Hiding and Revealing: Text and Image in Venantius Fortunatus's *Carmina*

GINA DERHARD-LESIEUR [ID]
Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

ABSTRACT   In his *carmina*, Venantius Fortunatus (sixth century) has left us three figurate poems that depict the cross as an image, while its verses describe the cross textually. He is thus an author who completely detaches figurate poems from the pagan tradition and inscribes them in the Christian one. The aim of this essay is to examine these poems from a pictorialist perspective. To this end, after a brief presentation of all three poems, they are considered, firstly, as *ekphraseis* that draw on a three-step representation: The figure depicts a cross that points to transcendence, the verses describe it, and they have the potential to evoke an additional mental image in the reader. Secondly, I examine what image and text, and thus the figurate poems as intermedial products, gain through the respective other medium. This results, thirdly, in an analysis of the figurate poems within the categories of iconism, aniconism, and anti-iconism.

KEYWORDS   Late Antiquity, Christianity, cross, images, poems, iconotexts, Venantius Fortunatus, Gaul

Introduction to Fortunatus and his Poetry on the Cross

In his poetry, Venantius Fortunatus, a sixth-century Christian poet, priest, and bishop who spent most of his life in Merovingian Gaul, often refers to a Christian symbol: the cross. This might hint not only at its general importance in the Christian religion but also at an important event that took place after Fortunatus had settled down in Poitiers: In 569, Radegund, Thuringian widow of Chlothar I, founder of a monastery for women which was presided by the abbess Agnes, received a cross relic from the Byzantine Emperor Justin II and his wife Empress Sophia (see Fort. carm. app. 2.57-58). Fortunatus seems to have been implicated in the request for the cross relic as well as in the installation ceremony by providing poetry on the cross. [1]

Fortunatus's *carmina* are a collection of poems composed in different meters that deal with a great variety of topics; we find, for example, panegyrics on bishops and churches, descriptions of rivers and landscapes as well as notes on banquets. In these poems, there are numerous [2]

references to the cross: They mention the latter as an object of decoration and art, as an object of veneration, as an apotropaic as well as beneficial means, and as a relic. Through the cross, these poems reflect on salvation, which plays a leading part in a series of six poems in the collection's second book (2.1-2.6): This 'cross cycle' covers approximately one third of the second book by number of poems (6/16 poems).[1]

However, the role the cross plays is not limited to the poems' content. On the contrary, the cross shapes the form of several poems. Supplementary verses are inserted vertically and diagonally so that a cross comes into being pictorially: The text forms an image and the image forms a text.[2] This concerns the so-called figurate poems 2.4, 2.5 (2.5a),[3] and 5.6a. The figurate poems as a whole may be considered images if we define the latter as "material and visual means of representation" (Krech et al. forthcoming; referring to Krech 2021, 104–5). Therefore, I will use the term 'image' in the following when taking into consideration the poems' cross shape together with the frame, and as the term opposed to 'text'. I will use the more restricted term 'figure' where I only want to refer to the pictorial cross that is included in the poem.

[3]

In this article, I propose to take a closer look at the relation between text and image in Fortunatus's *carmina* with regards to religious communication. Therefore, I will first analyze how this kind of poetry establishes a relation (and, at the same time, a distinction) between text and image. I will then present the three poems in question by paying special attention to the cross's role in these text-image relations. Next, I will turn towards the three main analyses that result from the special issue's focus on 'religion and images': The link between picturality and scripturality will first be examined from the angle of *ekphrasis*, which is a descriptive speech characterized by vividness (see below). Second, the œuvres will be considered as texts that gain from their images and as images that gain from their texts separately. Finally, they will be examined in the triad iconism – aniconism – anti-iconism.

[4]

Iconotexts

When writing about Fortunatus's figurate poems, we mean poems 2.4, 2.5, and 5.6a, of which two, 2.4 and 5.6a, are completed, while the third one, 2.5, is incomplete. There are other poems in which Venantius Fortunatus extraordinarily plays with the alphabet's letters: He writes poems in which the respective initial letters of the verses make up the alphabet (abecedarian) or a word or a sentence (acrostic). However, these kinds of poetry seem less relevant for the

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1   The other two thirds, carm. 2.7-2.16, deal with saints and church buildings.

2   Fortunatus in general uses a language that is visually rich. This manifests in detailed descriptions of light and colors as well as in tropes. See Ernst (1991, 151) pejoratively concerning Fort. carm. 2.4: "The language seems overloaded and mannered, the array of tropes seems overwhelming: the urge to image thus manifests itself not only on the level of *figura*, but also in the textual sphere of verbal communication". (Original: "Die Sprache wirkt überladen und manieriert, das Tropenaufgebot erscheint überfordernd: Der Drang zum Bild manifestiert sich somit nicht nur auf der Ebene der *figura*, sondern auch in der textuellen Sphäre verbaler Mitteilung." All translations by the author unless indicated otherwise). For references to light and color, see, e.g., Roberts (2011). So, too, the cross is often portrayed as an object of decoration (*electa ut visu, sic e crucis ordine pulchra* [Fort. carm. 2.4.21], *immortale decus* [2.4.23], *gemmantem et nobile signum* [2.4.31], *dulce decus signi* [2.4 latere]), which produces light: *crux benedicta nitet* (2.1.1), *virtutum flamma coruscat* (2.3.11), *fulget crucis mysterium* (2.6.2), *arbor decora et fulgida* (2.6.17).

3   Codex Sangallensis 196 has this figurate poem written after 2.5, but it has been rejected among the *spuria*. It forms a cross pattée, starting from a C in the middle. You can read *crux* from right to left, from left to right, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. It is printed and commented on in Reydellet (1994, 56).

topic of religion and images, as the letters do not form a figure.[4] All three figurate poems, on the contrary, have in common that their letters form Christian symbols, namely different types of crosses, and that the vertical framing letters (acrostics and telestics) also constitute entire verses. These 'additional' verses are called *versus intexti* ("verses that are woven-in"): They result in a grid poem from letters of the 'normal', i.e., horizontal verses that form additional verses when read in a different direction, for example diagonally. In these poems, picturality is extremely important. The letters form a versified text and an image at the same time, provided that the letters that shape the *intexti* are highlighted by color or other means (bold, underlined, etc.). This kind of poetry has been classified 'iconotextual' by Wagner (1996, 15): "By iconotext I mean the use of […] an image in a text or vice versa." According to him, it is important that "text and image form a whole (or union) that cannot be dissolved" (1996, 15);[5] therefore, "iconotext refers to an artifact in which the verbal and the visual signs mingle to produce rhetoric that depends on the co-presence of words and images" (1996, 16). This concept has already been applied to Fortunatus's figurate poems by Brennan (2019, 29).

