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CLAUDIANUS MAMERTUS IN THE EYES OF SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS

SUMMARY: The present paper discusses the person and literary achievements of Claudianus Mamertus as seen by his fellow writer and friend, Sidonius Apollinaris. In his extant writings, Sidonius presents a sympathetic and, indeed, impressive image of his friend as both a devout member of the Christian community and an outstanding intellectual. Both the letters to Mamertus and the eulogy written after his death testify to the friendship between the two writers, and the intellectual, spiritual, and personal qualities of Claudianus Mamertus. Sidonius' works concerning Mamertus are often analysed to underscore the philosophical and theological character of Mamertus' work; yet their elegant form and their deep connection to cultural tradition deserves also an analysis from a more aesthetic, literary point of view.

KEYWORDS: Sidonius Apollinaris, Claudianus Mamertus, Late Antiquity, epistolography, funeral poetry, aesthetics

Sidonius Apollinaris was very actively participating in the literary life in Southern Gaul in the second half of the 5th century, and his works, especially the collection of letters in nine books, provide very valuable knowledge about the prominent figures of this period: writers, scholars, rhetors, philosophers, and theologians, whose work did not survive to the modern times. Sidonius Apollinaris' writings are an extremely

valuable testimony of intellectual life both in large urban centres, such as Arles called “Gallic Rome”, Bordeaux, Lyon, Narbonne, as well as the ancestral estates of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, where the specific *villa culture* (Mathisen 1981: 95-109) flourished. He also repeatedly visited Vienne, because in this city he found not only the beauty of imperial architecture, but, above all, a lively academic and literary centre, concentrated around two Mamertus brothers: the bishop Mamertus, highly respected by Sidonius Apollinaris (*Epist.* IV 14, 2; IV 14, 5; VIII 1), and the younger Claudianus Mamertus, a priest, philosopher, theologian, and poet. From among the young Mamertus’ writings some have been preserved to this day: the theological-philosophical treatise *De statu animae* (*On the state of the soul*), and two letters addressed to Sidonius and to Sapaudus, a young rhetorician in Vienne.¹ Claudianus Mamertus belonged to the narrow group of the most eminent scholars of the era. Well educated, familiar with Greek and Roman literature, both the traditional and the Christian, he also had a wide knowledge of philosophy and theology, as evidenced by preserved treatise *De statu animae*. He was clearly influenced by the then-fashionable neo-Platonism. Of the Latin authors, one especially close to him was Apuleius; his writings also left his mark on the style of the Gallic author who often tended towards archaism in the Latin language. Sidonius and Claudianus Mamertus were united by strong friendship ties, and in Sidonius’ letters much attention is paid to the person and works of his friend. Claudianus pays special attention to *De statu animae*, which the author dedicated to him. The dissertation, consisting of three books, demonstrates the absolute disembodiment of the soul, and is a response to a letter from another friend of Sidonius, Faustus of Riez (Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carm.* XVI; *Epist.* IX 9); the debated text was probably the extant treatise *De Spiritu Sancto*, in which he argued that there could be a suffering God and that the soul was corporeal. The specific theme of the work is known to us from the preserved text itself. Sidonius himself speaks about it very generally, and clearly does not want to engage in theological and philosophical polemics between the two ministers,

¹ On Mamertus see esp. Jülicher 1899: 2660-2661; Broise 1890; Schmidt 1957: 169-179; Courcelle 1948: 223ff.; Kaufmann 1995: 290-292.

a friend of whom he was.² In the letter IV, 3 (dated 471 AD), which is Sidonius' response to Claudianus' reproaches (he blamed Sidonius for not discussing Claudianus' work in his letters), the author speaks with great enthusiasm about philosophical and theological prose and poetry of his friend. His silence is justified by fear of being subjected to Mamertus' judgement: Mamertus is, after all, a great authority in the field of Latin language:

Praeter aequum ista coniectas, si reare mortalium quempiam, cui tamen sermocinari Latialiter cordi est, non pavere, cum in examen aurium tuarum quippe scriptus adducitur; tuarum, inquam, aurium, quarum peritiae, si me decursorum ad hoc aevi temporum praerogativa non obruat, nec Frontoniana gravitatis, aut ponderis Apuleiani fulmen aequiperem.³

The bold comparison to Fronto and Apuleius, two undisputable masters of archaising Latin prose, is not accidental here, because both of them are symbolic patrons of *De statu animae*: Fronto as the most prominent Latin theoretician of the archaistic prose, and Apuleius as the main representative of the Roman Neo-Platonism which formed the fundamental philosophical inspiration for Mamertus in his deliberations on the soul (Fortin 1959).

