Edinburgh Research Explorer

# Sidonius Apollinaris and Horace Ars poetica 14-23

OPEN ACCESS

**DE GRUYTER**

Aaron Pelttari*
# Sidonius Apollinaris and Horace, *Ars poetica* 14–23

**Abstract:** Sidonius knew and understood the beginning of Horace's influential *Ars poetica*, the passage in which Horace pronounced in favour of artistic unity. Instead of following Horace's advice, Sidonius opted for variety in *Poem* 22 and *Letters* Book 9. Even though he ignored the advice, Sidonius at the end of both texts invoked Horace's authority from the *Ars poetica*. Sidonius even claimed to have written exactly as Horace said he should. A century before, Ausonius had translated Horace in a way that the source had specifically criticised. Both Sidonius and Ausonius engaged Horace's authoritative text in order to negotiate their debt toward and place within Latin literature. Further study could describe the variety of ways in which late antique poets received and transformed their Classical inheritance.

**Keywords:** Sidonius Apollinaris, Horace, Ausonius, intertextuality, late antiquity

Sidonius Apollinaris – the Latin poet, letter-writer, and bishop who was surprisingly influential from the 5th until the 15th century –[1] twice cites the programmatic beginning of Horace's *Ars poetica*. Annick Stoehr-Monjou (2013) has provided a thorough and sensitive study of Horace in the memory of Sidonius. I am indebted to her study, but I will suggest that Sidonius was more active and not as respectful as she concludes. In an explanatory note following *Poem* 22, Sidonius casually reverses the accepted meaning of Horace's passage from the *Ars poetica*. At the end of *Letter* 9.16, Sidonius cites the same passage to impose a superficial unity on his last, *multiplex* book of letters.[2] Both citations are individual acts of reception that transform the model they invoke, with a deference that also includes

---

**1** See Hernández Lobato (2014) and Wolff (2014).
**2** For a new and different view of Sidonius's use of Horace in his letter collection, see Mratschek (forthcoming).

**\*Corresponding author: Aaron Pelttari,** Department of Classics, The University of Edinburgh, 1M.10 William Robertson Wing, Old Medical School, Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9AG, UK, E-Mail: aaron.pelttari@ed.ac.uk

objectification.[3] That combination is neatly expressed in a casual phrase that Sidonius uses elsewhere to describe a friend who read the ancients with reverence, *cum reuerentia antiquos* in Sidonius's happy formulation (*Ep.* 8.11.8). The modal ablative (*cum reuerentia*) describes the manner in which the author approaches his models; the accusative makes the ancients subject to the transitive desires of modern authors. They are objects to be acted upon and transformed. In his readings, Sidonius oscillates between reverence and transformation, and we will see that he constructs Horace's authority in a very particular way, rather than confronting or challenging his predecessor. Put differently, Sidonius read Horace in the way that suited him best.[4] The type of intertextuality represented here is important for Sidonius and common in late antiquity, but difficult to describe using the current terminology.

## Horace, *Ars poetica* 14–23

Sidonius's source text is the famous passage in which Horace criticizes the purple patches that some poets use to extend their work. According to Horace, a work of art should be *simplex et unum*:

> *Inceptis grauibus plerumque et magna professis*
> *purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter*                    15
> *assuitur pannus, cum lucus et ara Dianae*
> *et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros,*
> *aut flumen Rhenum aut pluuius describitur arcus*
> *sed nunc non erat his locus. Et fortasse cupressum*
> *scis simulare: quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes*              20
> *nauibus aere dato qui pingitur? Amphora coepit*
> *institui: currente rota cur urceus exit?*
> *Denique sit quiduis, simplex dumtaxat et unum.* (Hor. *Ars P.* 14–23)

> Often on grand beginnings that make great claims
> a purple patch is sewn, one and then another,

---

**3** For a more direct reversal of Horace's advise at the beginning of the *Ars poetica*, compare *Ars P.* 29–30 with Ov. *Met.* 1.302 and 305. On Ovid's reversal of Horace's advise, see Barchiesi (1997) 250 n. 26 and Tissol (1997) 95–96.

**4** When I speak of the author and his or her intentions, I am constructing from and for the text "an intention-bearing authorial voice" (Hinds 1998, 49). In other words, I assume that meaning "is always realized at the point of reception" (Martindale 1993, 3). As a side note, significant work remains to be done on *intentio*, διάνοια and the other related interpretative categories used in the rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy of (late) antiquity to talk about a text's meaning or goal.

to stand out and shine far. Then the grove and altar of Diana
and the passing of rushing water through pleasant fields,
or the river Rhine or a rainbow is described,
but there was not space for these now. And perhaps you can
imitate a cypress. But what's the point if the one painted,
(it was paid for) swims hopeless from his broken ships? A jar
was produced at first: as the wheel turns, why does it end up as a pot?
Really anything is fine, as long as it is single and unitary.

