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FILomena GIANNOTTI

MAXIMAM SOLITVDINEM APPELLO:  
THE PRESENCE OF TACITUS IN SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS\*

The famous *sententia* in *Agricola* 30, 5, attributed by Tacitus to the Caledonian chief Calgacus just before the Battle of Mons Graupius (ca. 84 AD), *auferre, trucidare, rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque, ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*, has had an impressive afterlife in the history of Western culture, one that has indeed lasted up until the present day<sup>1</sup>.

However, after being probably recalled by Tacitus himself in *Hist.* 4, 17, 2 *miseram servitute falso pacem vocarent* (which is once again attributed to an enemy of Rome, the Batavian prince Gaius Julius Civilis), and by Pliny the Younger in *Paneg.* 48, 5, *ut solitudinem faceret* (referring to Emperor Domitian)<sup>2</sup>, it is generally believed that the *sententia* is not mentioned again in Late Antiquity<sup>3</sup> or in Medieval literature, or during

\* The words *maximam solitudinem appello* are from Sidon. *ep.* 7, 14. I had the idea to write this article during my stay in Durham (UK) for a Durham Residential Research Library fellowship from July 4 to 28, 2022 and, in particular, during my investigation, through the original documents, into some of the first modern commentaries on Sidonius preserved in the Durham historic collections: the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century editions by Jean Savaron and Jacques Sirmond (see notes 11 and 12), available at Palace Green (Routh Library, Bishop Cosin's Library and Bamburgh Library) and at Ushaw College (Big Library). I should like to thank Prof. Stephen Taylor, DRRL Director, Prof. James Kelly, DRRL Academic Co-ordinator, and Mrs. Barbara Jackson, DRRL Administrator, for implementing this fellowship scheme, and all the staff of Palace Green and Ushaw College Libraries for their assistance during my research. Thanks are also due to Prof. Roy Gibson and Dr. Laura Losito of Durham University for their precious help.

<sup>1</sup> I have already partially investigated the reception of this sentence in Italian culture and literature in the second part of my article *L'imperium e la pax. La celebre sententia di Calgaco (Tac. Agr. 30,5) tra modelli e fortuna*, in *SIFC* IV serie, 16, 2, 2018, pp. 213-232, and in a paper I gave at the international Symposium *Calgacus in 2020*, organized in London on 25 January 2020 by University College London and King's College London. I will present more recent occurrences of the famous Tacitus' sentence in our contemporary culture at the next «Giornata del Centro di Studi sulla Fortuna dell'Antico», scheduled on 17 March 2023 in Sestri Levante. The main commentaries on that sentence include: *Cornelii Taciti, De vita Agricola*, edited by R.M. OGILVIE, I. RICHMOND, Oxford 1967, pp. 257-258; *Tacito, Opera omnia*, a cura di R. ONIGA, Torino 2003, vol. I, pp. 829 and 841-843; *Cornelio Tacito, Agricola*, introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento di P. SOVERINI, Alessandria 2004, pp. 238-241; *Tacitus, Agricola*, edited by A.J. WOODMAN with contributions from C.S. KRAUS, Cambridge 2014 (from which I quote), pp. 236-244; and *Tacito, Agricola*, introduzione, nuova traduzione e note di S. AUDANO, Santarcangelo di Romagna 2017, pp. 127-130. For the reception of this sentence, see A. MEHL, «Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant». Ein antikes Zitat über römischen, englischen und deutschen Imperialismus, in *Gymnasium* 83, 1976, pp. 281-288; J. CLARKE, *An Island Nation: Re-Reading Tacitus' 'Agricola'*, in *JRS* 91, 2001, pp. 94-112; and especially A. BONANDINI, *Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant. Percorsi, rifrazioni e mutazioni di una sententia tacitiana divenuta slogan*, in *ClassicoContemporaneo* 3, 2017, pp. 36-77, examining about 120 occurrences in modern and contemporary culture.

<sup>2</sup> See GIANNOTTI, *L'imperium e la pax*, cit., p. 221 and note 32, with further bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> On Tacitus' reception during Late Antiquity (which is of particular interest here), see R.H. MARTIN, *From Manuscript to Print*, in A.J. WOODMAN (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 241-252; pp. 241-242, and D. KAPUST, *Tacitus and Political Thought*, in V.E. PAGÁN (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, Malden-Ma. 2012, pp. 504-528: p. 507.

Humanism. As far as is known, its first recurrence, dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, appears in a collection of classical *loci* edited by the French lawyer and scholar Pierre Dupuy, while its first literary revival can be found in 1813, in Byron's poem *The Bride of Abydos*, which helped to make the *sententia* known in the following centuries culture<sup>4</sup>.