Sidonius presents the book dedicated to himself as one filled with great wealth of knowledge and language: *Adstipulatur iudicio meo volumen illud, quod tute super statu animae rerum verborumque scientia divitissimus propalavisti*.⁴ He praises the comprehensive content, clarity of expression, clear and concise formulation of assumptions, open-

² Pricoco 1965: 71-150, esp. 141-150: *Sidonio Apollinare tra Claudio Mamerto e Fausto di Riez e la datazione del 'De Spiritu Sancto'*; Amherdt 2001: 112-113

³ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 1: *You misconceive the facts if you imagine that there is any man, at least anyone with a real regard for Latin expression, who is not alarmed when he is submitted, and in written form too, to the judgment of your ears, I repeat, with whose skill, if the privileged position of the generation before our time did not overawe me, I should not rank even the abundant flow of Fronto's impressive utterance and of Apuleius's weighty words* (trans. Anderson 1984: 69-71).

⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 2: *This judgment of mine is confirmed by the book you have published on the nature of the soul, the work of man with a rich command both of words and of matter* (trans. Anderson 1984: 71).

ness in the discussion, and the spring-like freshness of style, mitigating the thorns of syllogisms:

At quod, deus magne, quantumque opus illud est, materia clausum, declamatione conspicuum, propositione obstructum, disputatione reseratum, et, quamquam propter hamata syllogismorum puncta tribulosum, vernantis tamen eloquii flore mollitum!⁵

This spring-like freshness of style (*eloquium vernans*) is consistent with Fronto's recommendations concerning the choice of vocabulary borrowed from the works of archaizing authors; such a vocabulary, applied in the new contexts, gave speeches freshness and elegance: *Nova ibi verba, quia vetusta, quibusque conlatus merito etiam antiquarum litterarum stilus antiquaretur*.⁶

Archaizing elegance of vocabulary is stressed by a *frugal* style (*parsimonia, brevitatis eloquendi*), avoidance of exaggeration, and the pursuit of maximum condensation of content: *quodque pretiosius, tota illa dictio sic caesuratim succincta, quod profluens; quam rebus amplam strictamque sententiis sentias plus docere quam dicere*.⁷

Unfortunately, due to Sidonius' obvious reluctance take sides in the theological and philosophical dispute between his two friends, he says almost nothing about the specific content of Mamertus' treatise. All we have are general statements, presented in a hyperbolic tone: *Ad*

⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 2: *And, great heaven! What a work, what a grand work it is! – abstruse in matter but clear in exposition, beset with obstacles in the introductory presentation but opened up in the discussion, roughened and furrowed by the barbed points of the syllogisms, and yet made soft to the tread by a flowery carpet of lush eloquence* (trans. Anderson 1984: 71).

⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 2: *There one finds words which are new because they are old – indeed the language even of antique literature would justly fall from favour by comparison with it* (trans. Anderson 1984: 71). One can easily detect here the influence of archaizing aesthetics: *ut de vulgaribus elegantia, de contaminatis nova redderes, imaginem aliquam accomodares, prisco verbo adornares, colorem vetusculum adpingeres* (Fronto, *De eloquentia* 2, 5).

⁷ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 2: *At more valuable merit is that all that diction flows freely, though broken up into short groups of words; and with the abundance of matter and the conciseness of phrase, it seems to teach more than it expresses* (trans. Anderson 1984: 71). See also Engelbrecht 1885: 423-542.