Horace would have his readers avoid purple patches and unnecessary descriptions. Although the passage is more complex, Horace's basic statement is clear, that unity is central to artistic creation. Pomponius Porphyrio (the 3rd-century commentator whose work survives in a version from the 5th century) explains the basic meaning of the passage:

> *Tertium* καθολικόν *est, naturam quorundam poetarum esse pessimam, qui incipiant grandia describere, deinde in locos communes exeant, qui licet boni sint, tamen ridentur ac superuacui habentur, nisi loco positi sint.* (*Ad artem poeticam* 14)

> The third general [warning][5] is that some poets are terrible by nature, the ones who begin to describe something grand then end up in common places – which, even though they might be good, are mocked and considered superfluous, unless they are put in [the right] place.

Pseudo-Acron, from the 5th century, also understands the passage as a prohibition against poems that are not continuous and unitary. The following is his gloss on *inceptis grauibus*:

> *Aliud praeceptum. Docet non importune inducendam esse parabolam aut descriptionem; sed aut parabola aut descriptio apte debent adiungi incepto bene poemate; qui enim incipit granditer et leuiter finit, uituperandus est.*

> Another warning. He teaches that a comparison or description should not be introduced out of order. Instead, a comparison or description should be joined on in a fitting way if the poem was begun well. For anyone who begins grandly and ends frivolously ought to be censured.

We should note that there was no dispute, or even trace of any dispute, over the meaning of Horace's lines. Horace disparages discontinuous works, and that was how he was understood in the scholia that survive from late antiquity, from the 5th century when Sidonius was writing.

---

**5** *Praeceptum* is understood from the notes on lines five and nine.

# Sidonius, *Carmen* 22

Sidonius breaks Horace's rule in *Carmen* 22, a description of the Burgus (the modern-day Bourg-sur-Gironde) of Pontius Leontius sent to its owner between 461 and 466.[6] The poem digresses from praise of the hilltop home through an invocation of Erato[7] to a narrative involving Bacchus and Apollo. Bacchus is heading from Erythrae to Thebes with his followers, captives, and elephants (22–63). Apollo, fresh from his own troubles in Aonia, meets Bacchus on the way and suggests that they leave Greece behind and move instead to Gaul, to the future home of Pontius Leontius (64–100). After a long speech from Apollo in praise of the home (101–230), they agree to depart from Greece together (231–235), and the poem ends. Apollo describes in detail the site in Gaul, even including a catalogue of the territories that will send grain to its barns, territories that stretch from Africa to Attica (171–178). When Apollo began his speech, Silenus was quite drunk (*Silenus iam numine plenus alumno*, 38). Apollo goes on for so long that by the end Silenus is already sober (*Confirmat uocem iamiam prope sobrius istam / Silenus*, 231–232).[8] From even this brief sketch, it is apparent that Sidonius plays self-consciously on the very length of his praise (self-consciously, because the note of impatience in *iamiam* is extradiegetic); and he makes no effort to abide by Horace's restrictions. Indeed by invoking Erato, Sidonius writes a high beginning (*inceptum graue*) and makes grandiloquent claims (*magna professus*), but he then digresses. Because of the high tone at the beginning of *Poem* 22, I do not think that Sidonius would have claimed license for his descriptions on the grounds that he was writing a lighter work.[9]

---

**6** For the dating, see Delhey (1993) 9–12.

**7** For the choice of Erato as muse, see Delhey (1993) 66. Delhey cites *Anthologia Latina* 76.6 (Shackleton Bailey = 88.6 Riese) for Erato's connection to lyrical poetry. On the same page, he also cites epic precedents for the high-sounding call of verse 12, *Ergo age Pierias, Erato, mihi percute chordas*.

**8** Delhey (1993) 200 had already observed the link, but he does not interpret Silenus's sobering up as indicative of Sidonius's ironic self-presentation.