The purpose of this article is to point out that, actually, an interesting echo of Tacitus' *sententia* probably also appeared in Late Antiquity, namely in a letter by the 5<sup>th</sup> century Gallic bishop Sidonius Apollinaris (*ep.* 7, 14, 10)<sup>5</sup>:

*ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello.*

This possible recurrence is not included in Geisler's list of *loci similes* at the end of Lütjohann's edition of Sidonius Apollinaris<sup>6</sup>, nor in the very rich and detailed commentary on Sidonius' book 7 by van Waarden<sup>7</sup>.

More generally, the whole relationship between Sidonius and Tacitus is yet to be studied. To my knowledge, this topic has so far only been investigated by Teitler<sup>8</sup>, with particular reference to *ep.* 4, 14, 1<sup>9</sup>. The *incipit* of the letter runs thus:

*Gaius Tacitus unus e maioribus tuis, Vlpianorum temporum consularis, sub verbis cuiuspiam Germanici ducis in historia sua rettulit dicens: "Cum Vespasiano mihi vetus amicitia; et, dum privatus esset, amici vocabamur".*

In this epistle not only is the historian explicitly mentioned as an ancestor of the addressee Polemius, but also the words of the Batavian chief Claudius Civilis, from *Hist.* 5, 26, 2, are recorded apparently *ad verbum* (actually, the quotation is not particularly precise<sup>10</sup>, as Savaron<sup>11</sup> and Sirmond<sup>12</sup> had already noted). On the basis of this

<sup>4</sup> BONANDINI, *Ubi solitudinem faciunt*, cit., pp. 45-46 for Dupuy, and pp. 43-44 for Byron.

<sup>5</sup> Here and elsewhere the text follows the critical edition *Sidoine Apollinaire*, texte établi et traduit par A. LOYEN, I. *Poèmes*, Paris 1960; II. *Lettres (Livres I-V)*; III. *Lettres (Livres VI-IX)*, Paris 1970.

<sup>6</sup> *Gaii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii epistulae et carmina*, recensuit et emendavit C. LÜTJOHANN, MGH AA 8, Berlin 1887 (*Loci similes auctorum Sidonio anteriorum* edited by E. Geisler, pp. 351-416).

<sup>7</sup> J.A. VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive. A Commentary on Sidonius Apollinaris, Letters Book 7*, vol. I. *The Episcopal Letters 1-11*, Leuven 2010; vol. II. *The Ascetic Letters 12-18*, Leuven 2016; II, *ad locum*.

<sup>8</sup> H.C. TEITLER, *Tacitus in de late oudheid: Kanttekeningen bij een brief van Sidonius Apollinaris*, in *Hermeneus* 83, 2011, pp. 142-147.

<sup>9</sup> See D. AMHERDT, *Sidoine Apollinaire. Le quatrième livre de la correspondance: introduction et commentaire*, Bern-Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 339 and 342 on the unknown kinship between Tacitus and Polemius, and on Tacitus' *praenomen*, which is *Publius* rather than *Gaius*. On the question of Tacitus' *praenomen* see also TEITLER, *Tacitus in de late oudheid*, cit., pp. 142-144.

<sup>10</sup> Tacitus' words are, to be exact: *erga Vespasianum vetus mihi observantia, et cum privatus esset, amici vocabamur*.

<sup>11</sup> *Caii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii Arvernorum episcopi opera* Io. SAVARO [...] multo quam antea castigatius recognovit et librum commentarium adiecit, [...] editio multis partibus auctior et emendatior, accesserunt indices locupletissimi, Parisiis, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Hadrianum Perrier, 1609<sup>3</sup> (1598<sup>1</sup>; 1599<sup>2</sup>), p. 272 (consulted at Palace Green Library in Durham): «Ex Caio Tacito lib. 5. histor. in fine, ubi tamen sic habetur: *Cum Vespasiano mihi vetus observantia*». On Savaron and his three editions of Sidonius, see now L. FURBETTA, *Sidonius Scholarship: Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, in G. KELLY, J. VAN WAARDEN (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Edinburgh 2020, pp. 543-563; pp. 551-555.

<sup>12</sup> *C. Sol. Apollin. Sidonii Arvernorum episcopi opera* Iac. SIRMONDI Soc. Iesu Presb. cura et studio recognita, notisque illustrata, editio secunda, ad eiusdem autographum praelo iam pridem paratum diligenter exacta, Parisiis, Sumptibus Sebastiani Cramoisy [...] et Gabrielis Cramoisy, 1652 (1614<sup>1</sup>), p. 48 of the *Notae* (consulted at Palace Green Library in Durham): «Verba sunt Claudij Ciuilis Bataurorum

historical anecdote taken from Tacitus, Teitler argues that in Late Antiquity his works were still being read. Partial discussions of the subject can be found in two papers, now somewhat dated, by Ramorino<sup>13</sup> and Haverfield<sup>14</sup>. Finally the question has only occasionally been raised, for different purposes. This is the case with Mratschek and her analysis of *ep.* 4, 22, 2<sup>15</sup>. Here Sidonius refuses to write a historical work at the invitation of his friend and patron Leo, as – he says – Pliny the Younger (*ep.* 5, 8) did with Tacitus, who later took over the task he himself had tried to impose. Sidonius mentions the historian in order both to extol Leo as a new Tacitus – who will himself take on the burden of the theme he had proposed – and also to produce a pun on Tacitus' name:

*tu vetusto genere narrandi iure Cornelium antevenis, qui saeculo nostro si revivisceret teque qualis in litteris et quantus habere conspicaretur, modo verius Tacitus esset.*

The historian would be *tacitus* in a very real sense if, coming back to life, he could evaluate Leo's writings. Actually, it was Titinius Capito, not Tacitus, who put the question to Pliny<sup>16</sup>. But, in spite of this (further) inaccuracy by Sidonius, this second anecdote – this time with a literary theme – remains a valid example given by Mratschek illustrating his tendency to use literature as «an effective instrument for moulding opinion, in particular for influencing prominent members of the new political ruling

principis apud Tacitum lib. V Historiarum, sed paulo aliter a Tacito concepta». On Sirmond and his two editions of Sidonius, see now FURBETTA, *Sidonius Scholarship*, cit., pp. 556-558.

<sup>13</sup> F. RAMORINO, *Cornelio Tacito nella storia della cultura*, Firenze 1898, p. 18, while making a list of the authors who seem to have read Tacitus, mentions Sidonius and, in footnote 36, his *car.* 2, 192 and 23, 154, and his *ep.* 4, 14 and 22.

<sup>14</sup> F. HAVERFIELD, *Tacitus During the Late Roman Period and the Middle Ages*, in *JRS* 6, 1916, pp. 196-201. Haverfield begins by saying that in some cases it is difficult to decide whether it is a «reference» (which may be second-hand), a «quotation» (which may be more or less *verbatim*, or a passage and a phrase quoted or imitated), or «whether a writer who seems to quote or imitate is actually copying, and is not by chance independently inventing anew some phrase already used by the earlier author» (p. 197). The reference is to the parallel between Sidonius' words on the death of Philomathia *infortunata fecunditas* (*ep.* 2, 8, 1) and Tacitus' words on Agrippina, *infelici fecunditate fortunae totiens obnoxia* (*Ann.* 2, 75, 1). Then he claims that Sidonius «was certainly acquainted with the writings of Tacitus, and we might rather think that he was here echoing them by memory» (p. 199). In footnote 2, talking about the tendency to derive mentions or even quotations from an anthology or a *florilegium*, Haverfield also argues that «it is rather strange that Tacitus' epigrams – 'solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant', and the like – seem never to have been gathered into any 'florilegium'».

<sup>15</sup> S. MRATSCHEK, *Creating Culture and Presenting the Self in Sidonius*, in KELLY, VAN WAARDEN, *Edinburgh Companion*, cit., pp. 237-260: pp. 244-247, with notes 54, 62, 68. See also AMHERDT, *Sidoine Apollinaire*, cit., pp. 451-455 and 458-460; P. CUGUSI, *Sidonio, Epist. IV 22, Plinio, Epist. V 8 e Cicerone, Fam. V 12*, in *Studi di filologia classica in onore di Giusto Monaco*, III: *Letteratura latina dall'età di Tiberio all'età del basso impero*, Palermo 1991, pp. 1329-1333; R. GIBSON, *Reading the Letters of Sidonius by the Book*, in J.A. VAN WAARDEN, G. KELLY (eds.), *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, with *Indices* on Helga Köhler, C. Sollins *Apollinaris Sidonius: Briefe Buch I*, Leuven 2013, pp. 195-219: pp. 208-210.

<sup>16</sup> The problem had already been reported by SAVARO, *Caii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii*, cit., p. 284 of the 1599<sup>2</sup> edition (consulted at Ushaw College Library in Durham; = p. 296 of the 1609<sup>3</sup> edition, consulted at Palace Green Library in Durham). In his turn, the French scholar – who is very fond of similar *calembours* – while explaining the passage, is indulging in a further play on Sidonius' words (p. 297 of the 1609<sup>3</sup> edition): «Tacitus ergo esset tacitus, id est, taceret Tacitus loquente te, et magis haberetur Tacitus».

class»<sup>17</sup>. To conclude this summary, I would like to point out that, surprisingly, in the long list recently compiled by Gualandri of the «Latin authors whose influence on Sidonius' work has been detected»<sup>18</sup>, Tacitus is completely absent.

Going back to *ep.* 7, 14, in this long and complex letter, the author is railing against those who consider that someone can only be truly known through direct experience, and not on a merely intellectual basis. Thus he starts a wide-ranging and thorough philosophical treatment of this subject, by comparing men with animals and describing all their somatic and sensorial features. His conclusion is that the only thing that distinguishes men are their mental abilities. Indeed, the peak of human relationships is the bond between *viri omnium litterarum*, although they may live far apart, rather than the connection with neighbours who are *rustici* (*ep.* 7, 14, 1). Thanks to this intellectual exchange, Sidonius claims that he knows the addressee Philagrius better than anyone else, in spite of the fact that they have never met in person, since they can see each other simply *cordis oculo* (*ep.* 7, 14, 9).

