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Gavin Kelly, Joop van Waarden, *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 856. ISBN 9781474461696. £195.00.

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[Authors and titles listed at the end of the review.]

In 2020, Sidonius scholarship is in full swing. So far, this challenging year witnessed the publication of several articles, monographs, a special journal issue as well as two major volumes of collected studies, one in Italian, one in English.[1] (#\_edn1) The latter is the volume under review: it offers the first companion on the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Gallo-Roman senator-bishop, his literary works, their tradition and reception. The editors, Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden, are both well-known in the field, not only for their own publications, but also for having launched an international and interdisciplinary network dedicated to Sidonius studies in 2013.[2] (#\_edn2) The Edinburgh companion is the latest result of this collaboration. Thus, the volume gathers contributions from many experts, philologists as well as historians. Given the many blossoms in a blooming area of research, this plurality of perspectives acts as a much-needed counterbalance to scholarly fragmentation.

As both editors underscore in the introduction, only a holistic approach can adequately combine the “jigsaw [-] puzzle” pieces that both Sidonius’ own works and their discourse provide (ix). Complexity, Kelly and van Waarden argue, is key when dealing with tricky texts written in a literary culture that followed the intricate conventions of late-antique elite communication. Simply reading Sidonius’ works as a ‘life in letters’ or as ‘documents of Roman defeat’ won’t do — (aspiring) scholars need to both consider the socio-political contexts of “Sidonius’ world” and how he shaped his own world through literature.

The companion’s outline stays true to the holistic view as well as the call for complexity proposed in the introduction. Each individual essay is placed within a major section that highlights a particular thematic area in Sidonius’ oeuvre, its contexts, and varied afterlife. These parts also match the different lines of questioning a reader may address to Sidonius as author and/or agent: from dating, biographic, or prosopographic issues (Part I) through political, religious, and social contexts (Part II) to literary (Part III) and linguistic (Part IV) features. The final two sections (Parts V and VI) provide a historiography of Sidonius scholarship as well as his literary tradition. An epilogue takes up the different threads and proposes areas and questions for future research.

Though the issues discussed in Part I seem clear enough, the reader soon discovers that “[n]othing about Sidonius is straightforward” (2) — a fortiori personal details or text dates. Joop van Waarden faces a difficult task in providing a biographical sketch while addressing the many biases of Sidonius’ self-fashioning. Van Waarden manages to walk this methodical tightrope by illustrating, on the one hand, how little we know about Sidonius from external sources, and on the other hand, how many parts of Sidonius’ life are blurred, glossed over, or hidden behind the curtain of conventions. The next chapter by Ralph W. Mathisen tackles a different question: How can we read Sidonius’ letter collection as a mirror of 5<sup>th</sup>-century society? Using the tried and tested tools of prosopography as well as modern network analysis, Mathisen writes a social history of “Sidonius’ People” and presents a detailed prosopographic database as an appendix to his essay. Mathisen’s observations on the quantitative marginality of women and curiales prove his point on the heuristic potential of statistical evaluation. Gavin Kelly’s chapter deals with another basic, yet tricky topic: work chronology. Though Kelly raises awareness for methodological challenges and limits to dating efforts, he is pragmatic in his approach and works out a useful chronological framework for dating both the carmina and the correspondence. Even if specialists might disagree with some of the assessments (e.g., the case against an early publication of Sidon. epist. 1 and 2), Kelly is careful to include contrasting views and invites the readers to discuss different dating propositions.

Part II places Sidonius on the political, social, and religious stage of late-Roman Gaul. It opens with a chapter by Michael Kulikowski that contextualises Sidonius as an historical agent. Kulikowski presents late-antique Gaul as a chaotic political landscape, torn between elite fractions, imperial loyalties as well as Germanic reges, where

political careers could take dangerous turns. Becoming a bishop, he argues, was one way out of chaos and dilemmas, literary production another—both paths Sidonius chose for himself. Sidonius' self-fashioning in a shifting socio-political environment is the main focus of chapters 5 and 6, both written by Sigrid Mratschek. For Mratschek, transformations in the social space of late-antique Gaul and persona constructions are two sides of the same coin. Hence, she evaluates changes of social practices such as *amicitia* based on Sidonius' correspondence. Reflections on alterity link the former to the latter chapter. There Mratschek discusses the codes and discourses of elite communication. Casting himself in different roles, Sidonius could set the stage for a literary space where "all kinds of [...] rebirth [...] seem[ed] possible" (259). Lisa Kareen Bailey's chapter returns to yet another heavily debated basic: what can we say about Sidonius as a bishop and *religiosus*? Contrasting Sidonius' own works and external sources, Bailey points out the biases of the source tradition. Through statements by Gregory of Tours i.a. and by studying his self-presentation as a bishop, we get few, but telling glimpses of Sidonius' religiosity in later life. Sidonius was evidently also an attentive reader of the scripture, though this form of intertextuality has been studied less.