**9** Pace Hernández Lobato (2012) 369 n. 144 and Delhey (1993) 209, who suggest that Sidonius understood *Poem* 22 as a lighter work. In addition to the invocation of the Muse (12–21), both the reference to Phoebus (8) and *carbasa fandi* (8) tell against a straight-forwardly frivolous reading of *Poem* 22. Though Sidonius does call his poems *nugae* (*Poem* 8.3 and 9.9), he can also describe his work as high poetry. Condorelli (2008) 162–165 details the ways in which Sidonius gestures towards both epic and epigram at the beginning of *Poem* 22. However, despite what Condorelli (2008) 155–158 writes about the *epigramma longum*, Sidonius does not say that the poem is either long or an epigram. In the note following the poem, Sidonius allows that the poem *epigrammatis excesserit paucitatem*, which might imply that it is long but not that it is an epigram, only that it can be read in the context of epigrammatic poetry.

In saying that Sidonius digresses, I do not really mean the scattered descriptions (of the elephants and the territories most notably), but rather the fact that the main subject of the poem is formally a digression. Like the central ecphrasis within the narrative of Catullus 64, Sidonius nests the praise of Pontius Leontius's Burgus within a speech that Apollo just happens to give when he comes upon Bacchus. Sidonius, however, does not resolve the contrast between the central narrative and the opening frame. The poem begins exegetically and ends diegetically, with the rejoicing chorus of the gods as a conclusion to both the inset mythical narrative and Sidonius's praise of his friend's villa. In precise contrast to the Horatian rule, Sidonius begins the poem as one thing and ends it as another. The sense of movement in this poem and the mixing of scenes, tones, and genres are striking, just as they are typical of much late antique Latin literature. Indeed, Jacques Fontaine championed the mixing of scenes, tones, and genres in late antiquity.[10] Michael Roberts has studied the importance of movement and boundaries in the *Mosella* of Ausonius, as well as the broader jeweled style of late antique poetry.[11] And in *The Space That Remains*, I argued that the fragmented poetry of late antiquity gains a sense of coherence through the role of the reader.[12] Sidonius's *Poem* 22 lends itself to a formal analysis in light of the broader movements of later Latin literature. Jesús Hernández Lobato has explored this poetry in his broad study of Sidonius;[13] likewise, the Latin centos, fragmented texts *par excellence*, have been studied in detail by McGill and Bažil;[14] nevertheless, a synthetic, historical study of late antique poetry from its emergence through to the 6th century remains to be written. This poem should be a part of that story, because it reveals how Sidonius constructed his own literary history.

*Poem* 22 was extravagant enough that Sidonius decided to set out the rules of his game in a short epistolary note that follows the poem immediately in the manuscripts.[15] Sidonius explains that if any reader should happen to be offended for this indecorous work he was after all only following the model of Statius and the advice of Horace. In support of his argument from authority, Sidonius cites the lengthy descriptions of *Silvae* 1.5 (*Balneum Claudii Etrusci*), 3.1 (*Hercules Surrentinus Polli Felicis*), 3.4 (*Capilli Flauii Earini*), and 1.3 (*Villa Tiburtina Manili*

---

**10** Fontaine (1977).
**11** Roberts (1984) and (1989).
**12** Pelttari (2014).
**13** Hernández Lobato (2012).
**14** McGill (2005); Bažil (2009).
**15** On paratexts, the reader's relation to the text, and authors' explanations of the rules guiding their ludic poetry, see Pelttari (2014) 45–72 along with Jansen (2014).

*Vopisci*). Then he cites Horace, supposedly in support of his own stylistic preferences:

> *Quas omnes descriptiones uir ille* [*Papinius*] *praeiudicatissimus non distichorum aut tetrastichorum stringit angustiis, sed potius, ut lyricus Flaccus in artis poeticae uolumine praecipit, multis isdemque purpureis locorum communium pannis semel inchoatas materias decenter extendit.* (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22.6)

> With great foresight that man [Statius] does not constrain any of his descriptions to the narrowness of two or four line segments. Instead, just as the lyrical Horace teaches in the scroll of his *Ars poetica*, he extends in a seemly way the material that he began from a single point with many purple patches and these from commonplaces.

In spite of Horace's clear meaning and despite the explanations of Horace's commentators, Sidonius cites the *Ars poetica* in defense of his choice to sprinkle his poem with purple patches. Even more surprising, Sidonius cites Horace for a poem whose formal structure privileges descriptions (plural) at the expense of unity.