In Fortunatus's *carmina*, the speaker reflects on a famous quote of Horace, which is sup-   [6]
posed to have given the inspiration for figurate poem 5.6a: " 'Painters and poets have always enjoyed equal sanction to dare anything.' "[6] He continues: "In pondering the verse I wondered, if each artist (*artifex*) intermingles whatever he wants, why should not their two practices be intermingled, even if not by an artist (*ab artifice*), so that a single web (*una tela*) be set up, simultaneously a poem (*poesis*) and a painting (*pictura*)?"[7] Fortunatus proposes to make one out of two: In his figurate poems, the text forms an image and the image forms a text. The arrangement of the individual letters in an iconotext is to be considered poetry (*poesis*) and art (*pictura*) at the same time.[8] Later in the text, Fortunatus labels this finished poem again a painting: "May this work be written (*hoc opere … conscripto*) on a wall, if it please you, and in place of me as doorkeeper (*ostiario*) may the painting (*pictura*) stand guard over your entrance hall."[9] Fortunatus suggests that the addressee puts up his figurate poem on the cathedral's entrance wall.[10] He uses two terms to designate the iconotext 5.6a, *opus conscriptus*[11] and

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4   We therefore stick to the definition of Ernst (1991, 7): "In the following, the term figurate poem describes, in terms of genre theory, an intermedially conceived text-image composition in which a usually versified and, in the broadest sense, lyrical text is formed into a graphic figure that has a mimetic character and assumes a sign function coordinated with the verbal statement." (Original: "Im folgenden bezeichnet der Begriff Figurengedicht gattungstheoretisch eine intermedial konzipierte Text-Bild-Komposition, bei der ein in der Regel versifizierter und im weitesten Sinn lyrischer Text zu einer graphischen Figur formiert ist, die mimetischen Charakter aufweist und eine mit der verbalen Aussage koordinierte Zeichenfunktion übernimmt.").

5   Paradoxically, these two components, text and image, whose indissolubility is proclaimed, are in turn separated from each other by this statement, at least as abstract entities. As will be shown below, Fortunatus's iconotexts are simultaneously both image and text, which can be viewed either way depending on one's perspective.

6   *"pictoribus atque poetis / quaelibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas,"* Hor. ars 9-10, quoted in Fort. carm. 5.6.7, transl. Roberts (2017, 315).

7   *Considerans versiculum, si quae vult artifex permiscet uterque, cur non, etsi non ab artifice, misceantur utraque ut ordiretur una tela simul poesis et pictura?*, Fort. carm. 5.6.7, transl. Roberts (2017, 315).

8   See Brennan (2019, 32): "Fortunatus's 'weaving' for Bishop Syagrius was both a poem and a picture that the poet hoped might be displayed on a wall at the entrance to the episcopal residence." For allusions to weaving in Fortunatus's (figurate) poems, see Brennan (2019, 30–32).

9   *Si placet, hoc opere parieti conscripto pro me ostiario pictura servet vestibulum*, Fort. carm. 5.6.7, transl. Roberts (2017, 321).

10   According to Ehlen (2011, 96), this is the Basilica of the martyr Symphorianus in Autun; according to Ernst (1991, 155), the Cathedral of Saint Lazarus of Autun.

11   *Conscribere* here most likely mentions the inscription of the text's single letters onto the cathedral's wall (see sim. ThLL 4.377.7-16, s.v. *conscribere*). The term *opus*, taken for itself, is very large and can refer both

pictura, that respectively refer to text and image. While it is the literary œuvre that is supposed to be written onto a wall, it is the image that is painted on the entrance door and thus guards the door instead of its author, who is presented as a doorkeeper. This might indicate that an image is appropriate as church decoration, whilst a text is less common.[12] It stresses that the church visitor might first glance at it as a picture and might not decipher the text (immediately). Third, it considers the poem (also) a picture.

Fortunatus, as the inventor of his verses and images, is conscious about the complex relationship between letter, verse, and image. Walz has shown how the author transmits the importance of each single letter to his readers by starting the two accomplished figurate poems with the words *dius apex*[13]: [7]

> Right at the beginning of our poem, he even calls God, the creator of the world, [8]
> a letter: *dius apex* (v. 1), because to the numerous concretizing meanings of *apex*
> as 'the highest point' also belongs 'the letter,' especially 'the majuscule letter'. A
> letter thus forms the primordial beginning of the world and of the letter tissue!
> (Walz 2006, 66)[14]

In addition to this, and contrary to his predecessors, Venantius Fortunatus constructs, in terms of content, a strong link between text and image (Ernst 1991, 155). Especially the accomplished poems 2.4 and 5.6a discuss the cross's function in Christian theology; they form a soteriological discussion of Christ's death on the cross. Therefore, the cross is the figure's as well as the text's content. This is where the third dimension that is considered in this article, religion, comes into play. [9]

Moreover, there are some *para*textual hints to the picturality of these iconotexts to which I would like to come now. They consist in the poems' titles as well as the collection's arrangement. Indeed, Fortunatus's collection seems to use 2.4's title, poem 2.5, as well as the prose letter 5.6, in order to attract the reader's attention to the picturality of the iconotexts 2.4 and 5.6a. In 2.4's title, *signaculum* ("sign") figures prominently: "Again, on the sign (*signaculo*) of the cross."[15] This paratext was probably not used outside of the *collection*. The lexeme *sign-* might thus function as a reminder to the reader that s/he has a pictorial poem before his or her eyes. Therefore, Fortunatus makes sure that the secondary reader grasps this poem as figurate, even if the *intexti* are not highlighted by colors. Indeed, it is possible that a copyist did not use a separate color for the *intexti*. In this case, a reader who is not prepared to find an iconotext will only read the poem linearly. In fact, Fortunatus, in one of his abecedarians, also uses the title (see *ex nomine suo* in carm. 3.5) in order to alert the reader to a non-linear reading. Indeed, *signaculum* means 'distinctive mark' or, in Christian usage, 'sign of the cross.' [10]

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to a text and a painting, even though there are many more references for a text than a picture (see, for the latter, ThLL 9.2.845.17-42, s.v. *opus*).

12   See, however, the *tituli* to the drawings of saint Martin in Fort. carm. 10.6. See Brennan (2019, 43).

13   The individual letters' significance is also highlighted in an epitaph, which mentions the skills of a deceased girl in embroidering letters onto a tissue (Brennan 2019, 50). See Fort. carm. 4.28.9-10: "Skilled as she was with a pen and in stitching letters with thread, the role paper plays for you, her weaving performed for her." (*Docta tenens calamos, apices quoque figere filo, / quod tibi charta valet hoc sibi tela fuit*, transl. Roberts 2017, 273). The word *apices*, describing the handwriting and the strokes of the alphabet's individual letters, is thus used again (see also Fort. carm. 5.1.3: *per singulos apices*).

14   Original: "Er bezeichnet sogar gleich zu Beginn unseres Gedichts Gott, den Schöpfer der Welt, als Buchstaben: *dius apex* (V. 1), denn zu den zahlreichen konkretisierenden Bedeutungen von *apex* als 'der höchsten Spitze' gehört auch 'der Buchstabe', insbesondere 'der Majuskelbuchstabe'. Den Uranfang der Welt und des Buchstabengewebes bildet somit ein Buchstabe!"

15   *Item de signaculo sanctae crucis*, transl. Roberts (2017, 75).

Because Fortunatus does not use *de cruce* ("on the cross") as a title, we can conclude that the choice of the word *signaculum* refers to the figure of the figurate poem. The other poems of the cross cycle do not mention a *signaculum* but refer more explicitly to the cross by calling it *crux* in their respective titles.[16]

Therefore, it also makes sense to include an 'unfinished' poem (2.5) just afterwards. Looking at this poem, the reader can see that some of Fortunatus's poems can be read in more than a linear way. The unfinished status of 2.5 automatically attracts the reader's attention to 2.4's accomplished figure. This might also explain why 2.5, having a slightly different topic, is nevertheless included in this series of poems about the cross. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Fortunatus voluntarily included an unfinished poem in his collection.[17] This is a way to highlight that the preceding poem is figurate, too, and that in general, in the poems you can look for such literary and pictorial puns. Figurate poem 2.4 is thus framed by two hints towards its picturality. 5.6a is quite different at first glance: It is not part of the cross cycle but appears with a covering letter (Fort. carm. 5.6), which explains how it was constructed and which function it is supposed to have on the primary reader. However, this results in two couplets, arranged in a chiastic order: 2.5 comments figuratively on 2.4; 5.6 comments paratextually on 5.6a.[18]

[11]

In these poems, the individual letter gains in importance. Even in 'ordinary' Latin poems, the arrangement of words, syllables, and even individual letters is more important than in prose, mainly due to metrical restrictions. This is all the more important in iconotexts, as each letter is crucial not only for forming a verse but also for shaping an image; all verses must, for example, have the same number of letters to form the square form of Fortunatus's iconotexts. In Fortunatus's iconotexts, the figures take the shape of different crosses. The image can thus be read as a text, or the text can be contemplated as an image. Moreover, the different possibilities to string the letters together enable more than one single reading. Indeed, each reader is free to read the *intexti* before or after the horizontal verses and can read the *intexti* in any order as well.