*hoc unica singularisque doctrina et in diversarum rerum assertione monstrabilis.*⁸

The whole emphasis of Sidonius in his assessment of Mamertus' treatise is put on the stylistic and formal issues.⁹ The seriousness of its philosophical contents is supposed to be stressed not just by the presence of philosophical themes themselves, but rather by the representations of pagan and Christian philosophers, whom Claudianus Mamertus discusses on the pages of his work. The list of their names is long; it resembles an extensive epic catalogue, framed with a figure of *enumeratio*. It is enough to quote only the beginning of the enumeration:

si fors exigit, tenere non abnuit cum Orpheo plectrum, cum Aesculapo baculum, cum Archimede radium, cum Euphrate horoscopium, cum Perdice circinum, cum Vitruvio perpendiculum, quaeque numquam investigare destiterit cum Thalete tempora, cum Atlante sidera, cum Zeto pondera, cum Chrysippo numeros, cum Euclide mensuras.¹⁰

⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 5: *In addition, we find here a learning peerless and unique, able to hold its own with distinction in many fields* (trans. Anderson 1984: 72). See also Courcelle 1948: 46ff.

⁹ Sidonius proposes a very similar approach, with the same intellectual distance, when discussing and assessing the work of Faustus of Riez, *De Spiritu Sancto*, in Ep. IX 9.

¹⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 5: *if need be, to hold the quill with Orpheus, the Staff with Aesculapius, the rod with Archimedes, the horoscope with Euphrates, the compasses with Perdix, the plummet with Vitruvius; a learning that has never ceased to investigate Times with Thales, stars with Atlas, weights with Zethus, numbers with Chrysippus and measures with Euclid* (trans. Anderson 1984: 72). Cf. also IV 3, 6, on comparisons with Greek philosophers and Greek and Latin orators (see Hirschberg 1992: 124-127), and also with the Church Fathers: *Iam si ad sacrosanctos patres pro comparatione veniatur, instruit ut Hieronymus, destruit ut Lactantius, adstruit ut Augustinus, attollitur ut Hilarius, summititur ut Iohannes, ut Basilius corripit, ut Gregorius consolatur, ut Orosius affluit, ut Rufinus stringitur, ut Eusebius narrat, ut Eucherius sollicitat, ut Paulinus provocat, ut Ambrosius perseverat* [If we now turn to the hallowed Fathers for purposes of comparison, he is instructive like Jerome, destructive like Lactantius, constructive like Augustine; he exalts his tone like Hilary and subdues it like John; he rebukes like Basil and comforts like Gregory; he is diffuse like Orosius and compressed like Rufinus; he narrates like Eusebius, urges like Eucherius, challenges like Paulinus and perseveres like Ambrose (trans. Anderson 1984: 72)].

These images, fixed in the philosophical and at the same time also the iconographic tradition are not a proof of Sidonius' deep philosophical education; they are rather an evidence of Mamertus' philosophical erudition, whose preserved work can confirm its author's expertise and erudition in Greek and Roman philosophy. Sidonius on the other hand does not feel secure enough, discussing this topic, to be able to start a dialogue with Mamertus or Faustus. In his assessment of the philosophical and theological content of Mamertus' treatise he uses techniques similar to those of poetic visualization; he evokes an allegorical image of a given philosopher, but in fact these images are nothing else than popular *loci communes*, taken from the textbooks then in circulation (Hebert 1988: 519ff.; Courcelle 1948: 240-241; Amherdt 2001: 111-115).

Also a motif of the pictorial catalogue, this time in the form of nine Muses representing the *artes liberales*, was used by Sidonius to assess Mamertus' work in a letter to Nymphidius (V 2), whom he asks for the return of a borrowed valuable work:

Librum de statu animae tribus voluminibus inlustrem Mamertus Claudianus peritissimus Christianorum philosophus et quorumlibet primus eruditorem totis sectatae philosophiae membris, artibus partibusque comere et excolere curavit, novem quas vocant Musas disciplinas aperiens esse, non feminas. Namque in paginis eius vigilax lector inveniet veriora nomina Camenarum, quae propriam de se sibi pariunt nuncupationem. Illic enim et grammatica dividit, et oratoria declamat et arithmetica numerat et geometrica metitur et musica ponderat et dialectica disputat et astrologia praeno-scit et architectonica struit et metrica modulatur.¹¹

¹¹ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* V 2, 1: *Mamertus Claudianus, the most expert philosopher among the Christians and the first of all savants Christian or otherwise, has taken pains to deck and embellish the three volumes on his notable work 'On the nature of the soul' with all the members, joints, and parts of the philosophy he affects, making it clear that the nine so-called Muses are branches of learning, not females. In his pages the vigilant reader will find the truer names of the Camenae, who themselves bring forth the appellations appropriate to them: for in that work grammar classifies, rhetoric declaims, arithmetic numbers, geometry measures, music modulates, dialectic discusses, astronomy foretells, architecture builds, and metric regulates* (trans. Anderson 1984: 73-75).