Sidonius knew Horace well and referred to him throughout his poems and letters. He also expected his readers to remember their Horace. This was demonstrated by Stoehr-Monjou in her sensible and sensitive review of Sidonius's engagement with the lyric poet.[16] Nevertheless, some scholars think that Sidonius must have misunderstood Horace, or else he would not have cited the *Ars poetica* in support of his episodic poetry. André Loyen said that Sidonius was obviously wrong ("a tort évidemment") to cite the authority of Horace for his purple patches.[17] Ernst Robert Curtius, in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, disparaged what he thought was a misunderstanding: "Horace's well-known warning against sewing on 'purple patches', Sidonius not only fails to understand but changes into its opposite".[18] For his part, Antonio La Penna is not sure whether Sidonius's "curioso rovesciamento" of Horace is "volontario o involontario".[19] Like Curtius, Antonio Nazzaro concluded that Sidonius misunderstood

---

**16** Stoehr-Monjou (2013).

**17** Loyen (1943) 114.

**18** Curtius (2013) 539. This passage neatly reveals the blind spot in Curtius's approach to the tradition of Latin poetry. By focusing on commonplaces, Curtius systematically overlooked the input and influence of individual authors working at discrete points within the literary tradition. This is of course unsurprising since Curtius was writing before allusion, intertextuality, and reception had become separate focuses of literary study. Nevertheless, the material deserves another look with more attention now to the active transformations of Latin literature within the Middle Ages.

**19** La Penna (1995) 20.

Horace.[20] In his valuable commentary on *Poem* 22, Norbert Delhey took a some-what different approach. He asserted that Sidonius did not misunderstand Horace, because he followed Pseudo-Acro's interpretation and observed decorum in the framing of his story: there is not a fundamental contrast between Sidonius's descriptions and Horatian poetics, because "die Forderung nach passenden (*decenter*) Einschüben widerspricht nicht der Ablehnung unpassender".[21] However, Delhey downplays the emphasis that Sidonius gives to *multis isdemque purpureis*, an evident departure from what Horace had said. Silvia Condorelli went further, but not I think far enough. She concluded that Sidonius presents a "forced" interpretation of Horace but that he probably did so consciously: "è chiaro che questo processo di attamento comporta una lettura 'forzata', e non necessariamente inconsapevole, del testo dell'*ars* del poeta augusteo".[22] Jesús Hernández Lobato has understood perfectly clearly what Sidonius is actually doing with this reference:

> Sidonio era perfectamente consciente del abismo estético que mediaba entre la preceptiva aristóto-horaciana y las soluciones literarias – eminentemente anticlásicas – que él mismo preconizaba. Prefiere, sin embargo, hacer como si dicho abismo no existiera y disimular el carácter innovador de sus propuestas, dando a entender que eran simples herederas de la tradición poética clásica.[23]

To the points made by Hernández Lobato I would add several observations, whose cumulative effect seems to me decisive, because Sidonius knew what he was doing as he playfully but seriously reversed the meaning of Horace's words. Rather than citing or imitating, Sidonius was indeed dissimulating. Thus, the word *praeiudicatissimus* is precise: the prefix draws attention to the temporal dynamics at play in citing one ancient model (Statius) before another (Horace);[24] the idea of judgment in *iudicium* and the more precise meaning of *praeiudicatus* ('prejudiced') suggest the literary prejudices of Statius and Sidonius; the superlative is playfully sarcastic. Likewise, *angustiis* is figurative and poetic. *Lyricus Flaccus in artis poeticae uolumine* is a rather exact reference (Sidonius usually provides only the name of the author cited); perhaps *uolumine* is also old-fashioned, since Sidonius presumably read Horace in a codex. *Praecipit* is ironically authoritative, like a teacher giving orders. *Multis* emphasizes that these are not

---

**20** Nazarro (1998) 74.

**21** Delhey (1993) 209.

**22** Condorelli (2008) 160.

**23** Hernández Lobato (2012) 370.

**24** Of course, the temporal sense of *prae-* was weak by the 5th century, but readers could still see the original meaning.

individual or scattered digressions (Sidonius goes far beyond Horace's *unus et alter*). Likewise, *isdemque* draws attention to the key adjective *purpureis* which brings to mind Horace's central criticism, that extra patches (*panni*) are added on for no good reason. *Locorum communium* is strikingly specific; whereas Horace's criticism is couched in general language, Sidonius uses the precise term to name his digressions (he may have seen the term in Pomponius Porphyrio). Rather than misunderstanding Horace, Sidonius is actually more precise than his source.

If Sidonius reveals his knowledge of Horace in the first parts of this sentence, the last few words mark his distance from the *Ars poetica*. *Semel* takes the place of *simplex*: whereas Horace bids authors to write a simple work, Sidonius says only that writing begins from one origin. Presumably, the material then diverges from that source just as Sidonius diverges from Horace: the odd phrase *semel incohatas* makes that divergence into something just as necessary as the passing of time, because any and every work has a single beginning. The clarity of Sidonius's syntax here contrasts with the complexity of his thought.[25] That difference is part of the play with divergent tones and meanings in which Sidonius is engaged in this poem. Moreover, the periodic style and clarity of his sentence lends weight to the two final, crucial words, *decenter extendit*: the poet extends his material in a decent way. The verb encapsulates the point that extension and speech are prized for their own sake; *decenter* is kindly ambiguous (and we have already seen that some readers are glad to take refuge in its evasions). The whole is extremely ironic, but not sarcastic. Horace is revised but not rejected. Sidonius wants to retain Horace's authority while also producing a statement of his own, poetic difference. In this case, Sidonius's reverence for the past is more complex than it would seem at first.

