

# NOTES, CRITICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE, ON THE POEMS OF SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS

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THE LOEB EDITION of Sidonius' poems (and the first two Books of his letters) by W. B. Anderson (1936) is an ornament to its series. Anderson, who succeeded Housman in the Chair of Latin at Cambridge, was a *deus minorum gentium*, but he was an excellent Latinist, meticulous and clear-headed. His translation was practically pioneer work, one of two nineteenth-century French versions being described as "contemptible," the other as "not markedly superior." In these circumstances to have maintained as high a level of accurate interpretation as Anderson does was no small achievement. In his bibliography he specially commends W. H. Semple's *Quaestiones exegeticae Sidoniana* (Cambridge 1930). Since Anderson's edition the only notable contribution on the verbal side has been A. Loyer's Budé volume (1960), also a meritorious performance, which corrects Anderson's errors in a number of passages.

Anderson professes at large a Housman-like contempt for his author (as a poet) which some may think excessive. Certainly no one would wish to place Sidonius on the higher slopes of Parnassus, and his virtuosities may amuse or annoy according to the reader's taste. But only one totally void of sympathy for Latin literary baroque can fail to see why the author and his contemporaries thought the verses worth the paper they were written on: and for so many fourth and fifth-century Latin poems that is a mystery of mysteries. As a technician he ranks high—higher than Ausonius, though below Claudian.

2.8

*tuque o cui laurea, Iane,  
annua debetur, relīga torpore soluto  
quavis fronde comas*

Cf. Auson. 14.3.11 *ter dominante Tito cingit nova laurea Ianum*.

Semple noticed the problem: "What exactly is the force of *quavis fronde*? In view of the previous sentence, *cui laurea . . . annua debetur*, it seems rather inappropriate—unless, indeed, on this special occasion Janus is granted a greater appearance of festivity than is required by mere ceremonial observance; but this is improbable." Even less plausible is Loyer's explanation, that *quavis fronde* is an irreverent expression implying that Janus does not need the protection of the laurel. Janus, be it recalled, was two-faced (*bifrons*), and poets are apt to remind us of the fact. Sidonius, I think, took his opportunity and wrote *quavis fronte*, "on whichever brow you please." Garlands and brows, hair and brows,

garlands and hair come together in countless passages; for all three cf. Sil. 4.726 *madidae frontis crines circumdata fronde/populea*. The context here invited the copyist to error, as in Sen. (?) *Herc. Oet.* 1641 *populea silva, frontis* (codd. *frondis*) *Herculeae decus*.

- 2.341                    *illa prior: "venio viduatam praesule nostro  
per te, si placeat, lacrimis inflectere Romam;  
expetat Aurorae partes fastuque remoto  
hoc unum praestet, iam plus dignetur amari . . ."*

Oenotria (Italy) addresses Tiber, who is to ask Rome to apply to the Eastern Empire for Anthemius as her next ruler.

Anderson renders (343 f.): "let her put her disdain aside and by granting this one thing deserve even greater love." Similarly Loyen. *dignetur* is thus mistranslated and the poet's point lost. Rome is asked to make just one concession to the rival Empire, towards which she is usually somewhat haughty and unbending (cf. 517 *dum mitior exstes*): let her condescend to be loved, by Anthemius, more than he loves his native East.

- 2.487                    *circumspice taedas  
antiquas: par nulla tibi sic copula praesto est.*

Neither Anderson ("and no union such as this event can offer itself to thy view") nor Loyen ("aucune union semblable ne se présente à tes yeux") saw that *sic par* means "so well-matched;" cf. Ov. *Her.* 9.32 *siqua voles apte nubere, nube pari*, et sim.

- 2.429                    *pectora bis cingunt zonae, parvisque papillis  
invidiam facit ipse sinus.*

"and even the fold in her robe mocked the smallness of her breasts," Anderson, with note: "The meaning is not clear. Possibly 'made her small breasts envious,' though *invidiam facere* regularly means 'to bring reproach upon.' " Loyen is no help. *invidiam facit* = "makes invidiously prominent." Though small, the breasts are emphasized by the tight drapery.