Part III takes up this thread and deals with crucial philological approaches to Sidonius as a *litteratus*. Isabella Gualandri's chapter ("Sidonius' Intertextuality") combines 'Produktions- and Rezeptionsästhetik' as a way to bridge the gap between different concepts of intertextuality. Due to the cultural context of literary production in late antiquity, e.g., scholastic training, Gualandri argues that one must understand Sidonius and his fellow writers as both authors and readers. Intertextuality, thus, was a way to test each other's literary knowledge, an attempt to "fill in what is not said" (315). The next two chapters by Annick Stoehr-Monjou and Franca Ela Consolino offer a fresh reading of Sidonius' poems, his panegyrics as well as shorter poems, in the light of late-antique elite culture. Stoehr-Monjou emphasises both literary and political aspects of later Roman epideictic literature, and, therefore, understands panegyrics as a performative act of political communication. No less than the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Gallo-Roman orators, Sidonius interacted with his audience and took chances to convey his political message. Nevertheless, Stoehr-Monjou includes the reasonable caveat that "panegyric is not a news bulletin" (336). Consolino's essay continues in this spirit. Her chapter focuses on both the so-called *carmina* as well as the poems included into the letter collection. Thus, she illustrates how Sidonius pushed the boundaries of genres and experimented with literary forms. This approach is counterpointed by Gibson's essay on "Sidonius' Correspondence". The essay opens with a handy, yet densely-commented outline of epistolographic essentials and places Sidonius' letters within the framework of epistolary theory. A second chapter section discusses the issue of composing a letter corpus. As Gibson's rereading of Sidon. epist. 1.1 i.a. reveals, the dedicatory letters do not give a straightforward answer but rather provide clues how Sidonius gradually built up the collection. Reviewing a previous model, Gibson comments on the perhaps "more opportunistic" (391) corpus composition, either in a Plinian (9 books) or in a Symmachian fashion (7 books).<sup>[3]</sup> (#\_edn3)

Part IV ("Sidonius' Language and Style") elaborates on a frequently-commented but rarely-discussed topic: Sidonius' linguistic complexity. Etienne Wolff's scholarly chapter on "[...] Vocabulary, Syntax, and Style" will soon become the go-to for any aspiring as well as already experienced reader of Sidonius' work. The same goes for van Waarden's inspiring socio-linguistic case-study which combines quantitative as well as qualitative analysis to evaluate the "You and I in Sidonius' Correspondence". Contrary to first expectations, the choice of *numerus* was apparently not only a question of social distance but also a means of focalisation. Two chapters on metric and rhythm, one written by Silvia Condorelli, the other again by Joop van Waarden wrap up this section of the volume. Both chapters, but especially the latter on prose rhythm, supply welcome guides for anyone who was ever lost in the jungle that is late-Latin prosody.

The contributors to Part V and VI faced the difficult task of summing up more than 1500 years of Sidonius' reception as well as the history of scholarship on the author going back well into the middle ages. Frank Dolveck accepted the challenge to re-evaluate the manuscript tradition that the MGH's editor Christian Lütjohann could not elaborate on. Though understated in tone, Dolveck sketches out a completely new stemma for the Sidonius' manuscript that provides a fresh basis for future critical editions. Luciana Furbetta then gives an account of the earlier editions from the *editio princeps* to Mohr's Teubner text. Her observation that (early) 19<sup>th</sup>-century French scholars sought to expand the knowledge of Sidonius' text to create a national identity through the Gallo-Roman past tallies well with van Waarden's chapter on 'modern' literary reception. Silvia Condorelli provides a useful thematic bibliography of recent scholarship while Filomena Giacometti reveals a clash between scholarly developments and on-going narratives of decline and fall in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century literary receptions.