## Sidonius, *Epistulae* 9.16

Sidonius cites the same section of the *Ars poetica* at the end of his collection of letters, because against the advice of Horace he nearly ends the prose work with a testament in verse. Sidonius flirts with poetry at the end of Book Nine, a book that he added to his letter collection after its initial publication.[26] Of the thirteen distinct poems included in Sidonius's letters, four come in these final four letters (out of all proportion in a collection of 147 letters). Thus, *Letter* 9.13 includes twenty-eight Asclepiads and then 120 Anacreontic dimeters. *Letter* 9.14 does not

---

**25**  Sidonius often prefers obscurity (*obscuritas*), as studied by Raphael Schwitter (2015).
**26**  On the structure and dating of Sidonius's letters, see Gibson (2013) and Mathisen (2013).

include any longer poem, but it discusses *versus recurrentes* and quotes four lines as examples. *Letter* 9.15 includes 55 trochaic senarii and then ends with a short concluding paragraph. The final *Letter* in the collection (9.16) concludes with 21 Sapphic strophes and then a single concluding sentence. The shift to verse is significant. It strikes the reader on first glance and emphasizes the programmatic turn of the final poem.

The last letter of Sidonius's collection begins with an address to Firminus, who (as the poet explained in *Letter* 9.1) had asked Sidonius to add another book of letters to his collection. After describing the collection and status of his letters, Sidonius introduces the following eighty-four lines in Sapphic stanzas by saying that he will honor Firminus. This last poem in the collection is Sidonius's literary testament, describing his past glories as a poet (during the time before he became a bishop) and his future plans to write Christian poetry.[27] The first two lines mark the retrospective gaze from which the author begins, as he draws attention to the contrast between prose and poetry and the twin collections that he had already published: *Iam per alternum pelagus loquendi / egit audacem mea cymba cursum* ("Now through the twin sea of speaking my bark has led its audacious course"). The poem includes an allusion to Horace *Odes* 3.30, and its tone and structure recall Prudentius's *Praefatio*, which also looks back at the Christian poet's career, conversion, and poetry.[28] The intertexts confirm that Sidonius's retrospective poem was a culmination of his writing and not just some afterthought pasted on to the end of *Letter* 9.16. Paradoxically, Sidonius emphasizes that he left poetry behind when he became a bishop; however, starting in line 61, Sidonius turns to a poetic future: He admits that he may write verse again, specifically in honor of the martyrs and of Saturninus in the first place. After signalling a new direction for his writing and immediately after this poem, Sidonius draws attention to the oddity of ending a collection of letters in verse. A final sentence in prose stands between the last line of verse and the end of the letter collection:

> *Redeamus in fine ad oratorium stilum materiam praesentem proposito semel ordine terminaturi, ne, si epilogis musicis opus prosarium clauserimus, secundum regulas Flacci, ubi amphora coepit institui, urceus potius exisse uideatur. Vale.*

> Let us return in the end to the oratorical style so as to finish the present work from the order proposed at the beginning, so that – if we closed a prose work with a musical epilogue – according to Horace's rule it will not seem to end up as a pot when a jar was produced at first.

---

**27** Gualandri (1979) 4 calls the poem Sidonius's "testamento poetico".
**28** For *Odes* 3.30 see Stoehr-Monjou (2013) 150–151. For the preface of Prudentius, see Condorelli (2008) 238.