- 5.293                    *sic fatur et illum  
rure iubet patrio suetos mutare labores,  
fatorum currente rota, quo disceret agri  
quid possessorem maneat, quos denique mores  
ius civile paret, ne solam militis artem  
ferret ad imperium.*

*agri* Luetjohann, *agro* codd. Dismissed by Aetius to the country, Majorian now has the opportunity to learn estate management and civilian ways, and so improve his equipment as future Emperor. *maneat* ("to the end that he might learn what is in store for the possessor of land")

seems inane. Perhaps *moneat*. He learned what to tell the landlords to do when the time came.

5.312

*iam tunc imperium praesentis principis aurea  
volvebant bona fata colu; sed publica damna  
invidiam fugere viri. quicumque fuerunt  
nomen in Augustum lecti, tenere relictum  
Caesaribus solium; postquam tu capta laboras,  
hic quod habet fecit.*

Africa is explaining to Rome why Majorian did not become Emperor immediately after the death of Valentinian III. Anderson translates "the calamities of the people shrank from bringing enmity on such a man;" i.e., the delay meant that Majorian would not be blamed for the disasters which befell Rome during the intervening reigns of Petronius Maximus and Avitus. Similarly Løyen. This takes no account of the following words, *quicumque . . . fecit*, which are presumably by way of explanation. Whereas all previous Emperors had succeeded to an Empire in being, Majorian, after Rome's capture by Geiseric, had to create the Empire anew. If he had followed Valentinian, his appointment would in the normal course of things have involved him in some *invidia*. That he escaped because of the exceptional situation created by *publica damna*; everything he had made for himself. "Public calamities avoided jealousy of the hero" is a highly artificial way of expressing this, but the expression is strained however we interpret it.

5.415

*pars poplite secto  
mortis ad invidiam vivit.*

Not "live on to envy death" nor "vivent dans le désir de la mort," but "live as a reproach to death" (which ought to have put them out of their misery).

7.97

*plus, summe deorum,  
sum iusto tibi visa potens quod Parthicus ultro  
restituit mea signa Sapor positoque tiara  
funera Crassorum flevit dum purgat. et hinc iam  
(pro dolor!) excusso populi iure atque senatus  
quod timui incurri; sum tota in principe, tota  
principis, et fio lacerum de Caesare regnum,  
quae quondam regina fui.*

The translators mistake the meaning of *quod timui incurri* ("I have fallen upon the fate I feared"). Surely Rome was not afraid of monarchy all along. The gods, she says, resented her triumphs ("Sapor," as Anderson notes, is the Parthian Phraates IV, who returned the Roman standards to Augustus). And so she happened upon something which (for the first time) made her afraid, i.e., an Emperor.

7.163

*solverat in partum generosa puerpera casti  
ventris onus; manifesta dedi mox signa futuri  
principis ac totam fausto trepidi patris aulam  
implevi augurio. licet idem grandia nati  
culparet fata et pueri iam regna videret,  
sed sibi commissum tanto sub pignore cernens  
mundi depositum, ne quid tibi, Roma, periret,  
iuvit fortunam studio.*

Anderson's punctuation, followed in effect by Loyen, does not put matters to rights. Avitus' father would naturally be alarmed by the supernatural signs (which the poet does not describe, counting no doubt on his readers' familiarity with Virg. *Aen.* 2.681 ff.): but why should he find fault with the greatness they portended? And what of the sequence "although . . . he saw that his son would be Emperor, yet he took particular care of him"? Read *captaret*, with comma after *augurio* and full stop after *videret*. The father was alarmed, though at the same time (*idem*) he caught eagerly at the prospect held out. *sed* in 168 may be resumptive, "but at all events."

7.195

*quam pulchrum, cum forte domum post lustra revertens  
horrore splenderet apri virtusque repugnans  
proderet invitum per fortia facta pudorem!*

"The veritable picture of a gawky lad! His valour was reluctant to parade itself: his modesty was therefore apparent: but his modesty in turn was unwilling to appear because of his brave exploits which deserved display" (Semple). Anderson understood quite differently: "his gallantry in its own despite baulked his shrinking modesty by this evidence of brave deeds." I think Semple took *repugnans* and *proderet* correctly, but that *per fortia facta* belongs with the verb (so Loyen); and that *invictum*, which has some manuscript support (see Luetjohann's apparatus), should replace *invitum*. The brave exploits served to display the young man's modesty which no amount of success could overcome.