In the eighth chapter of the letter IV 3 Sidonius discusses the artistic value of Claudianus Mamertus' poem, belonging to the unpreserved part of his oeuvre. As is in the case of the treatise *De statu animae*, the assessment is very positive, but seems to be more pragmatic and concrete. Very visible is the ease with which Sidonius the poet evaluates a work of another poet:

Iam vero de hymno tuo si percontere quid sentiam, commaticus est copiosus, dulcis, elatus, et quoslibet lyricos dithyrambos amoenitate poetica et historica veritate supereminet. Idque tuum in illo peculiare, quod servatis metrorum pedibus, pedum syllabis syllabarumque naturis intra spatii sui terminum verba ditia versus pauper includit nec artati carminis brevitatis longitudo phalerati sermonis eliminat; ita tibi facile factu est minutis trochaeis minoribusque pyrrichis non solum mollossicas anapaesticasque ternarias sed epitritorum etiam paeonumque quaternatas supervenire iuncturas.¹²

This assessment highlights key categories of hymn poetics as understood by Sidonius: transparency, rich content as well as poetic grace, which, however, does not eliminate the main concept of hymn poetics, that is the sublime (which is believed to be crucial according to the canons of the late ancient aesthetics). Of importance is also the concise speech (*brevitas eloquendi*) which is a part of the concept of poetic beauty (*amoenitas poetica*), obviously present in Mamertus' poem. It is surprising to find here, as a specified criterion, historical reliability (*historica veritas*). It is difficult to determine what historical truth the author has in mind, as we do not know whether Mamertus' hymns were inspired by the Christian or pagan tradition.

¹² Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 8: *Again, if you ask me what I think of your hymn – abundant in matter but with ample pauses, delightful but elevated, it combines the charm of a poet with the veracity of a historian to a degree not found in any lyrical dithyramb you care to name. Moreover, it has a merit all your own, in that while the feet appropriate to the metre, the syllables appropriate to the feet, and the character appropriate to the syllables are kept throughout, yet within its allotted space a meagre line is made to hold rich words, and the brevity of your restricted verse does not preclude the amplitude of majestic speech, so easy is it for you to make tiny trochees and tinier pyrrhics surpass combinations not only of trisyllabic molossi and anapaests but even of quadrisyllabic epitrites and paeons* (trans. Anderson 1984: 75-77).

A modern researcher may feel puzzled by special emphasis that is placed by Sidonius on the issues of metric. This is undoubtedly a permanent effect of the school education, at the time when long and short vowels have ceased to be universally distinguished in everyday speech. Sidonius seems really moved by Mamertus' poetic craftsmanship, who was able to achieve a state of perfect harmony between the metric form and the condensed of the poem, thanks to his incredible proficiency in various metres of lyrical poetry.¹³ To render the beauty of Mamertus' devotional hymn, with its rich content masterfully encased in a concise form, Sidonius uses two elaborate metaphors: a magnificent precious stone enclosed in a delicate subtle gold casing, and a dashing steed suppressed by the reins at a gallop in a difficult terrain:

Excrecit amplitudo proloquii angustias regulares et tamquam parvo auro
 grandis gemma vix capitur emicatque ut equi potentis animositas, cui fre-
 menti, si inter tesqua vel confraga frenorum lege teneatur, intellegis non
 tam cursum deesse quam campum.¹⁴

At the end of the letter Sidonius, filled with poetic *humilitas*, compares his poetry to the dried-up stream (*venula arens*). Conversely, he compares Mamertus' poetry to a powerful trumpet, beloved throughout the world. He also expresses his admiration for Mamertus' ability to master both the poetic and prosaic form in the way that few can emulate: *Nam te, cui, seu liberum seu ligatum placeat alternare sermonem, intonare ambifariam suppetit, pauci, quos aequus amavit, imitabuntur.*¹⁵

The complete synthesis of Claudianus' education and creativity, his ministry at his brother the bishop's side, as well as his deep ethics and religiosity, Sidonius gave in the letter IV 11 to Petreius, Claudius

¹³ On late Ancient poetics see Strzelecki 1959.