The reference *secundum regulas Flacci* again presents Horace as an authority. The quoted words *amphora ... institui* and *urceus ... exisse* show even more clearly this time that Sidonius has in mind the beginning of the *Ars poetica*. However, as far as I can tell, modern readers take what Sidonius says at face value:[29] he ends a prose work in prose because Horace told him to do so. The problem is that the real end of Sidonius's prose work is the *epilogi musici* that contravene the Horatian precept. Only wry irony could construe this final sentence as a fitting epilogue to Sidonius's letters. The real epilogue is the literary testament, the *sphragis* that marks the end of the work and that Sidonius chose to write in verse rather than prose. But *epilogi musici* is again precise: the plural draws attention to the fact that *Letter* 9.16 is just one of a series of letters in which Sidonius allows poetry to intrude near the end of his letter collection. Rather than actually resolve the contrast between prose and poetry, Sidonius's final reference to Horace again draws attention to the author's combination of styles, tones, and genres. He includes poetry in prose letters in order to reveal the limitations of language and genre. Like Prudentius, Sidonius refers in his poem to the saints whose names do not fit within his chosen meter, that is within the constrains of language; thus, Sidonius's future poetry will describe martyrs who cannot be named in Sapphics: *Singulos quos nunc pia nuncupatim / non ualent uersu cohibere uerba* (*Epist*. 9.16.3; *Carm*. 81–82).[30] Sidonius's concluding note after the poetic epilogue reminds the reader that he has in fact combined poetry with prose and that he is not really following Horace's rules. Instead, he claims to be following the rules just as he departs from them. And, even though Sidonius's use of Horace may strike the modern reader as wooden and forced (and though it surely has not been successful of late), there is good reason to think that he purposefully reversed his meaning in order to redirect Horace's authority and support his own poetic choices. Indeed, Sidonius's reading of Horace became authoritative in its own right, for Sigebert of Gembloux followed him in interpreting Horace's purple patches in a positive way.[31]

---

**29** Condorelli (2008) 159–160 (followed by Stoehr-Monjou 2013, 166) says only that Sidonius adapts Horace's advice on epic poetry to his own situation, i.e. to the mixture of prose and poetry.
**30** Cf. Prudent. *Perist*. 4.161–164.
**31** See Curtius (2013) 539.

# A Model for Sidonius's Use of Horace

A parallel act of reception from Ausonius, in a poem that also promotes and rejects Horace's authority, may serve as confirmation of Sidonius's technique. The parallel comes from Ausonius's sixth *Letter* where the poet pointedly translates Horace into a playful and macaronic poem. Like Sidonius after him, Ausonius transforms Horace without disavowing his source. Ausonius mixes and matches Latin and Greek in his letter in a way that Horace had specifically criticized. Axius Paulus, the recipient of the letter, was also the dedicatee of Ausonius's *Cento nuptialis* and a rhetor and author in Bordeaux. He would have known Horace well, and he was apparently receptive to his friend's poetic experiments.

Ausonius concludes the poem by promising Paulus solace and a banquet and by borrowing directly from Horace. The next to last line of the poem reproduces Horace *Odes* 2.3.15. In the final line, Ausonius translates *Odes* 2.3.16 into Greek (νήματα πορφύρεα πλέκηται = *fila trium patiuntur atra*). Throughout the poem, Ausonius combines individual words and forms to create a poem in which Greek and Latin are nearly indistinguishable, and the final lines show that Ausonius had Horace in mind. But why did Ausonius choose to translate Horace rather than any other source? Horace had criticized a certain Pitholeo, whose epigrams are not extant and who is known only because he had the good fortune to be abused in a short passage of *Satire* 1.10, which focuses its criticism on Lucilius's mixture of Greek and Latin. While the fragments of Lucilius that survive are peppered with Greek, they give no indication that he ever went beyond incorporating the occasional Greek word or phrase into what was clearly Latin poetry; as far as we can tell, he did not write macaronic poetry as Ausonius did.[32] Horace mentions Pitholeo while criticizing Lucilius, or rather Horace introduces what he expected an admirer of Lucilius's style might say:

> "At magnum fecit, quod uerbis graeca latinis       20
> miscuit". O seri studiorum, quine putetis
> difficile et mirum Rhodio quod Pitholeonti
> contigit? "At sermo lingua concinnus utraque
> suauior, ut Chio nota si commixta Falerni est". (Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.20–24)

> "But it was a great thing he did, mixing Greek with Latin words!"
> You've come late to your studies, or do you really think that anything is difficult or
> remarkable that Pitholeo the Rhodian achieved?
> "But an idiom composed of each language is sweeter,
> like when the quality of Falernian is mixed with Chian".

---

[32] On the macaronic form of this letter, see Green (1991) 614.