The main idea of the superiority of the mind over the body is developed so extensively, and in such formalized prose, that the whole letter sounds like an «extended rhetorical *tour de force*»<sup>19</sup> (a similar example, in Sidonius' letters, can perhaps only be found in the depiction of the parasite Gnatho in *ep.* 3, 13, which, according to Köhler, seems to have a preoccupation with physiognomy in common with the letter in question<sup>20</sup>). This somewhat schematic and scholastic approach, in addition to the fact that there is no further information about the addressee Philagrius – who has always been considered to be an ecclesiastic, or at least a *conversus* – made van Waarden even doubt his existence, and suggest the possibility that he might be «a fictive figurehead», and «none other than Sidonius' *alter ego*»<sup>21</sup>. Consequently, the usual date of the letter, 469/470 (shortly before his appointment as a bishop)<sup>22</sup>, has been similarly questioned by van Waarden, and considered to be a little earlier, between 461 and 467, when Sidonius was in his first period of retirement, with nothing more than «a heightened preoccupation with his ascetic lifestyle»<sup>23</sup>.

While this is the overall context of the letter, we must now turn to the paragraph in which the sentence is placed (*ep.* 7, 14, 10):

*Amas, ut comperi, quietos; ego et ignavos. Barbaros vitas, quia mali putentur; ego, etiamsi boni. Lectioni adhibes diligentiam; ego quoque in illa parum mihi patior nocere desidiam. Complex ipse personam religiosi; ego vel imaginem. Aliena non appetis; ego etiam refero ad quaestum, si propria non perdam. Delectaris contuberniis eruditorum; ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello.*

<sup>17</sup> MRATSCHEK, *Creating Culture*, cit., pp. 244-245.

<sup>18</sup> I. GUALANDRI, *Sidonius' Intertextuality*, in KELLY, VAN WAARDEN, *Edinburgh Companion*, cit., pp. 279-316: p. 285.

<sup>19</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> H. KÖHLER, «Der Geist ist offenbar im Buch wie das Antlitz im Spiegel»: Zu Sidonius *epist.* I 2, III 13, VII 1, in M. BAUMBACH et al. (eds), *Mousopolos Stephanos: Festschrift für Herwig Görgemanns*, Heidelberg 1998, pp. 333-345: p. 343. Cfr. also VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, pp. 119 and 117. On p. 119 all the prosopographical data. Now see also R.W. MATHISEN, *A Prosopography of Sidonius*, in KELLY, VAN WAARDEN, *Edinburgh Companion*, cit., pp. 76-154: p. 114.

<sup>22</sup> LOYEN, *Sidoine Apollinaire*, cit., III, pp. 69 and 215, number 14.

<sup>23</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, pp. 119-120.

Underneath the rhetorical surface, two aspects of this passage seem to be particularly evident (and both aspects continue in the subsequent paragraph of the letter).

Despite a philosophical inspiration – which, starting with Courcelle, has been especially traced back to Claudianus Mamertus' *De statu animae*, along with Neoplatonism<sup>24</sup> –, and despite a reference to God (*ep.* 7, 14, 8), Sidonius' perspective here is clearly not philosophical or theological, but rather literary and social. As van Waarden has pointed out, «his objective is to anchor the new society of the *conversi*, monks, and clerics in the *res publica litterarum*, an intellectual elite which, to be sure, is pious, but is above all firmly rooted in the soil of aristocratic traditions»<sup>25</sup>.

In the second place, the sentence is set in a context of contrasts which are evidently ironic and self-mocking<sup>26</sup>, as if Sidonius aimed to complete a playful portrait of the Christian intellectual *élite*. Within this framework, Philagrius is delighted with *contubernia eruditorum*, that is humorously juxtaposed with a *turba* of ignorant people. The word play between *turba* and *contubernia* ends up combining a small group of learned men (all familiar with each other) with a mass of people, whose nature is different and opposed to that of the former *élite*. If the *contubernia* are *contubernia eruditorum*, the *turba* will be a *turba litterariae artis expers*.

At this point, the very quality of *turba* – which, furthermore, can be as large as one likes (*quamlibet magna*) – has to be itself deprived of any value, by a determination reducing it to a minimum. This is how Sidonius' fantasy is struck by the image of the maximum degree of opposition, between crowd and desert, between *turba* (*quamlibet magna*) and *solitudo* (*maxima*). And this is how he 'completed' this ironic development, in order to give it additional flavour after the pun on *contubernia* and *turba*, and within the antithesis between *turba* (*quamlibet magna*) and (*maxima*) *solitudo*. It is also worth noticing that this antithesis is further reinforced by the fine arrangement of the adjectives *magna* and *maxima*, building to both a chiasmus and a climax.