[12]

The Figurate Poems in Fortunatus's *Carmina*

Before turning to the three main points of analysis as pointed out in the introduction, one cannot avoid describing the three iconotexts and their structure, even if this is not the first time that this is done in research. Therefore, this part of the article in particular will build on the studies of Brennan (2019), Ehlen (2011), Fels (2006) and Graver (1993).

[13]

Carm. 2.4, the first figurate poem in the collection's order, is written in hexameters, just like the other two figurate poems that we will examine. It narrates the story of Adam's and Eva's creation, passing by the fall and redemption, and finally praising the cross as means of salvation. The poem can be divided into two parts: The first part is written in the third person and deals with the creation of mankind and its fall, the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ (vv. 1-19).[19] The second part (vv. 20-35), in contrast, resembles a hymn, the cross

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16   See *de cruce Domini* in 2.1, *in honore sanctae crucis* in 2.2, *item versus in honore sanctae crucis* in 2.3, *hymnus in honore sanctae crucis* in 2.6. 2.5 lacks a title.

17   Scholars have argued that he abandoned it or that a copyist or weaver did not have the time to complete it (Graver 1993, 231; Ehlen 2011, 433). Fels (2006, 95–97) argues that the weaver (Eusebia from the epitaph carm. 4.28) died before accomplishing the tissue. See against this thesis Ehlen (2011, 433 n. 146).

18   Ehlen (2011, 99) refers to Ausonius, who also wrote covering letters to accompany some of his experimental poems, such as *cento nuptialis* and *technopaegnion,* in order to comment on them.

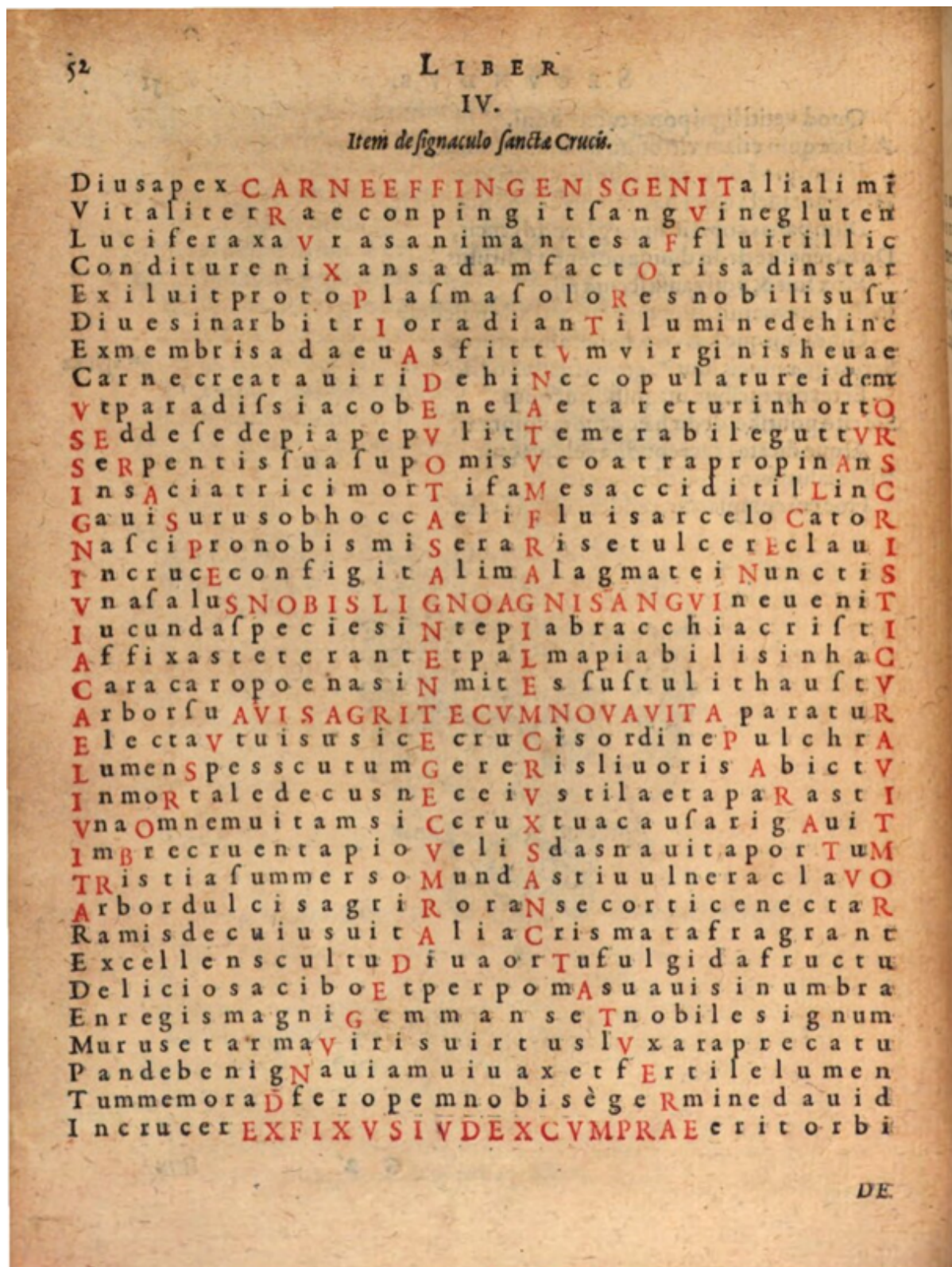19   In vv. 13-15, Christ is addressed in the second person.

IV.

Item de signaculo sanctæ Crucis.

Diusapex CARNEFFINGENSGENITalialimī
Vitaliter Raeconpingitfangvinegluten
Luciferaxa v rasanimantesaffluitillic
Conditurenix ansadamfactOrisadinstar
Exiluitprotoplasmasolo Resnobilisusu
Diuesinarbitri oradianTiluminedehinc
Exmembrisadaeu Asfittvmvirginisheuae
Carnecreatauiri Dehinccopulatureidem
vtparadissiacob Enel Aetareturinhorto
SEddesedepiapev lit Temerabileguttvr
Serpentisfuafupo mis v coatrapropinАns
Insaciatricimort ifa Mesacciditillinc
Gauisurusobhocc Aeli Fluifarcelo Cator
Nafcipronobismif eraRisetulcerEclau
Incruceconfigit Alim Alagmatei Nunctis
vnafalu SNOBISLIGNOAGNISANGVineuenit
Iucundafpeciesi N tepi abracchiacrift
Affixasteterant Etpal mapiabilisinhac
Caracaropoenasi N mit E fuftulithauft
Arborfu AVISAGRITECVMNOVAVITA paratur
Electav tuisusic E crucisordinePulchra
Lumen Spesscutum Gere Risliuoris Abictv
Inmortaledecus N eeiv stilaetapaRast
vnaomnemuitamsi Cerux tuacaufarig Auit
Imbr ecruentapio veli Sdasnauiapor TuM
TRistiafummerso Mund Astiuulneraclavo
Arbordulcisagri Roransecorticenectar
Ramisdecuiusuit Alia Crismatafragranc
Excellenscultu Diuaor Tufulgidafructu
Deliciaciboe t perpom Asuauisinumbra
Enregismagni Gemmanse Tnobilesignum
Murusetarmav irisuirtuslvxaraprecatu
Pandebenig Nauiamuiuaxetf Ertilelumen
Tummemora Dferopemnobisège Rminedauid
Incrucer EXFIXVSIVDEXCVMPRAE eritorbi

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Figure 1   Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 4 P. lat. 426, S. 52, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10685810-8

being addressed in the second person (Ernst 1991, 151).[20] It deals with Christ's death and the benefits that are granted to mankind due to the latter.