7.248

*qui proxima quaeque  
discursu, flammis, ferro, feritate, rapinis  
delebant, pacis fallentes nomen inane.*

*fallentes* = *simulantes* was understood by Savaro (1609): "id est, pacis involucro rapinas suas et hostiles ruinas tegentis;" but not by Anderson ("betraying and making void the name of peace") or Loyen ("faisant mentir le nom vain de paix").

7.272

*sic Phrygium Emathia victorem cuspidē poscens  
Aeacides caeso luctum frenavit amico  
per mortes tot, Troia, tuas iam vilia per se  
agmina contentus ruere strictumque per amplos  
exserere gladium populos; natat obruta tellus*

*sanguine, dumque hebetat turba grave caedua telum,  
absens in cuncto sibi vulnere iam cadit Hector.*

Anderson, "dubitanter," reads *nam* for *iam* in 274, making *nam . . . agmina* a parenthesis. But the worthlessness of the ordinary Trojans whom Achilles slaughters in his search for Hector does not *explain* anything. Loyen adopts Mohr's *iam vilia prae se/agmina*, translating "content de bousculer devant lui des hordes méprisées." *per mortes . . . tuas* then has to be taken with *luctum frenavit*, which is false to the context. Achilles was only interested in Hector. He was quite content to kill all these people, despite the fact that they were of no importance in themselves and their deaths would bring him no glory, because this led him to his real goal: "in every wound Hector falls." Read *per mortes tot, Troia, tuas, tam vilia per se/agmina*.

7.295                    *haec post gesta viri (temet, Styx livida, testor)  
intemerata mihi praefectus iura regebat,  
et caput hoc sibimet solitiis defessa ruinis  
Gallia suscipiens Getica pallebat ab ira.*

Jupiter is speaking, and that god's interest in the workings of the imperial bureaucracy, however benevolent, could hardly support the "ethic" dative *mihi* ("le héros fut l'un de mes Préfets"). The words *intemerata mihi* belong inside the parenthesis. Jupiter has never broken an oath by the Styx. Sidonius no doubt expected his readers to recall Virg. *Aen.* 6.323 *Stygiamque paludem, / di cuius iurare timent et fallere numen* and similar passages, but I think we have here a direct echo of his favourite Claudian, *Rapt.* 1.111 *primordia testor/noctis et horrendae stagna intemerata paludis*, where Platnauer's rendering "the unexplored shallows of the Stygian lake" misses the point. The oath guarantees the preceding story of Avitus' martial prowess, which is certainly tall enough to call for it.

In 297 read *at* for *et*.

7.382                    *sic quondam ad patriae res fractas pauper arator,  
Cincinnate, venis, veterem cum te induit uxor  
ante boves trabeam dictatoremque salignae  
excepere fores atque ad sua tecta ferentem  
quod non persevit, turpique e fasce gravata  
vile triumphalis portavit purpura semen.*

The words underlined anticipate and spoil the elaborate climax *turpique . . . semen*; *atque* has no business; *ad sua tecta* is otiose after *excepere fores*; *persevit* is ἀπ. λελ. Let them be stricken as the product of a marginal explanation such as *semen ferentem ad sua tecta quod non severat*. Incidentally, the passage echoes Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* 415 *sordida dictator flexit Serranus aratra:/lustratae lictore casae fascesque salignis/postibus affixi*.

7.403

*obstupere duces pariter Scythicusque senatus  
et timuere suam pacem ne forte negaret.  
sic rutilus Phaethonta levem cum carperet axis  
iam pallente die flagrantique excita mundo  
pax elementorum fureret, sqq.*

404 is misunderstood by Anderson: "feared lest he should deny their peaceful intent." Loyen may be right: "n'ayant qu'une crainte: c'est qu'il rejetât leur paix," if "leur paix" means "peace with them"; cf. 489 *dudum, dux inclute, culpo/poscere te pacem nostram*, 486 *i durus pacemque nega*. I think, however, that *suam* refers to Avitus, not to the Goths. They were afraid that he might now refuse *his* peace, i.e., the peace he had established with Theoderic I (cf. 308 ff.).