In addition, the mechanisms of intertextuality at play here appear particularly interesting, and seem to be directed towards a fine allusion<sup>27</sup>. The word *solitudo*, in my opinion, might have links to Sidonius' cultural memory (the very memory that the whole letter aims to promote) with Calgacus' speech, and this means that, consequently, Sidonius uses the verb *appello*. In a single context, therefore, the author is reworking two elements from the same source text. As for the reader, a single word, namely *solitudo*, serves as a clue allowing them to suspect a relationship between the two texts.

<sup>24</sup> P. COURCELLE, *Sidoine philosophe*, in W. WIMMEL (ed.), *Forschungen zur römischen Literatur. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Karl Büchner*, Wiesbaden 1970, pp. 46-59. For an accurate reconstruction of the philosophical system underlying the whole letter, with further bibliography, see VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, pp. 106-115.

<sup>25</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup> All the elements of self-irony are well discussed by VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, both in a dedicated section of the *Introduction* to the letter (1.5 *Self-mockery*) and on pp. 158-163, *ad locum*.

<sup>27</sup> Here I use the word «intertextuality» in the sense recently explained by GUALANDRI, *Sidonius' Intertextuality*, cit., p. 281, as «a broader term simply indicating that there is a relationship between a text and an earlier text, which may be either unconscious on the author's part (determined by pure involuntary memory), or conscious and deliberate; in the latter case, I shall conform to current usage by speaking of 'allusion'. I would also like to highlight what Gualandri argues on p. 292 (with further bibliographic references in n. 73): «A textual reference may be evoked [...] by a small number of words, and sometimes by a single term».

However, since the same textual reference is evoked by a second single term, i.e. *appello*, the reader is led to think that it cannot be a coincidence that Sidonius derived two terms from the same passage. In both cases, a clue is also provided by the fact that the two terms are quite rare in Sidonius. There are very few other occurrences of both these words in his works<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, as happens in Tacitus, the verb *appello* is placed at the end of the sentence, so the impression given is that here Sidonius is ‘quoting’.

According to that well-known passage in Tacitus’ *Agricola*, the Caledonian leader Calgacus blamed the Romans for making a desert (*solitudo*) through plunder, butchery, and theft, and then calling it (*appellant*) peace. The learned Roman Sidonius is distorting everything ironically and, in the presence of a *turba (quamlibet magna)* that is unlearned, he is ready to call it (*appello*) a desert (*solitudo*), and indeed the biggest desert possible (*maximam solitudinem appello*).

Regarding the metaphor of the desert, in the *General Introduction* to the second volume of his commentary, van Waarden has some interesting considerations on the ideal of asceticism. This way of life, originally pursued in the desert, began, from the fourth century on, to pervade cities, taking on more social and political connotations than religious ones, and indicating rather «a mental state of detachment from the world bridging the perceived gap between monks and bishops»<sup>29</sup>. In *ep.* 7, 14, 10, the image of the desert has an undoubtedly negative meaning, which incidentally seems to provide a further argument to identify an originating influence from Tacitus, since here Sidonius is not promoting the positive value of the desert as a spiritual landscape of Late Antiquity, but uses instead a negative metaphor referring to waste and desolation, as in Tacitus.

This paragraph, which ends on the subject of the importance of a cultural education, presents, at its beginning, a mention of the barbarians and the need to avoid them: *barbaros vitas, quia mali putentur; ego, etiamsi boni*. One also wonders whether this specific thought by Sidonius may have fostered a memory of the barbarian chieftain Calgacus, and those refined words attributed to him by Tacitus.

The fact that Sidonius must have known Calgacus’ speech seems to be proven by a possible reminiscence of it in one of the last letters of his epistolary. After apologizing to Lupus, bishop of Troyes, for sending a *libellus* through him, rather than to him, Sidonius, towards the end of the letter, moves on to praise him, especially for his ability to discover and promote hidden talents. In order to highlight this special virtue, the author uses an equally special image (*ep.* 9, 11, 9):

*Ita si quos, vir sacrosancte, studiosorum senseris aut quietos aut verecundos aut in obscuro iacentis famae recessu delitescentes, hos eloqui tui claritas artifice confabulatu, dum compellat, et publicat.*

<sup>28</sup> As for *solitudo*, *ep.* 3, 2, 3; 7, 1, 5; 7, 6, 8 and 9, 9, 13 (in the first and the last case it is plural). The verb *appello* recurs in *ep.* 1, 6, 4; 2, 13, 1 and 7, 18, 3. Of these, the most interesting is the last: *nam ut timidi me temerarium, ita constantes liberum appellant*. Added weight to *appellant*, in the third person plural and at the end of the sentence as in Tacitus, is given by the fact that the previous sentence contains Sidonius’ famous adage, *scias volo [...] numquam me toleraturum animi servitatem*. This would fit Tacitus perfectly, on account of its spirit and its use of the key word *servitus* (see below). There are no occurrences of either of the words in Sidonius’ poems.

<sup>29</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 4, with further bibliographic references.