Intexti frame the poem and form a cross pattée (Ehlen 2011, 410; Ernst 1991, 151), with [15] its outer lines forming verses (see figure 1). The cross's horizontal verses are naturally also part of the 'regular' verses of the poem, except for their shifted ends. We read on the upper beam: "Our true hope lies in the wood (*ligno*), the blood of the lamb (*agni sanguine*), and the nails (*clavo*)."[21] The cross's lower beam reads: "Sweet tree of the field, with you new life is acquired."[22] Both verses deal with redemption and salvation.[23] But while the first stresses Christ's death (compare the tricolon *ligno, sanguine, clavo*), the second highlights 'new life', meaning at the same time Christ's resurrection and humanity's redemption and resurrection. This follows the entire poem's topic, switching from fall to salvation at the cross's horizontal beams.

The cross's vertical verses, however, do not follow this general outline. They consist in a [16] prayer for protection, addressed to the cross (Ehlen 2011, 414, 423). The author, Fortunatus, and his protégées, Agnes, the abbess of the women's monastery in Poitiers, and Radegund, its founder, shall profit from the cross's protective function:[24] "Holy cross, guard your devoted servants Radegund and Agnes, and protect too, sacred cross, Fortunatus in his weakness."[25] With this prayer for Agnes, Radegund, and Fortunatus himself, the *intexti* stand out because they are not part of the general outline of the Christian salvation story but immerse the reader into Fortunatus's time and surrounding. The vertical *intexti* therefore add a personal dimension to the horizontal poem. Brennan (2019, 46) insists on the fact that the names are inscribed on the support 'beams' of the cross: "Their names, and that of Fortunatus himself, are literally the supports of the cross." Following the historical context, they are supporters of Fortunatus's (figurate) poetry as well as of the cross relic that has been sent to Poitiers.

In classical literature, we often come across poems in which the author hides his name. [17] Consider, for example, Ovid (*Ovidius Naso*), who, when speaking about the deity Flora, prays "that Naso's (*Nasonis*) poem may flourish (*floreat*) forever."[26] Fortunatus makes use of a *versus intextus* to inscribe his name, which can be considered in line with this tradition. Therefore, if the poem is reproduced outside the collection, e.g., on a wall or in a manuscript, the poet's fame is guaranteed among contemporaries and future generations. Moreover, he adds his addressees' names for the same reason, and as a means of showing his devotion towards them. However, this play also gains a profound religious notion in this poem, as the names are included in a prayer that Fortunatus speaks for himself and the addressees.[27]

Carm. 2.5, which might be read as a pair to 2.4 because of the equal verse structure (35 [18] verses with 35 letters each), includes a frame, a cross with equal length bars and a rhombus, which surrounds the cross and is rotated 45 degrees with respect to the outer square (see

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20   In v. 17, the cross is addressed in the second person for the first time.
21   *Vera spes nobis ligno agni sanguine clavo*. Transl. Roberts (2017, 79).
22   *Arbor suavis agri tecum nova vita paratur*. Transl. Roberts (2017, 79).
23   The choice of the tree metaphor is not surprising as it links the fall to redemption (Reydellet 1994, 185 n. 39).
24   Consequently, Brennan (2019, 46) and Ehlen (2011, 410) propose to read Radegund and Agnes as the donors and commissioners of the poem.
25   *Crux pia, devotas Agnen tege cum Radegunde. Tu Fortunatum fragilem, crux sancta, tuere*. Transl. Roberts (2017, 79).
26   *Floreat ut toto carmen Nasonis in aevo*, Ov. fast. 5.377.
27   Most of Fortunatus's *carmina* were sent to individual people before he assembled them in a collection, which he dedicated to Gregory of Tours. But even before he prepared the collection, many of his poems probably attracted a larger audience.
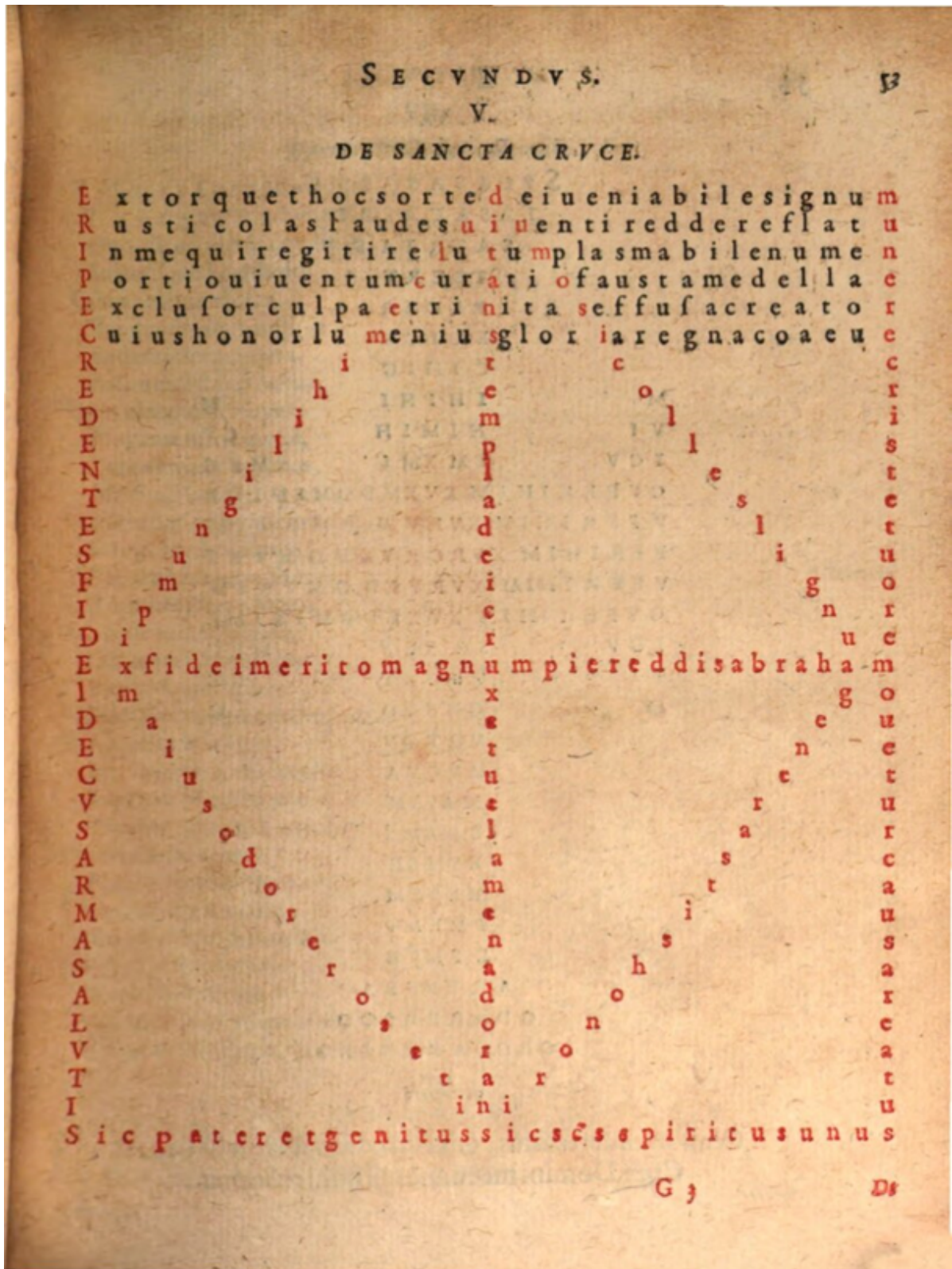
SECVNDVS.