¹⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 9: *The breadth of your utterance transcends the narrow limits imposed by rules; like a large gem, it is barely contained in its small gold setting; it flashes out like the mettle of a powerful horse, which chafes if held in by the law of the bit amid wild and broken country, and obviously lacks not speed but space* (trans. Anderson 1984: 79).

¹⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 3, 10: *But as for you, who, whether you choose to turn to prose or to verse, have the power in either case to utter resounding tones, only a few, favoured and loved, will be able to imitate you* (trans. Anderson 1984: 79).

Mamertus' cousin. The letter was written after the end of 471 Cem on the occasion of *De statu animae* author's death. The letter as a whole, both the poetic and the prosaic parts, is an epitaph in honour of the deceased, presented using all the adornments of late ancient poetics and rhetoric. The letter's formula is very hyperbolic, well placed within the tradition of the funeral elogium. Sidonius' main aim is to emphasize Mamertus' great qualities, whose death he interprets as a universal loss for all his age:

Angit me nimis damnum saeculi mei nuper erepto avunculo tuo Claudiano oculis nostris, ambigo an quempiam deinceps parem conspicaturis. Vir siquidem fuit providus, prudens, doctus, eloquens, acer et hominum aevi, loci populi sui ingeniosissimus quique indesinenter salva religione philosopharetur; et licet crinem barbamque non pasceret, pallium et clavam nunc inrideret, nunc etiam execraretur, a collegio tamen conplatoniorum solo habitu ac fide dissociabatur.¹⁶

Already in the introductory chapter Sidonius clearly outlines a model form of the Christian intellectual and writer, referring to some extent to the ideal of the sage-philosopher (*sapiens*) in the pagan tradition. Key words describing the personality of the ancient ideal of ethics: *providentia* – forethought, *prudencia* – prudence, *doctus* – knowledge, *eloquentia* – eloquence, *acer* – sharp mind, *ingenium* – the talent – all of them can be found here. This attitude of intellectually active philosopher in no way violates the basics of the Christian faith – *quique indesinenter salva religione philosopharetur*. Sidonius points at Mamertus' spiritual and intellectual affinity to Neo-Platonism, which in late antiquity exerted a decisive influence on the development of the Christian philosophy

¹⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 11, 1: *I am deeply grieved at the loss which my generation has sustained by the removal of your uncle Claudianus from our eyes, which will scarcely methinks, see his like again. He was a man both provident and prudent, learned, eloquent, ardent, the most talented among men of his time, his country, and of his people, and one who ceaselessly devoted himself to philosophy, without detriment to religion – indeed, although he did not his hair and beard grow long, and although he sometimes ridiculed, sometimes even execrated the philosopher's cloak and cudgel, it was only in his dress and in his religion that he parted company with the Platonic brotherhood* (trans. Anderson 1984: 103).

and theology. In the further, prosaic part of the letter one can find the development of some of the abovementioned features of Mamertus' intellectual and ethical attitude. Sidonius discusses his way of consulting philosophical issues, talks about the joy that filled Mamertus when he had an opportunity to explain the labyrinthine intricacies of knowledge: *voluptuosissimum reputans, si forte oborta quarumpiam quaestionum insolubilitate labyrinthica scientiae suae thesauri eventilaretur*.¹⁷

Then we read about Mamertus' art of discussing academic issues, and his patient forbearance for hasty and inexperienced participants of such debates. Finally, the author presents two rhetorically constructed catalogues of Mamertus' charitable actions and tasks he performed as an associate of his brother the bishop of Vienne. It is important here to emphasize Christian humility and modesty of Claudianus Mamertus (*humilitas Christiana*), who undertook these activities from pure love of his fellow men. He was not looking for applause, but acting only in the hope of eternal salvation: *Nam merita sua, quibus divitem conscientiam censu pauperatus locupletavit, spe futurae retributionis celare plus studuit*.¹⁸

This emphasis should be interpreted not only in terms of Mamertus' charitable actions and his work for the good of the church, but generally in respect to his entire attitude towards life. His incredibly deep classical culture, as well as all his charitable activities, and his outstanding organizational skills always remain at the service of religion (*salva religione*) and the church (Amherdt 2001: 280). The prosaic part of this epistolographic epitaph is accompanied by a lyrical epicedium in phalacian hendecasyllabi, very much in the vein of traditional funeral poetry. The contents of the poem are similar to the preceding prosaic section, with a similar structural order: grief after the Mamertus' death, attention paid to his remarkable erudition, including traditional Greek and Latin as well as Christian literature, which Mamertus learnt as a young monk:

¹⁷ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 11, 2: *deeming it a great delight if some questions presented a labyrinthine intricacy which required him to ransack the treasure-houses of his wisdom!* (trans. Anderson 1984: 105).