In particular, the expression *in obscuro iacentis famae recessu* seems to recombine the words *recessus* and *fama* attributed to the Caledonian leader: *Nos terrarum ac libertatis extremos recessus ipse ac sinus famae in hunc diem defendit* (*Agr.* 30, 3). As readers will know, in this evocative passage, which comes just before the sentence on *solitudo* and *pax*, Calgacus reminds his men that, up until then, their location in such a marginal space and, consequently, other people's limited knowledge of them, had represented a sort of protection. All these images are vividly expressed: the Caledonians find themselves living in a very distant part of both the geographical map and of freedom itself, and their very marginality (*recessus ipse*), which is protecting them, results in their fame retreating (*sinus famae*). On closer inspection, the word *recessus* is supposed to sound poetic to Sidonius, who uses it only once more in his letters, but in a totally different context, referring to *inclementia canicularis* and highlighting the opportunity to «beguile the fierceness of the dog-days by retiring to the coolest of retreats»<sup>30</sup> (*clementissimo recessu. ep.* 2, 2, 2), while all the five other occurrences are in his *carmina*<sup>31</sup>. The second of these, from the *epithalamium* of Ruricius and Hiberia, is particularly significant (*car.* 11, 6-9):

*exit in Isthmiacum pelagus claudentibus alis  
saxorum de rupe sinus, quo saepe recessu  
sic tamquam toto coeat de lumine caeli,  
artatur collecta dies [...]*

What is striking here is not only the description of the landscape, which is also in common with *car.* 16, 92, but, above all, the use of the word *sinus* in combination with *recessus*. As shown by Gualandri, in the complex system of Sidonius' intertextuality, references to a single source text may also occur at places in his writings that are far apart from each other<sup>32</sup>. This double occurrence (of *sinus* and *recessus*) may thus be further confirmation that Tacitus and that passage from *Agricola* were really read from Sidonius.

The fact that *ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello* (*ep.* 7, 14, 10) could be inspired by Tacitus may also be confirmed by an expression appearing in a previous sentence: *aliena non appetis*. This expression, which also occurs in Sidonius' *ep.* 3, 5, 2, *alieni non appetens*, has its possible model in Tacitus *Hist.* 1, 49, 3 *pecuniae alienae non adpetens* (and in Sallust, in turn a possible model for Tacitus: *Cat.* 5, 4, *alieni adpetens*), as has long been noted<sup>33</sup> (as early, in fact, as Savaron in 1599<sup>34</sup>).

To those arguments can be added one rather smaller but perhaps significant observation: a similarity to Tacitus would fit well in the framework of this letter, which

<sup>30</sup> *Sidonius, Poems and Letters*, with an English translation, introduction, and notes by W.B. ANDERSON, I. *Poems, Letters, Books I-II*, Cambridge Ma.-London 1936; II. *Letters, Books III-IX*, Cambridge Ma.-London 1965 (finished by W.H. SEMPLE and E.H. WARMINGTON): I, p. 419.

<sup>31</sup> *Car.* 5, 20; 11, 7; 16, 92; 33, 21 (in *ep.* 7, 17, 2) and 34, 32 (in *ep.* 8, 9, 5).

<sup>32</sup> GUALANDRI, *Sidonius' Intertextuality*, cit., p. 292.

<sup>33</sup> See F. GIANNOTTI, *Sperare meliora. Il terzo libro delle Epistulae di Sidonio Apollinare: introduzione, traduzione e commento*, Pisa 2016, p. 168. VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, pp. 162-163, recently pointed out that this expression may also be «a biblical command, originating in *Exod.* 20.17», «repeatedly thematized by the church fathers, e.g. Hier. *Vita Hilar.* 10».

<sup>34</sup> SAVARO, *Caii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii*, cit., pp. 189 and 444 of the 1599<sup>2</sup> edition (= pp. 194-195 and 467 of the 1609<sup>3</sup> edition).

has, after all, «the most complex and sustained intertextuality»<sup>35</sup> in book 7. Indeed, it would help to enrich the already long list of references drawn up by van Waarden, and ranging – just to give an idea – from Cicero, Lucretius and Virgil, to Christian authors, such as Lactantius, Jerome and Augustine, John Cassian, Prudentius and Claudianus Mamertus, via Seneca, Pliny the Elder, and Apuleius.

If it is correct to claim that this passage in Sidonius derives from the passage in Tacitus, a significant difference should be taken into consideration: the sentence *ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello* (*ep.* 7, 14, 10) shifts from a historical context, i.e. Calgacus' denunciation of Roman imperialism in Tacitus, to a cultural one, i.e., in Sidonius, the conviction that intellectual activity is of primary importance in life. In other words, the complex reworking of Calgacus' sentence by Sidonius should be viewed in a different way: even though the approach is rhetorical, as usual with Sidonius, for the way in which his words are selected and arranged owes much to a rhetorical education, the perspective is not exactly political, as in his model. Rather, here the author is defining the Christian intellectual *élite* that is considered to be essential to the new society emerging in the difficult circumstances before the fall of the Roman Empire and the new barbarian kingdom of the Visigoths. The only *conversi*, in such a scenario, may offer a guarantee that «the more things change, the more they will stay the same»<sup>36</sup>, at least from a cultural point of view.