V.

DE SANCTA CRVCE.

Figure 2 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 4 P. lat. 426, S. 53, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10685810-8

figure 2). It is incomplete and lacks a title. The word *crux* ("cross") forms the exact middle of the cross (mesostic) and therefore of the poem. On the cross's horizontal beam, crossing *crux*, we read *agnum ("lamb")*. "The cross-shape is [thus] centered on the words *agnus* and *crux*, suggesting the centrality of the sacrifice" (Brennan 2019, 46). Both the vertical and the diagonal *intexti* are addressed in the second person to the cross and glorify the latter.

The first horizontal verses allude to composition difficulties. The very first word, *extorquet*, [19] can be read as an allusion to the effort necessary to write an iconotext. These difficulties are due to the raster consisting of letters. Metapoetically, the verb *extorquere* underlines that such poems are to be read in a more than linear way. This is also stressed by *rusticulae laudes* in the next verse:

> The first two verses allude in poetological self-reflection to the difficulties associ- [20]
> ated with a praise of the Trinity in the form of a *carmen cancellatum*. The terms
> *extorquere* ("forcing under torture") and *rusticas* [sic!] *laudes* ("rustic praise") oc-
> cupy a key position here. They denote both the constraints to which the poet is
> subject in the composition and the inferior quality of the verses that results from
> these constraints. (Ehlen 2011, 435)[28]

Rusticulus in its metaphoric sense means "somewhat uncouth or provincial in style" (OLD [21] 1671, s.v. *rusticulus*).[29] The speaker claims that his praises (*laudes*) are inept for such a grand topic and inscribes his poem into the tradition of *captatio benevolentiae* and *recusatio*—two motifs with which the author shows that the subject is beyond his literary abilities and with which he hopes to secure the reader's favor. According to the grandeur of the subject, he puts the praises into the form of a figurate poem; the intermingling of text and image can magnify the subject, just as in 2.4. One of the iconotext's functions is thus mentioned metapoetically, namely, to magnify and praise the cross.

In contrast to the other two figurate poems, **5.6a** presents itself almost as a verse letter, [22] naming the addressee in its title: "Syagrius of Autun, I give this work to you as payment (*solvo*)."[30] Fortunatus, in his covering letter, asks Syagrius, bishop of Autun, to give money to free prisoners. In fact, he seeks "the bishop's help on behalf of a person whose son was being held for ransom" (Brennan 2019, 29) and asks Syagrius to pay the ransom and offers his poem in return. The covering letter as well as the poem play with the release (*solvere)* of prisoners by Syagrius and of humanity by Christ (Ehlen 2011, 98, 428). The horizontal verses deal again with the creation of humanity, its fall, Christ's birth and death. They turn briefly towards the second person in vv. 25-27, which stress Christ's death as an act of salvation and redemption.

The poem ends with an exhortation to the "bright radiance of Gaul (*Gallorum radii*)."[31] It [23]

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28   Original: "Die ersten beiden Verse spielen in poetologischer Selbstreflexion auf die Schwierigkeiten an, die mit einem Lob der Trinität in Form eines *carmen cancellatum* verbunden sind. Die Begriffe *extorquere* ('unter Folter zwingen') und *rusticas* [sic!] *laudes* ('bäurisches Lob') nehmen dabei eine Schlüsselstellung ein. Sie bezeichnen sowohl die Zwänge, denen der Dichter bei der Abfassung unterliegt, als auch die mindere Qualität der Verse, die sich aus diesen Zwängen ergibt."

29   As the poet describes his *laudes* as *rusticulae*, there might be a reference to the 'botanical' aspect of the cross that is named in the *intexti* of the cross (see *lignum, rosetis, dumosi colles, lignum, generastis*), taking *rusticulus* in its literal and not metaphoric sense. The two verses, which form the rhombus, present the cross as wood (*lignum*), using plant motives. The vertical verse on the right (telestic), on the contrary, talks more generally about the cross's role in redemption: *Munere, Christe tuo, removetur causa reatus*.

30   *Augustidunensis opus tibi solvo Syagri*, transl. Roberts (2017, 323). According to the number of verses (33) and letters (34 vs. 33), it is obvious that this epistolary heading has to be taken apart. On the authenticity of this title, see Ehlen (2011, 429).
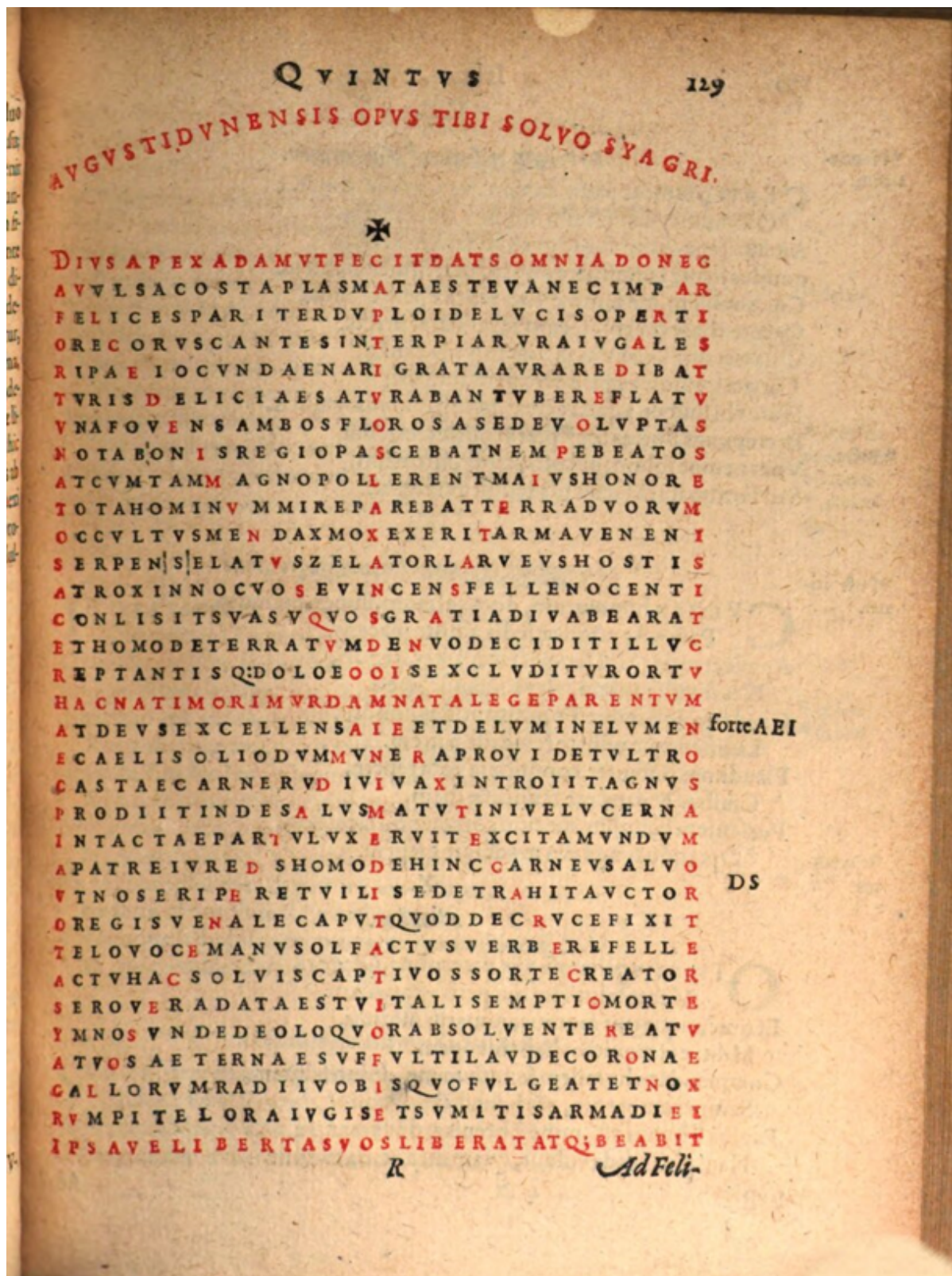
QVINTVS   129