*pallente* in 406 is mysterious. When Phaethon's fiery chariot got out of hand it did not lose heat; far from it (cf. Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* 63 *cum procul insanae traherent Phaethonta quadrigae/saeviretque dies*). Perhaps read *fallente*. The sun (*dies*), i.e., the chariot, was "letting down" the driver; cf. (not exactly parallel) Claud. *Carm. min.* 30.178 *socerum* (sc. *Oenomaum*) *fallente rota*.

7.419

*quid foedera lenta minaris,  
in damnum mihi fide meum? compendia pacis  
et praestare iubes nos et debere.*

*quid . . . minaris?* was rightly understood by Sempke: "this means a lingering and protracted negotiation, such as might be indicated by Avitus' arrival as an ambassador." The Goths want to make short work, even though the peace which Avitus' loyalty makes them desire is to their own disadvantage (*in damnum mihi fide meum*). The next sentence has led the translators astray: "Thou dost bid us both give to thee and owe to thee the advantages of peace:" "tu veux que nous te garantissons les avantages de la paix, tu prétends que nous te les devons." As Sempke saw, *compendia pacis* is in "strong antithesis" to *foedera lenta*, meaning "a peace quickly concluded." But Avitus was not ordering that (*iubes*). Read *iube*. The imperative is a further expression of submissiveness; cf. 493 *quid mereor, si nulla iubes?* Let Avitus command. The Goths will grant the peace (*praestare*) at his bidding and have him to thank for it.

7.423

*nec dicere saltim  
desidiaie obtentu possum te proelia nolle:  
pacem fortis amas. iam partes sternit Avitus;  
insuper et Geticas praemissus continet iras  
Messianus; adhuc mandasti, et ponimus arma.*

"Avitus is already ending the strife of parties." What parties? Loyen is wild here: "Avitus est en train d'aplanir le conflit." Rather than assume an otherwise unattested historical reference, I would read *Martem* and

refer to what precedes. In the past Avitus has proved his courage on the battle field; now it is Mars (war itself) that he is laying low. The phrase may possibly have been suggested by Claud. *Carm. min.* 53.38 *hic sternere Martem/cogitat, hic Phoebi laceros divellere crines.*

7.501                    *testor, Roma, tuum nobis venerabile nomen  
et socium de Marte genus (vel quicquid ab aevo,  
nil te mundus habet melius, nil ipsa senatu),  
me pacem servare tibi vel velle abolere  
quae noster peccavit avus*

I do not understand *vel*, which Anderson translates "for." Perhaps substitute *si* (*s* disappears after *genus* and *i* becomes *l*).

7.543                    *promptissima nuper  
fulsit condicio, proprias qua Gallia vires  
exsereret, trepidam dum Maximus occupat urbem;  
orbem immo potuit, si te sibi tota magistro  
regna reformasset.*

546 *orbem immo potuit* TF, *orbem ego sat potui* MC. The subject of *potuit* is *Maximus* (the Emperor, Avitus' predecessor). To make it *Gallia*, with Anderson and Loyen, is to destroy the contrast *urbem/orbem* (cf. 557 *orbis in urbe iacet*). If Maximus had made full use of the talents of his *magister militum* (cf. 377 *peditumque equitumque magistrum/te sibi, Avite, legit*), he might have regained the whole Empire, including Africa (cf. 588 *hic tibi restituet Libyen*) and the East. For *immo* (*secundo loco*) see *Thes.* 7.1.479.78. The discrepancy in the mss raises doubts; perhaps the variants arose from *orbem qui potuit, qui* having dropped out. Modern texts are disfigured by Leo's all too typically inept *orbem sat potuit*.

11.86                    *te quoque multimodis ambisset, Hiberia, ludis  
axe Pelops, cursu Hippomenes luctaque Achelous,  
Aeneas bellis spectatus, Gorgone Perseus.*

Venus compliments the bride, Hiberia. Each of the named heroes of legend would have wooed her playing his own game. Pelops would have raced for her on wheels, Hippomenes on foot, Achelous would have wrestled. And then: "Aeneas with wars." What sort of *ludos* is warfare? Aeneas, moreover, did not in strictness *court* Lavinia with wars. All that started *after* she had been offered to him by her father. And then: "Perseus with the Gorgon." The Gorgon was not a *ludus*, and Perseus can hardly be said to have used it for his courting. Add that *spectatus* is a pointless encumbrance (if we take it with the ablatives, *ludis* becomes inoperative and *spectatus Gorgone* makes a strange combination). Whether 88 is a discarded chip from the poet's workshop or the idle jotting of a later scribbler, there is only one thing to be done: throw it out.