However, there is another letter in book 7 where Sidonius may be referring to Tacitus' words in order to convey a truly political message. The passage, which would also add fuel to the argument that Tacitus is present in Sidonius, is in *ep.* 7, 7, 2:

*facta est servitus nostra pretium securitatis alienae.*

This letter is one of the most famous in all his epistles, also thanks to Stevens, who called it «the Epitaph of the Western Empire»<sup>37</sup>. In 475 AD Graecus, bishop of Marseille – who is its addressee –, together with three other bishops (Basilus, Leontius and Faustus), was required by Emperor Julius Nepos to negotiate with the Visigoth king, Euric. But the treaty they signed, betraying Clermont, led to the Visigothic acquisition of the town, in spite of its solidarity with the Empire, and all the sufferings that the Arverni had gone through during the barbarian attacks over the previous three years (471-474 AD)<sup>38</sup>. Sidonius expresses all his criticism of the new situation of Clermont-Ferrand through the concept that the freedom of others comes at the price of the bondage of the Arverni. Thanks to its strongly-worded language, this incisive phrase has been continuously cited, but it has not been noticed so far that its formulation might be influenced by another of Tacitus' sentences quoted above, *miseram servitutem falso pacem vocarent* (*Hist.* 4, 17, 2). In common with

<sup>35</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 48.

<sup>36</sup> VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., II, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> C.E. STEVENS, *Sidonius Apollinaris and his Age*, Oxford 1933, p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> J.D. HARRIES, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome AD 407-485*, Oxford 1994, pp. 222-238, remains fundamental to understanding the historical context in which Sidonius wrote (and published) this letter. Now see also M. KULIKOWSKI, *Sidonius' Political World*, in KELLY, VAN WAARDEN, *Edinburgh Companion*, cit., pp. 197-213: p. 212.

Tacitus there is *servitus*, which is definitely the main concept and the key word in the letter (together with *libertas*, its exact opposite, according to the Roman mentality)<sup>39</sup>. However, the idea of a possible reworking of *miseram servitutum falso pacem vocarent* takes shape if one considers Sidonius' previous sentence (*ep.* 7, 7, 1):

*miseram minus fuit sub bello quam sub pace condicio*<sup>40</sup>.

It contains a reference to *pax*, which is another key word, both in Tacitus and Sidonius, and which is used with a certain sarcasm by both writers: in Sidonius' case, especially when he poses the rhetorical question, *Propter huius tam inclitae pacis expectationem avulsas muralibus rimis herbas in cibum traximus [...]?* (*ep.* 7, 7, 3).

The hypothesis of a relationship between Sidonius and Tacitus might gain further strength from the adjective *miseram*. Unfortunately Sidonius' letter presents a textual problem at this point, and *miseram* is merely a conjecture<sup>41</sup>. It was first proposed by Mohr<sup>42</sup>, as an intelligent supplement, assuming that the copyist may have made the common mistake of the *saut du même au même*, unintentionally omitting the first of the two words starting with *mi-* (*miseram minus*). This conjecture was accepted by Anderson (even though Warmington proposed *mitior* or *mollior*)<sup>43</sup> and by Loyen<sup>44</sup>, while Lütjohann suggested *minus* <*tristis*><sup>45</sup>. Van Waarden, preferring not to stray from the manuscript tradition, like Bellès<sup>46</sup>, but refusing Bellès' option *minor* based on M<sup>1</sup>, has chosen to follow the scribe of F, *melior*<sup>47</sup>.

In these circumstances, it is particularly difficult to adopt a definitive position on the whole question. Nevertheless, if Mohr's conjecture is right, in addition to the words already found in both Tacitus and Sidonius – *pax* and *servitus*, those contrasting terms – there would also be a third shared word, *miseram*, describing *servitus* in Tacitus, and that *sub pace* status resulting in *servitus*, according to Sidonius. Although it cannot be concluded with absolute certainty that here Sidonius is modelled on Tacitus, a comparison between the two passages is worth taking into account. However one chooses to resolve the textual problem, Sidonius is referring to a *pax* which is even worse than war, since it has turned out to be a form of *servitus*. As well as Tacitus is referring to a *servitus* which is falsely called *pax*. In this sense, the two contexts undoubtedly offer a parallel.

Similarly, on a more general level, we may not conclude from this brief survey that Sidonius had a precise and accurate knowledge of Tacitus. But, starting with

<sup>39</sup> See VAN WAARDEN, *Writing to Survive*, cit., I, pp. 334 and 337 (with further bibliography).

<sup>40</sup> So reads Loyen's text (see above, note 5).

<sup>41</sup> The manuscripts have *minus* CM, *minor* M<sup>1</sup>, *melior* F.

<sup>42</sup> C. *Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius*, recensuit P. MOHR, Leipzig 1895.