While it is unlikely that Ausonius ever saw Pitholeo's works or that they were anything like his own poem, I do think that Ausonius was inspired by Horace's rejection of Pitholeo's method. We know that Ausonius read Hor. *Sat.* 1.10 because he alludes to lines 23–24 at *Epist.* 10.32. Within *Letter* 6, *sermone bilingui* (the phrase that Ausonius uses in line two to explain his macaronic method) may well respond to *bilinguis* in Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.30 and to *sermo* in line 1.10.23, as well as to *Sermones*, the other title for Horace's *Satires*. It is also possible that Horace's *Camenae* in *Sat.* 1.10.45 influenced *Camenae* in Auson. *Epist.* 6.1. Whether or not these linguistic parallels are convincing, it is likely *a priori* that Ausonius, a grammarian and learned poet who recommended Horace as a model in his *Protrepticus ad nepotem* (l. 56), would have remembered this satire – and Horace's criticism of multi-lingual poetics – when he sat down to write his own *sermo bilinguis*. Despite, or rather because of their differences, Ausonius chose Horace as the poet to translate and transform at the end of his programmatic letter to Axius Paulus.

Like Sidonius, Ausonius does not explain that he is departing from his Classical source. Both authors conceal their differences rather than explicitly or emulatively contrasting themselves with their Classical model. Their approach has not appealed to recent scholars, especially when compared to the more adversarial forms of engagement that characterize allusion in most of the surviving Hellenistic Greek and Roman poetry.[33] Perhaps Sidonius and Ausonius did not need any longer to challenge their Classical models directly because the genres and modes of writing that were in use had changed so much in the intervening centuries.

## Conclusion

I have suggested before that we should not read Ausonius's engagement with Horace in *Letter* 6 as emulative, because Ausonius does not display a desire to rival his source.[34] Sidonius's engagement with the beginning of *Ars poetica* 14–23 reverses even more completely the Classical mode of allusion (in which authors competed with their predecessors openly but not by name). In both *Poem* 22 and in *Letter* 9.16, Sidonius appeals explicitly to Horace's authority at the same time as he reverses the previous meaning of that authority.

---

**33** Coffee (2013) surveys the bibliography on "Intertextuality in Latin Poetry". On conflict in Roman poetry, see now the helpful outline in Hutchinson (2013) 31–32.
**34** Pelttari (2014) 157–158.

The current terminology of allusion does not allow an accurate description of what Sidonius actually accomplishes in his reversal of Horace. *Aemulatio* implies that the authority of the source is at stake either implicitly or explicitly, and the same is true for *Kontrastimitation* and *oppositio in imitando*: rather than asking the reader to choose either himself or Horace, Sidonius allows both the old and the new to remain. *Imitatio*, intertext, hypotext, and reference are too general to apply to these specific cases. In considering such terms, I imply that Sidonius's citations are comparable to allusions. While a citation names the source that an allusion playfully conceals, they exist on a continuum. Indeed, Sidonius's citations here show that even an explicit reference can conceal as much as it offers. Despite similarities, the term quotation, which I used in passing elsewhere,[35] is not appropriate because it already has a specific meaning. Thomas Greene's "heuristic imitation" probably comes the closest, but it does not fully capture the anachronistic audacity of Sidonius's engagement with Horace.[36] I also suspect that "heuristic imitation" is too closely linked to Renaissance forms of appropriation to be useful here. In late antiquity Sidonius and others set out a canon of Classical Latin poetry even as they were establishing the credentials of their own new poetics. I could tentatively suggest *transpositio* as a term to mark the way in which such poets take up their authors and transform them for a new context. *Transposition* was used by Gérard Genette in *Palimpsestes* to describe highly transformative modes of hypertextuality.[37] *Transposition* does not seem to have caught on among Classicists. However, another term would not help unless it is accompanied by the kind of fuller study that could set these poets in context by describing in detail how Sidonius and others understood and transformed their authorities.

For the future then, a more precise term would make it easier to identify similar acts of reception that may, I submit, be particularly significant for tracing how Medieval literary culture emerged from the traditions of Classical Latin poetry, to show how and why authors such as Sidonius and Ausonius became authorities in the centuries that followed their writings. For now, I hope to have shown (1) that Sidonius did transform a crucial passage of the *Ars poetica* at two significant moments in his own writings, prose and poetry; (2) that such a transformation would have been obvious and understandable to contemporary readers familiar with the scholia to Horace and with Ausonius's *Letter* 6; and (3) that Sidonius's

---

**35** Pelttari (2014) 154–160.

**36** Greene (1982) 40 says that "[h]euristic imitations come to us advertising their derivation from the subtexts they carry with them, but having done that, they proceed to distance themselves from the subtext and force us to recognize the poetic distance traversed".

**37** Genette (1982).

acceptance of Horace and rejection of Horatian unity could function as a new model for poetry and poetics in late antiquity. In short, Sidonius's phrase *cum reuerentia antiquos* captures the strange acceptance and objectification that characterise one approach to Classical models among later Latin authors.