AVGVSTIDVNENSIS OPVS TIBI SOLVO SYAGRI.

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DIVS APEX ADAMVTFEC ITDATS OMNIA DONEC
AVVLSACOSTA PLASMATAESTEVANECIMP AR
FELICESPARITERDVPLOIDELVCISOPE RTI
ORECORVSCANTESINTERPIARVRAIVGALE S
RIPAE IOCVNDAENARIGRATAAVRARE DIBAT
TVRIS DELICIAESATVRABANTVBEREFLATV
VNAFOVENSAMBOSFLOROSASEDEV OLVPTAS
NOTABON ISREGIOPASCEBATNEM PEBEATOS
ATCVMTAMM AGNOPOLL ERENTMAIVSHONOR E
TOTAHOMINV MMIREPAREBATTE RRADVORVM
OCCVLTVSMEN DAXMOX EXERITARMAVENEN I
SERPENS ELATVSZELATORLARVEVSHOST IS
ATROXINNOCVOSEVINCENSFELLENOCENTI
CONLISITSVASVQVOSGRATIADIVABEARAT
ETHOMODETERRATVMDENVODECIDITILLVC
REPTANTISQ:DOLOEOOISEXCLVDITVRORTV
HACNATIMORIMVRDAMNATALEGEPARENTVM
ATDEVSEXCELLENSAIEETDELVMINELVMEN    forte AEI
ECAELISOLIODVMMVNERAPROVIDETVLTRO
CASTAECARNERVDIVIVAXINTROIITAGNVS
PRODIITINDESALVSMATVTINIVELVCERNA
INTACTAEPARTVLVXERVITEXCITAMVNDVM
APATREIVREDSHOMODEHINCCARNEVSALVO
VTNOSERIPERETVILISEDETRAHITAVCTOR   DS
OREGISVENALECAPVTQVODDECRVCEFIXIT
TELOVOCEMANVSOLFACTVSVERBEREFELLE
ACTVHACSOLVISCAPTIVOSSORTECREATOR
SEROVERADATAESTVITALISEMPTIOMORTE
YMNOSVNDEDEOLOQVORABSOLVENTEREATV
ATVOSAETERNAESVFFVLTILAVDECORONAE
GALLORVMRADIIVOBISQVOFVLGEATETNOX
RVMPITELORAIVGISETSVMITISARMADIEI
IPSAVELIBERTASVOSLIBERATATQ;BEABIT
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R   Ad Feli-

Figure 3 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 4 P. lat. 426, S. 129, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10685810-8

is asked to follow in Christ's footsteps to "break the bonds of subjection (*lora iugis*) and [to] take up the weapons of light."[32] The plural *Gallorum radii* as well as the repeated *vos* can be understood as a real plural (naming all faithful Gallic Christians, or their bishops), or can be understood as a *pluralis maiestatis*, naming Syagrius (Ehlen 2011, 101, 427). These are the two readings of secondary and primary addressee: Every reader can thus read the regular linear poem as a salvation story with appeal to him- or herself to break free from the *lora iugis* ("worldly chains") and to join the ascetic *militia Christi*. It contains an allusion to the poet's place of residence, Gaul, and the expected secondary readers, Gallic Christians. If one reads the title, the *intexti* or the covering letter, one can also read these verses as addressed to the captives or to the addressee Syagrius.

The *intexti* in this poem form an iota-chi constellation (Saint Andrew's cross plus mesostic [= iota-chi]; Walz 2006, 64; Graver 1993, 225) surrounded by a frame (see figure 3). Fortunatus requests Syagrius to fulfill his wishes with the acrostic. In the mesostic, he elaborates on this wish, asking Syagrius to free the captives (*captivos laxans*). Then, after the caesura, he shifts to the religious explanation of his wish: Syagrius will become a *Christi meditatio* in fulfilling this request. There are two options to understand this expression: Either Syagrius becomes an object of meditation for others, due to the captives' release; he therefore becomes an imitation of Christ that leads to a meditation on Christ. Or he embodies the meditation on Christ by studying this model so that he achieves redemption in Christ (Walz 2006, 71–72; ThLL 8.572.47-48, s.v. *meditatio*). The telestic makes the model 'Christ' even more explicit and elaborates on the *Christi meditatio*: "Christ offered himself when he brought us back from death."[33] Contrary to the horizontal verses' content, Fortunatus mentions individuals (author and addressee) and addresses his wish in the second person singular to Syagrius. [24]

This obliges Syagrius to pay the ransom if he accepts the poem and has it painted onto the church's wall. Otherwise, the established parallel between Syagrius and Christ would not work. As the poem gains in value through its figure and Fortunatus advances the costs, so to speak, by having spent a lot of time and energy on it, he makes sure that Syagrius will fulfill his wish by paying for the captives (Graver 1993, 230).[34] [25]

The two diagonal verses that form the chi are a blessing for Syagrius, but again, under the condition that he imitates Christ by paying the ransom and freeing the prisoners: "The gift (*munus*) of God is sweet; dear friend, may he crown you with it as your reward (*merx*). Holiness beloved by God sets a soul free (*solvi*) from death."[35] The vocabulary oscillates between monetary and religious terms.[36] This fits the parallel between Christ and Syagrius: As Christ [26]

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31   V. 31, transl. Roberts (2017, 325).

32   *Rumpite lora iugis et sumitis arma diei*, v. 32, transl. Roberts (2017, 325).

33   *Christus se misit cum nos a morte revexit*, transl. Roberts (2017, 325).

34   According to Ehlen (2011, 102), the detailed description of the father's tears in 5.6 and the praise of Syagrius at the end of the poem (he considers it a *pluralis maiestatis*) make it hard for Syagrius to not accept Fortunatus's request.

35   *Dulce Dei munus quo merx te, care, coronet. Cara Deo pietas animam dat de nece solvi*, transl. Roberts 2017, 325). For the motif of the *dulcedo Dei*, see Ernst (1991, 151).