<sup>43</sup> ANDERSON, *Sidonius, Poems and Letters*, cit., II, p. 324, note 2 of the critical apparatus.

<sup>44</sup> LOYEN, *Sidoine Apollinaire*, cit., III, p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> LÜTJOHANN, *Gaii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii*, cit., p. 110.

<sup>46</sup> J. BELLÈS in his edition with introductions, notes and Catalan translation in five volumes (two devoted to the poems, 1989 and 1992, and three to the letters, 1997, 1998 and 1999) within the series by Fundació Bernat Metge: *Sidoni Apollinar, Lletres*, vol. III (llibres VII-IX), Barcelona 1999, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> For the record, both SAVARO, *Caii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii*, cit., and SIRMOND, *C. Sol. Apollin. Sidonii Arvernorum episcopi opera*, cit., are aligned with F (*melior fuit sub bello quam sub pace conditio*; no comment in Savaron's editions, whereas Sirmond, on p. 74 of his *Notae*, merely tends to paraphrase this passage: «Sidonius non immerito queritur, Arvernorum meliorem fuisse sub bello quam sub pace conditionem»).

these new possible examples, and also considering a certain tendency for references to Tacitus to cluster together (among the five cases examined here, two are in *ep.* 7, 7, 1-2, and two in *ep.* 7, 14, 10), it would be worth studying this subject in more detail, and extending the research to other letters by Sidonius, in the spirit of two of his own statements on Tacitus that I have not had the chance to mention yet:

*qua pompa [sc. placet] Tacitus numquam sine laude loquendus*  
(*carm.* 2, 192)

*et qui pro ingenio fluente nulli,*  
*Corneli Tacite, es tacendus ori*

(*carm.* 23, 153-154).

Starting with the latter, it could be suspected that, while praising Consentius the elder, the poet is particularly interested in including Tacitus in the list of Latin writers who would shrink in the presence of Consentius (*si Consentius adfuit, latebant: carm.* 23, 169) by virtue of the word play between *Tacitus* and *tacendus*. A pun which reminds us of the very similar one that Sidonius makes in *ep.* 4, 22, 2, mentioned above<sup>48</sup>. On closer scrutiny, also in the first case the poet, providing a similar list of Latin writers, by whose studies Emperor Anthemius was moulded (*bis hunc formatum studiis: carm.* 2, 192), does not seem to want to pass up the opportunity of employing a rhetorical device. Once again Sidonius is playing with the historian's name, by combining the opposite concepts of talking and being silent. But beyond any pun so usual with him, can we be sure that the poet is not addressing himself, and referring, between the lines, to all the times that, in his writings, he has not been or will not be silent (*tacitus*) about Tacitus? In this case, it only remains for us to also detect the influence of the greatest Latin historian on Sidonius<sup>49</sup>, who – we might suspect – is revealing here something about himself as a reader, and as a writer.

<sup>48</sup> See above, notes 15-16 and context.

<sup>49</sup> See above, note 18 and context.

## ABSTRACT

In spite of its impressive afterlife in our contemporary culture, it is commonly believed that the famous *sententia* in *Agricola* 30, 5, ascribed by Tacitus to the Caledonian chief Calgacus, *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*, is not mentioned again until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of this article is to point out that, in actual fact, an interesting echo probably also appeared in Late Antiquity, namely in a letter by the 5<sup>th</sup> century Gallic bishop Sidonius Apollinaris: *ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello* (ep. 7, 14, 10). Although here Sidonius' perspective is cultural, rather than political as in his possible model, a dependence on Calgacus' speech and, more generally, on Tacitus, would seem to be confirmed by further expressions appearing both in the same letter and in other passages in Sidonius. Thus, the article is also an initial attempt to investigate the relationship between Sidonius and Tacitus, which is yet to be studied.

Nonostante la sorprendente fortuna di cui gode nella cultura a noi contemporanea, la celebre *sententia* di *Agricola* 30, 5, attribuita da Tacito al capo caledone Calgaco, *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*, sembra non essere citata fino al XVII secolo. Lo scopo di questo articolo è segnalare che in realtà ha probabilmente avuto un'eco interessante nella Tarda Antichità, in una lettera del vescovo Sidonio Apollinare, vissuto nella Gallia del V sec.: *ego turbam quamlibet magnam litterariae artis expertem maxumam solitudinem appello* (ep. 7, 14, 10). Sebbene la prospettiva sidoniana sia qui culturale, piuttosto che politica come nel suo possibile modello, un'influenza del discorso di Calgaco e, più in generale, di Tacito, sembrerebbe confermata da altre espressioni presenti nella stessa lettera e in altri brani di Sidonio. L'articolo si configura così come un primo tentativo di indagare sul legame fra Sidonio e Tacito, finora non ancora oggetto di uno studio sistematico.

KEYWORDS: Late Antiquity; Sidonius Apollinaris; Tacitus; Calgacus; intertextuality.

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