# Bibliography

Decimi Magni Ausonii *Opera*, rec. R. P. H. Green, Oxford 1999.
Q. Horatius Flaccus, *Opera*, ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Berlin [4]2008.
P. Ovidi Nasonis *Metamorphoses*, rec. R. J. Tarrant, Oxford 2004.
Pomponi Porfyrionis *Commentum in Horatium Flaccum*, rec. A. Holder, Ad Aeni Pontem 1894.
Aurelii Prudentii Clementis *Carmina*, ed. M. P. Cunningham, Turnhout 1966.
Pseudoacronis *Scholia in Horatium Vetustiora*, tom. II, rec. O. Keller, Leipzig 1904.
Sidoine Apollinaire, 3 vols., ed. and transl. A. Loyen, Paris 1961–1970.
P. Papini Stati *Silvae*, rec. E. Courtney, Oxford 1990.

A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse*, Berkeley, CA 1997 (originally published as *Il poeta e il principe: Ovidio e il discorso augusteo*, Roma 1994).
M. Bažil, *Centones Christiani: Métamorphoses d'une forme intertextuelle dans la poésie latine chrétienne de l'Antiquité tardive*, Paris 2009.
N. Coffee, "Intertextuality in Latin Poetry", *Oxford Bibliographies* 2013; available: http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0113.xml (last accessed 20 Feb 2015).
S. Condorelli, *Il Poeta Doctus nel V secolo D.C.: Aspetti della poetica di Sidonio Apollinare*, Napoli 2008.
E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. by W. R. Trask, Princeton, NJ 2013 (originally published: Bern 1948).
N. Delhey (ed.), *Apollinaris Sidonius,* Carm. *22*, Berlin 1993.
J. Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IVe siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien", in: M. Fuhrmann (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident*, Vandoeuvres/Genève 1977, 425–482.
G. Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, Paris 1982 (transl. by Ch. Newman/C. Doubinskey, London 1997).
R. Gibson, "Reading the Letters of Sidonius by the Book", in: J. A. van Waarden/G. Kelly (eds.), *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Leuven 2013, 195–219.
R. P. H. Green (ed.), *The Works of Ausonius: Edited with Introduction and Commentary*, Oxford 1991.
T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven, CT 1982.

I. Gualandri, *Furtiva lectio: Studi su Sidonio Apollinare*, Milano 1979.

J. Hernández Lobato, *Vel Apolline muto: Estética y poética de la Antigüedad tardía*, Bern 2012.

J. Hernández Lobato, *El humanismo que no fue: Sidonio Apolinar en el Renacimiento*, Padua 2014.

S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, Cambridge 1998.

G. O. Hutchinson, *Greek to Latin: Frameworks and Contexts for Intertextuality*, Oxford 2013.

L. Jansen (ed.), *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*, Cambridge 2014.

A. La Penna, "Gli svaghi letterari della nobiltà gallica nella tarda antichità: Il caso di Sidonio Apollinare", *Maia* 47, 1995, 3–34.

A. Loyen, *Sidoine Apollinaire et l'esprit précieux en Gaule aux derniers jours de l'empire*, Paris 1943.

C. Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge 1993.

R. Mathisen, "Dating the Letters of Sidonius", in: J. A. van Waarden/G. Kelly (eds.), *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Leuven 2013, 221–248.

S. McGill, *Virgil Recomposed: The Secular and Mythological Centos in Antiquity*, Oxford 2005.

S. Mratschek, "Poetry in Prose: The Letters of Sidonius Apollinaris", in: C. Sogno/B. K. Storin/E. J. Watts (eds.), *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide*, Berkeley, forthcoming.

A. V. Nazzaro, "Sidonio Apollinare", in: *Enciclopedia Oraziana* 3, 1998, 72–74.

A. Pelttari, *The Space That Remains: Reading Latin Poetry in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca, NY 2014.

M. Roberts, "The *Mosella* of Ausonius: An Interpretation", *TAPhA* 114, 1984, 343–353.

M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Cornell, NY 1989.

R. Schwitter, *Umbrosa lux: Obscuritas in der lateinischen Epistolographie der Spätantike*, Stuttgart 2015.

A. Stoehr-Monjou, "Sidonius and Horace: The Art of Memory", in: J. A. van Waarden/G. Kelly (eds.), *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Leuven 2013, 133–169.

G. Tissol, *The Face of Nature: Wit, Narrative, and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Princeton, NJ 1997.

E. Wolff, "Quelques jalons dans l'histoire de la réception de Sidoine Apollinaire", in: M. Formisano/T. Fuhrer (eds.), *Décadence: "Decline and Fall" or "Other Antiquity"?*, Heidelberg 2014, 249–260.