15.162                    *Taenaron hic frustra bis rapta coniuge pulsat  
Thrax fidibus, legem postquam temeravit Averni,*

*et prodesse putans iterum non respicit umbram.  
hic vovet Alceste praelato coniuge vitam  
rumpere, quam cernas Parcarum vellere in ipso  
nondum pernetam fato praestante salutem.*

Orpheus and Alcestis make two of the tableaux embroidered on a robe. *prodesse* in 164 is misunderstood by the translators ("deeming that this is in his favour," "pensant servir ainsi ses intérêts"). It refers to *Taenaron pulsat*. Orpheus hopes that he has been successful and that Eurydice is following him, but this time he is careful not to look back to see.

The reading in 167 is the vulgate, followed by Loyen. The paradosis is *fate (fato) restante salutem*. Anderson reads *fato restante salute* (Bücheler), with the comment "*praestante salutem* vulgo, fortasse recte," and translates "her life, which you could see there in the very wool of the Fateful Sisters, not yet spun to the end, for by her destiny life still remains to her." I should prefer *fato restante salutis*, "the destiny of her survival holding firm." Alcestis' destiny was to live. For the genitive cf. Stat. *Theb.* 5.453 *nostrae fatum excusabile culpa* ("my destined fault") and similar expressions in *Thes.* 6.361.

15.193 *perge libens, neu tu damnes fortasse iugari,  
quod noster iubet ille senex qui non piger hausit  
numina condemnans Anyto pallente venenum.*

*contemplans* (Wilamowitz) is now the vulgate. "Contemplating the gods" is not a particularly apt description of Socrates drinking the hemlock (surely we are not expected to think of Asclepius' cock) and it has the drawback of ruining a characteristic point. The death of the condemned Socrates was a condemnation of the gods who allowed it to happen (no reference, of course, to his alleged atheism, as Savaro thought). The spelling *condempnans* (*condempnens*, *contempnens*) in the mss signifies nothing; see *Thes.* 4.123.70).

16.127 *quicquid agis, quocumque loci es, semper mihi Faustus,  
semper Honoratus, semper quoque Maximus esto.*

Anderson's "I wish thee for ever more the blessings of thy three names" seems to be a slip. Faustus' immediate predecessors at Lérins were Maximus and Honoratus (founder of the abbey).

17.3 *natalis nostris decimus sextusque coletur,  
adventu felix qui petit esse tuo.*

"It should have been unnecessary to point out that *nostris* is not *nostorum*; but everyone since Mommsen's day has inferred from this line that two of Sidonius' children were twins! *Nostris* is Dative of the Agent." So Anderson, to whom it should have been unnecessary to point out the parallel datives in 11.53 *festā . . . quae socer Ommatius . . . natae generoque/ excolit auspiciis faustis*.



- 17.7 *nec per multiplices abaco splendente cavernas  
argenti nigri pondera defodiam.*

Omnatius is not to expect luxurious entertainment.

Anderson, apparently without misgivings, renders: "I shall not bury in the manifold recesses of a glittering side-board masses of dark old silver-plate." A host does not put away his plate to welcome an honoured guest, he brings it out, tarnished (*nigri*) from long storage. Savaro compared *Ep.* 1.2.6 *non ibi impolitam congeriem liventis argenti mensis cedentibus suspiriosus minister imponit*. But legitimately *defodiam* can only mean "bury." Neither of the subsidiary senses, "dig" (e.g., a pit) and "dig out" (e.g., earth) will help. Løyen correctly saw the problem: we should, he says, expect *effodiam*; "il faudrait donc supposer une confusion tardive entre *de* et *ex*." One hesitates to attribute this confusion to Sidonius.<sup>1</sup> Probably the text is at fault. *refodiam* ("dig up again") would constitute a metrical licence which the poet does not elsewhere permit. So one is forced to suggest *pondus* (*pond*) *ego ecfodiam*. For the elision cf. 4.12, 6.20.