¹⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 11, 4: *for the good deeds with which, though poor in worldly estate, he richly endowed his conscience, he was the more concerned to conceal in the hope of reward hereafter* (trans. Semple: 109).

*Triplex bybliothecca quo magistro, // Romana, Attica, Christiana fulsit;
// Quam totam monachus virente in aevo // Secreta bibit institutione.*¹⁹

This, in turn, is followed by enumeration of Claudianus' intellectual and artistic skills, parallel to that in the prosaic part; this time it is presented in a form of a poetic catalogue of functions performed alongside his brother bishop, as a master teacher of singing and the reader of sacred texts during services:

Orator, dialecticus, poeta, // Tractator, geometra, musicusque, // Doctus solvere vincla quaestionum // Et verbi gladio secare sectas, // Si quae catholicam fidem lacesunt. // Psalmorum hic modulator et phonascus // Ante altaria fratre gratulante // Instructas docuit sonare classes. // Hic sollemnibus annuis paravit // Quae quo tempore lecta convenirent.²⁰

When it comes to quoting biographical facts and intellectual, artistic, and public achievements of the deceased, the poem shows similarities with the ancient tradition of funerary poetry (Lattimore 1962: 270). Researchers have noted that the contents of the elogium can be compared with the tombstone inscriptions of the bishops and Gallic aristocracy (Heinzelmann 1976: 233ff.). The theme of the deceased, being at the same time the cause of pain (because he left this world) and of pride (because of his achievements) for the living (*decus et dolor*²¹) is rooted deeply in the Roman funerary topoi. For the first time we find it in Virgil, in relation to dead Pallas: *O dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti* (Verg. *Aen.* X 507). It occurs in several mourning poems from the imperial period, *inter alia* in a poem by Martial, from which Sidonius directly borrowed the phrase: *Romani decus et dolor theatri* (Mart. *Epigr.* XI 13,5). The

¹⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 11, 6, carm. 4-7: *Under his teaching three literatures were illumined, / Latin, Greek, and Christian: / All of them as monk in his prime / He absorber in his unobtrusive studies* (trans. Semple: 109).

²⁰ Por. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* IV 11, 6, carm. 8-16: *He was prose-writer, philosopher, poet, preacher, / geometer, and musician: / skilled in disentangling knotty problems, / and with the sword of the word to have down / the sectaries / who assail the Catholic faith. / Precentor and choirmaster, / He taught well-trained companies to chant before / the altar, / winning his brother admiration. / For the yearly festivals he selected readings / suitable to each season* (trans. Semple: 109).

²¹ Sidonius Apollinaris *Epist.* IV 11, 6, carm. 1: *Germani decus et dolor Mamerti [He was the pride and sorrow of his brother Mamertus, (trans. Semple: 107)].*

adaptation was facilitated by the identity of the metric structure: *Germani* replaced *Romani* and *Mamerti – theatri*. The same theme is also used by Ausonius in relation to his deceased wife, Attusia Lucana Sabina: *Et dolor atque decus coniugis Ausonii (Parentalia IX 24)*.²²

The passages from Sidonius Apollinaris presented here, referring to Claudianus Mamertus, reveal a multifaceted picture of intellectual and artistic activity of the late ancient Gallic author. The majority of critical comments and opinions on the text is usually restricted to the analyses of Claudianus Mamertus' philosophical and theological prose, assessed primarily in the context of then-approved rules of rhetoric and style. Sidonius Apollinaris not only invariably emphasizes his friend's literary and philosophical erudition, but he also draws attention to deep ethical qualities of his character. There is also high praise of Claudius Mamertus' hymnic works; their analysis is carried out in a professional way, stressing the importance of the categories typical for the poetics of hymn. It seems that Sidonius Apollinaris' general intention was to show his friend as an extremely dynamic personality, endowed with an outstanding mind and high artistic talent.

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²² Cf. Amherdt 2001: 296.

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