollicita compleret, 5.16.2 complevit, quod ... pollicebatur, 9.16.2 quin actutum iussa complerem. In 7.9.9 non episcopi, sed potius abbatis complet officium, officium complere means ‘to function as’, ‘live as’. See my comment ad loc.

For a treatment of the *iubes – pareo* motif and the *officia* of friendship (writing letters as a social obligation; the addressee has ‘ordered’ the letter, the author ‘obeys’), see General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

**garrulitate,** ‘talkativeness’: *Garrulitas* and its cognates *garrire, garrulus, garritus*, have an informal, not necessarily pejorative, character: ‘talkativeness’, ‘babbling’. First found in comedy, Pl. Aul. 830 *garrire nugas*, it is used by Cicero in his correspondence, e.g. *Att*. 6.2.10 (at the end of the letter) *cupiebam etiam nunc plura garrire sed lucet, Att*. 12.1.2 *quid cum coram sumus et garrimus quicquid in buccam*? It is a favourite with Sidonius, like its synonym *loquacitas*. It fits in with the self-depreciating mould in which this type of correspondence is cast (*urbanitas*), cf. Amherdt 2001: 164 on 4.3.10 *garriamus*. It is either said of the letter itself (e.g. Ep. 8.6.13 *epistulam, quae diu garrir, claudere optarem*) or of a story, poem, book, etc., contained in or attached to it, like here, cf. Auson. *Ep*. (= 27) 9a l. 7 ff. *libello ... antetuli paucos epodos, ... paucos quidem, ut ego loquax iudico; verum tu, cum legeris, etiam nimium multos putabis*. See also the next letter, 7.3.2 *garrulitate deblaterat*. 
licet qui indocto negotium prolixitatis iniungit, aegre ferre non debeat, 

indocto, ‘a mere amateur’ (Anderson): The partner who writes, modestly poses as indoctus, whereas the addressee is given the credits of superior taste and insight, cf. e.g. 7.3.2 (my presumption) quae doctissimo examini tuo naturali garrulitate deblaterat (see comment ad loc.). Sidonius had already posed as not being a dignus relator (sect. 2). See General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics (see also 3.3.2 Social conventions and Christianity).

negotium prolixitatis iniungit, ‘assigns the business of writing at length’: Iniungere, ‘to charge’, ‘give a task’, twenty-one times in the correspondence, is one of the verbs commonly used in the iubes – pareo scheme, for asking someone a service in the context of amicitia. Cf. e.g. 9.15.1 servio iniunctis. See General Introduction, loc. cit.

For prolixitas, ‘elaborateness’, ‘verbosity’, see Köhler 1995: 276 ad 1.9.7 epistulae ... prolixitatem. In principle prolixity is ‘nicht negativ bewertet’, but it may (supposedly) cause undesirable lengthiness. Cf. e.g. Ep. 9.11.9 ecce habes litteras tam garrulas ferme quam requirebas; ... ; namque in audentiam sermocinandi quem non ipse compellas?, Symm. Ep. 2.8.1 in illis (sc. litteris) ...

prolixitas, cf. id. 3.57.

si non tam eloquentes epistulas recipit quam loquaces.

eloquentes ... loquaces, ‘eloquent … talkative’: Cf. Sal. Hist. 4 fr. 43 loquax magis quam facundus, Plin. 5.20.5 aliu esse eloquentiam, aliu loquentiam, ibid. 8 epistulae loquacitate, Sidon. Ep. 9.11.5 tribus loquacissimis paginis fatigatus. The paronomasia (Hagendahl classes 2 and 3) effectively finishes the letter.

epistulas, ‘a letter’, instead of sing. epistulam (= litteras), although with a generalizing tendency, see Mossberg 1934: 65. It is found one more time in Sidonius, viz. Ep. 9.10.1 reddidit tibi epistulas meas, like e.g. Hier. in ler. 5.69.2 ad Sophoniam sacerdotem mittit epistulas (cf. CSEL 59, index verborum p. 529, ‘epistulae’). Sidonius has the same preference regarding amicitiae, e.g. amicitiarum vetera iura, cf. Symm. Ep. 5.4.