- 22.7 *et licet in carmen non passim laxet habenas  
Phoebus et hic totis non pandat carbasa fandi,  
quisque tamen tantos non laudans ore penates  
inspicis, inspiceris: resonat sine voce voluntas;  
nam tua te tacitum vivere silentia clamant.*

*totis* (= *cunctis*) . . . *fandi* is a mere repetition of *in carmen* . . . *habenae* and *hic* is senseless. Read *indoctis* (cf. Apul. *Apol.* 66 *neque facundiae ostentatio rudi et indocto . . . congruisset*). Ordinary, unlettered persons cannot write poems in praise of Leontius' manor, but they can praise it when they see it none the less. If they keep silent, they proclaim themselves as *lividi*.

- 22.74 *laeva parte tenet vasta dulcedine raucam  
caelato Pythone lyram*

*vasta dulcedine* ("of ineffable sweetness," "au chant puissant et doux") can hardly be tolerated, and *casta* (Leo) is no help. Read *varia*.

- 22.136 *ipsa autem quantis, quibus aut sunt fulta columnis!  
cedat puniceo pretiosus livor in antro  
Synnados, et Nomadum qui portat eburnea saxa  
collis et herbosis quae vernant marmora venis;  
candentem iam nolo Paron, iam nolo Caryston;  
vilior est rubro quae pendet purpura saxo.*

*est* is translatable, of course, but I have little doubt that Sidonius wrote *et: et nolo purpuram quae (iam) vilior pendet* . . . For such a com-

<sup>1</sup>Several additions and corrections in this paper are due to anonymous readers. One of them here refers to M. Bonnet, *Latin de Grégoire de Tours*, 607 f., a book which is inaccessible to me at present.

bination of two names followed by a periphrasis for a third (*lapis Syenites*; cf. 5.36) cf. e.g. Juv. 10.108 *quid Crassos, quid Pompeios evertit et illum, / ad sua qui domitos deduxit flagra Quirites?*

22.215

*lauri spatiabor in istis  
frondibus, hic trepidam credam mihi credere Daphnen.*

Cf. Auson. *Mos.* 170 *hic ego et agrestes Satyros et glauca tuentes / Naidas extremis credam concurrere ripis*. But if you come upon *Daphne fugitiva* in a laurel grove, what do you expect her to do? Believe you? Believe what? Or retire (*cedere*)?

23.214

*et iam te aula tulit piusque princeps  
inter conspicuos statim locavit,  
consistoria quos habent, tribunos;  
iamque et purpureus in arce regni  
praeesse officiis tuis solebat,  
mores nobilitate quod merebant:  
tantum culminis et decus stupendum  
scripti annalibus indicant honores.*

The scansion *praeesse* is more than suspect (cf. L. Müller, *De Re Metrica*<sup>2</sup>, p. 289) and the sense inept ("the wearer of the purple himself . . . was wont to preside over your boards"). Read *praestare* ("accord;" cf. Claud. *VI Cons. Honor.* 556 *quique neget nato procerum quod praestet honori*) and remove the comma after *solebat*.

23.228

*tum si forte fuit quod imperator  
Eoas soceri venire in aures  
fido interprete vellet et perito,  
te commercia duplicis loquelae  
doctum solvere protinus legebat.*

Anderson ignores the difficulty of *solvere*: "one well-instructed to hold intercourse in the two tongues." Loyen is awake: "à résoudre les difficultés d'une conversation dans les deux langues." But could *solvere* mean anything but *dissolvere* (cf. Solin. 27.32 *dissolutis venarum commerciis*)? *iungere* was to be expected (cf. Auson. *Mos.* 293 *licet hic commercia linguae / iungere*). I am not sure whether *volvere* (cf. Cic. *Brut.* 246 *celeriter sane verba volvens* et sim.) can be regarded as a possibility.

23.325

*continent ministri  
ora et lora manus iubasque tortas  
cogunt flexilibus latere nodis  
hortanturque obiter iuvantque blandis  
ulstro plausibus et voluptuosum  
dictant quadrupedantibus furorem.*

Read *ministrae* (cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.7.27 *caedis scelerumque ministrae . . . manus*) or, alternatively, *manu*.