Ralph W: Mathisen, Tina Chronopoulos, and Jesús Hernández Lobato tackle the question of how Sidonius' texts were read and reproduced since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Mathisen's chapter builds up a strong case for the importance of archives in the development of early manuscripts. Chronopoulos' and Lobato's chapters provide a micro and a macro-view on how medieval scholars studied Sidonius—not only for education purposes but also as a way of literary self-fashioning.

On the whole, the Edinburgh companion wins over its readers not only because it is meticulously edited, includes top-notch essays, a comprehensive bibliography, a prosopography, and useful indices but mainly because the editors decided not to reduce but embrace the complexity of the matter.[4] (#\_edn4) As Kelly and van Waarden point out themselves, often the ambiguities, political, social as well as literary, initially attract students to the field of late antiquity in general and Sidonius in particular — even though we try not to read postmodern problems into the texts. Complexity continues on the level of scholarly discourse: a careful reader spots on-going controversy — e.g., on the composition of the corpus (chapter 3, 11, and 20). Thus, the companion might overwhelm beginners in late-antiquity studies; its target audience appears rather to be the many Master and PhD candidates trying to wrap their heads around this alluring, yet illusive late-antique author and agent. The heavy price tag, however, might make students hesitant to acquire a copy; libraries should consider buying the e-book option to facilitate access.[5] (#\_edn5) There is still room for future philological, archaeological, and historical studies on Sidonius within the cultural landscape of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Gaul, although I am personally sceptical with regard to cognitive or psychological approaches.

All in all, we should congratulate the editors as well as the many contributors on compiling this excellent volume.

#### Authors and titles

Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden, Introduction to the Volume  
Part I SIDONIUS' LIFE, THE CHARACTERS IN HIS WORK, AND ITS DATING

1 Joop van Waarden, Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative

2 Ralph Mathisen, Sidonius' People

2.1 Sidonius' People: A Study

2.2 Sidonius' People: A Prosopography

2.3 Sidonius' Places: A Geographical Appendix

3 Gavin Kelly, Dating the Works of Sidonius

Part II SIDONIUS IN HIS POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

4 Michael Kulikowski, Sidonius' Political World

5 Sigrid Mratschek, Sidonius' Social World

6 Sigrid Mratschek, Creating Culture and Presenting the Self in Sidonius

7 Lisa Bailey, Sidonius and Religion

Part III SIDONIUS' WORK AND ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

8 Isabella Gualandri, Sidonius' Intertextuality

9 Annick Stoehr-Monjou, Sidonius' Panegyrics

10 Franca Ela Consolino, Sidonius' Shorter Poems

11 Roy Gibson, Sidonius' Correspondence

Part IV SIDONIUS' LANGUAGE AND STYLE

12 Étienne Wolff, Sidonius' Vocabulary, Syntax, and Style

13 Joop van Waarden, 'You' and 'I' in Sidonius' Correspondence

14 Silvia Condorelli, Metrics in Sidonius

15 Joop van Waarden and Gavin Kelly, Prose Rhythm in Sidonius

Part V THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION AND THE HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

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16.1 The Manuscript Tradition of Sidonius: A Study

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17 Luciana Furbetta, Sidonius Scholarship: 15th-19th Centuries

18 Silvia Condorelli, Sidonius Scholarship: 20th-21st Centuries  
19 Roger Green, Translating Sidonius

Part VI READERS OF SIDONIUS FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

20 Ralph Mathisen, Sidonius' Earliest Reception and Distribution  
21 Tina Chronopoulos, Glossing Sidonius in the Middle Ages  
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDICES

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- [1] (#\_ednref1) See i.a. Harich-Schwarzbauer, H., Hindermann, J. (Eds.), Leisure and the Muses in Sidonius Apollinaris. Special Issue of Journal of Late Antiquity 13.1 (2020).  
[2] (#\_ednref2) Cf. Kelly, G., van Waarden, J. (Eds.), New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris, Leuven 2013.  
[3] (#\_ednref3) Cf. Gibson, R., Pliny and the Letters of Sidonius. From Constantius to Clarus. Arethusa 46.2 (2020), 333–355.  
[4] (#\_ednref4) In over 736 pages of text, I only spotted a handful of errata, mainly in the footnotes.  
[5] (#\_ednref5) The companion is complemented by the regularly updated homepage Sidonius Apollinaris (<https://sidonapol.org/>), supervised by one of the editors.

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