36   Graver (1993) has worked on the merchandise metaphor in this pom. See especially p. 226 on the verb *solvere* and on monetary terms such as *merx*. See also the covering letter: *vestrae mercedis causas*, and: *uno fonte manabant res maeroris et muneris, uno luctus et merces, et unus rigans oculis alter bibens auribus quod iste torcularet in fluctu ille apotheceret in fructu*. In carm. 2.6, Ehlen (2011, 376) observes a similar topic: "Thus Venantius Fortunatus transfers the image of the tree and its branches (here the cross's beam) to the idea of a scale (*statera*), which serves to weigh the ransom (*pretium*), which here consists of Christ's self-sacrifice, for the redemption of mankind." (Original: "So überträgt Venantius Fortunatus das Bild des Baumes und seiner Äste (hier des Querbalkens) auf die Vorstellung einer Waage (*statera*), die dazu dient, das Lösegeld (*pretium*), das hier in Christi Selbstopferung besteht, für die Erlösung der Menschheit abzuwiegen.").

paid for the original sin with his death (a merely religious thought), Syagrius should pay for the captives (monetarily). The personal *intexti* therefore insert a profane level[37] into a poem which otherwise deals entirely with the religious concept of salvation.

At the same time, these diagonal *intexti* also function as an epistolary ending, thereby join-[27] ing the epistolary heading. With *solvo/solvi* ("to release") there is a communication between these two lines: Instead of a greeting (e.g., *salutem facit* or *salve*), Fortunatus uses (the ono-matopoetically close) *solvo*, which refers again to the poem's proclaimed aim: Fortunatus pays his debts through this iconotext, although, as we have seen, he puts Syagrius into debt with it as well. In the diagonal verse, God pays his 'debt' if Syagrius is willing to pay for the pris-oners (Graver 1993, 233). In several manuscripts, the title is not written down in a single line but forms a triangle with the poem's first verse. It looks like a roof, so that the entire image resembles a house: "Only in this way does the square block of the grid poem take on the form of a house and become a letter building, an image of the world. The figure of the Christ monogram specifies that the house is a sacred building whose ruler is Christ" (Walz 2006, 73).[38]

Precedent research has already shown that the relation between form and content is closer [28] in Fortunatus than in other authors of this 'genre' of figurate poems. I will now summarize this relation between content and form briefly by examining the exact form of the different cross figures in relation to the poem's content.

The last-mentioned arrangement of 5.6a's headline as a house's roof aligns with Fortunatus's [29] request to inscribe this poem onto the cathedral's entrance wall (see above) and his self-presentation as a doorkeeper (*ostiarius*, 5.6.17, see above).[39] In the two other poems, we can also observe a close connection between the cross's form and the poem's content. 2.4 is shaped in the form of a cross pattée, which means that we have two horizontal and two vertical verses that form the cross's beams. In between, there are three verses that are part of the imaginary cross's beams but are not highlighted by color and do not form *intexti* on the vertical level. These three verses, surrounded by the two horizontal 'cross's beams', present Christ nailed to the cross (see, e.g., *bracchia, affixa, steterunt, palma, caro*). The poem's content therefore corresponds to the figure (Ehlen 2011, 413–14; Brennan 2019, 45). Christ's death forms the poem's center and focus, introducing a change from death to life, from sin to grace. It could be told without the poem's pictorial aspect. However, the topic is further stressed by its pictorial representation; text and figure join to focus on this crucial moment in Christian soteriology. Even more: When considering the word-image relation, the cross is turned into a(n imaginary) crucifix, since the middle line (v. 18) states: "his sacred hands were pinned

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37   I consider payment for prisoners here to be a profane activity, although it can certainly be religiously motivated, as it is the case in almsgiving.

38   German original: "Dadurch erst nimmt der quadratische Block des Gittergedichts die Gestalt eines Hauses an und wird zu einem Buchstabengebäude, zu einem Abbild der Welt. Die Figur des Christusmonogramms spezifiziert, dass es sich bei dem Haus um ein sakrales Gebäude handelt, dessen Herrscher Christus ist.".

39   The *ostiarius* is of low hierarchical rank, and therefore opposed to the bishop: "At the end of the accompanying letter, Fortunatus once again illustrates this hierarchical relationship: he asks the bishop to place the poem on the wall at the entrance to his church, with himself taking on the role of doorkeeper (*ostiarius*). With this office, which in fact has been at the bottom of the hierarchy of offices in the church since earliest times, he signals his subordination to the bishop." (Walz 2006, 66, Original: "Am Ende des Begleitschreibens veranschaulicht Fortunat noch einmal dieses hierarchische Verhältnis: Er bittet den Bischof, das Gedicht an der Wand am Eingang seiner Kirche anzubringen, wobei ihm selbst die Rolle des Türhüters [*ostiarius*] zukommen möge. Mit diesem Amt, das tatsächlich in der Ämterhierarchie der Kirche seit frühester Zeit an unterster Stelle steht, signalisiert er seine Unterordnung gegenüber dem Bischof.").

and raised upright."[40] The crucified Jesus is therefore literally and pictorially fixed between the two horizontal lines of the cross pattée.

The choice of the cross's form is also crucial in the incomplete iconotext 2.5: Fortunatus uses   [30]
a cross embedded into a rhombus and into the square of the framing verses. This construction results in a multitude of triangles. These triangles visualize the poem's main topic, namely the Trinity (Brennan 2019, 45–46).[41] This is all the more significant as 2.5 is the only poem in the cross cycle that does not mainly deal with the cross and salvation, even though there are also links to this topic.

Textual Images as *Ekphraseis*

After having shown that there is a close link between text and image because the text's con-   [31]
tent describes what is also depicted in the figure, I would now like to address this *double representation of the transcendent* in the form of religious text and religious image. As pointed out in the introduction to this special issue:

> [T]he word 'representation' is of Latin origin and had a strong mental and imag-   [32]
> inative connotation, in the sense of making something present to a reader or an auditorium, or rather, to put something in front of the reader's eyes (see Scheerer 1992, 791). It is, thus, connected to the rhetorical figure of hypotyposis, or *ekphrasis*. (Krech et al. forthcoming)

In a modern and quite narrow sense, *ekphrasis* deals with works of art. An *ekphrasis* is in this   [33]
sense "doubly mimetic," as it is "a verbal representation of visual representation" (Koopman 2018, 5). "This means that the work of art represented in an ekphrastic passage must itself also represent something. As such, *ekphrasis* is a form of double representation" (Koopman 2018, 5).

In Antiquity, however, an *ekphrasis* did not have to be limited to art, but could also be about   [34]
places, events, etc.: "*Ekphrasis* is a descriptive speech that brings the thing shown vividly (ἐναργῶς) before the eyes."[42] "Vividly" in this quote translates as ἐναργῶς, which is linked to the concept of *enargeia*. By means of *energeia*, a mental image can be aroused in the percipient (Singer 2016, 175–76) and s/he can be turned from reader/listener into viewer (Zeitlin 2013, 17). We can conclude that even if *ekphrasis* is not (only) the verbal representation of an *image*, the presentation techniques due to *enargeia* still ensure a double representation: a descriptive/narrative text and the image that arises before the readers. This is also true for *ekphraseis* of art objects, as the reader usually does not literally see them but visualizes them mentally through the text. Fortunatus's iconotexts are therefore special forms of *ekphraseis*, where the reader has both the object and the text in front of his or her physical eyes.

If one reads carm. 2.4's title *de signaculo* as an announcement of the figure that forms   [35]
2.4, then 2.4 becomes, from the content's point of view, the description of this *signaculum*

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40   *Affixa steterunt et palma beabilis*, transl. Roberts (2017, 77).
41   For a different interpretation, see Pégolo (2016, 62): "It should also be noted that the rhombus simulates the figure of the diamond, one of the precious stones associated with light and spiritual knowledge that represents Christ and the Church". (Original: "Asimismo cabe señalar que el rombo simula la figura del diamante, una de las piedras preciosas asociadas a la luz y al conocimiento espiritual que representa a Cristo y a la Iglesia").
42   Ἔκφρασίς ἐστι λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπʼὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον. Theon, Progymnasmata 118,7, transl. Goldhill (2007, 3).

("sign").[43] In the apostrophe "A joyous sight!" (*iucunda species!*, v. 17, transl. Roberts 2017, 77), *species* might equally refer to the physical act of seeing. For poem 2.4, the definition of *ekphrasis* as the verbal representation of visual representation is thus valid in a double sense: On the one hand, the poem's content verbally describes the figure of the cross that is formed by the letters. On the other hand, the figure of the cross is the visual representation of the paratextual announcement *signaculum*. While in 2.4 the title (*item de signaculo sanctae crucis*) refers to the content (cross) on the one hand, and the figure (cross) on the other, it is the metatextual first verse in 2.5 which, with the last word, *signum* ("sign"), refers to both facts.

At the same time, the 'saving sign' is not only put before the reader's mental eye, but also   [36]
before his or her physical eyes: s/he not only imagines but actually sees it. What can only be seen mentally, however, is the 'crucifix': While the cross is physically perceivable, the description of Jesus hanging on the cross is made 'vivid' by details such as arms and nails and leads to a transformation of the physical cross pattée into a mental crucifix. In fact, the text of poems 2.4 and 5.6a talks about salvation that is, from a Christian viewpoint, realized through Christ's crucifixion. The crucifixion is depicted through and symbolized by the cross, and the cross gains a symbolic meaning but also stands for a particular religion, Christianity. However, reading about the actual crucifixion, its first 'meaning' is updated; therefore, the reader creates the mental image of Christ hanging from his arms, explicitly mentioned, on the cross. Via the mental image, the dimension of the human body is thus added to text and picture. In these iconotexts, especially 2.4 and 5.6a, the *picture* is transferred to a *mental image* through the *text*. All three can be considered second-order representations (see Jurczyk 2018, 108).

At the same time, the text can be considered an ekphrastic description of transcendence,   [37]
as Fortunatus's poem tells the story that the cross symbolizes. Were the pictorial cross not accompanied by the text, it might have been given a slightly different interpretation: It could have been considered as a symbol for Christianity, for example. The double media of image and text, however, are unambiguous with regards to the *significatum*. The *ekphrasis* therefore interprets the image and functions as a commentary (see below).

Due to the inherent *enargeia, ekphraseis* "evoke an emotional response through an appeal   [38]
to the immediacy of an imagined presence" (Zeitlin 2013, 17). This can already be found in ancient rhetoric. For example, in inst. orat. 6.2.32, Quintilian, concerning an *ekphrasis* of action, states: „This is followed by *enargeia*, […] which seems not so much to speak as to show, so that even feelings (*adfectus*) are evoked no differently than if we were present at the events themselves." In this light, it is interesting to reconsider Fortunatus's comments on the relation between text and image that he considers given through his clients' emotions: His poems are inspired and enriched by their tears and are lifted to the level of a picture. To explain this, I will have a look at some passages that are not especially linked to the figurate poems but that do explain the relationship between text, image and emotion.

Emotions in Fort. carm. 4.28 (*Epitaphium Eusebiae*)

In an epitaph, Fortunatus describes how a picture in general is more powerful than a text.   [39]
However, a text can increase in pathos and be lifted to the level of an image, if written under emotions (4.28.1-4):

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43   Carm. 2.3, preceding figurate poem 2.4, ends naming the *salutiferum signum* (v. 23). This might also be read as an announcement for 2.4's figure.

> If parents could write (*scribere*) in tears (*lacrimas*) the pains (*dura*) they suffer, in
> this case their grief (*fletus*) would be a text (*littera*) as good as a picture (*pro pictura*).
> But because the eye (*lumen*) with its waters cannot inscribe (*signat*) the name of a
> loved one (*nomen amantis*), the track of a hand follows (*sequitur*) the course grief
> (*dolor*) bids it go (*ire*).[44]

[40]

Writing in tears is a literary topos which is especially used in elegiac literature.[45] Here, however, the parents are incapable of writing about their emotions due to their daughter's death. The quote's first movement is formulated as an *irrealis*, playing with the idea of writing with tears:[46] Tears and emotions would give additional value to a text and make it come close to an image. It is noteworthy that *pictura* and *littera* are separated by the middle caesura in the penthemimeris, dividing the verse into two parts. This division makes function *fletus* as *littera*, and this is equivalent to *pictura* (*pro pictura*). The second movement turns to reality and insists on the incapacity of mourning parents to write with tears. In the context of epitaphs, the verb *signare* refers to the inscription. *Lumen* refers to the visual aspect of the so-called painting, which, by internal rhyme, is opposed to *nomen amantis*. *Nomen* here seems to allude to scripturality. Instead of a convincing text shaped like a picture by the parents' grief, we find an epitaph composed by Fortunatus. The last word of these four verses, *dolor*, is turned into the active agent that commands the writing hand. The way-metaphor used in this verse (see *sequitur, ire*) stresses the passivity of the writer, who feels obliged to put into materiality the emotions which dictate him. The materiality of this 'picture' is mentioned in this epitaph as well: *obscure lapis* (v. 6). This alludes to the stone on which the epitaph is inscribed. This finds an interesting parallel in the parents' sufferings, that are called *dura*. Even though *dura* is the direct object to *scribere*, the choice of the lexeme might at the same time reflect the epitaph's hard material.

[41]

Emotions in Fort. carm. 5.6

The effect on writing, triggered by tears, is further mentioned in the covering letter to iconotext 5.6a. Fortunatus describes how the father, who addressed Fortunatus because his son had been taken captive, was unable to speak because of his emotions, which are manifest in tears. The tears make Fortunatus's *persona* find inspiration for writing (5.6.4): "His dripping eyes have inscribed (*fixerunt*) on me his woes in the manner of ink (*incausti*) and in a miraculous fashion water, which is accustomed to erase (*delere*), has written (*scripsit*) with tears."[47] This time, the speaker formulates what he implies in the previous passage: As parents in grief are incapable of writing, they need an external author, namely Fortunatus. The parents' grief, however, gives additional value to Fortunatus's text: The tears dictate to Fortunatus what he should write. At the same time, they metaphorically use Fortunatus as a sheet of paper on

[42]

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44   *Scribere per lacrimas si possent dura parentes, / hic pro pictura littera fletus erat. / Sed quia lumen aquis non signat nomen amantis, / tracta manus sequitur qua iubet ire dolor.* Transl. Roberts (2017, 273).

45   See e.g. Ov. Her. 3.3-4: *quascumque adspicies, lacrimae fecere lituras; / sed tamen et lacrimae pondera vocis habent.* ("Tears have made the stains you see; but still tears also have the weight of words."). In Fortunatus's epitaph, the elegiac mode is stressed by words such as *dura* and *nomen amantis*. For elegiac motives, see also the paraklausytheron, i.e. the motif of a man waiting in front of a closed door (normally the one of his lover), mentioned above.

46   See Santorelli (1993, 288 n. 4): "*per* + accusative here expresses the meaning of the medium." (Original: "*per* + accusative esprime qui il significato del mezzo.").

47   *Lacrimantes oculi querellas mihi fixerunt ad vicem incausti et admirabili modo aqua, quae delere solet, per fletus scripsit,* transl. Roberts (2017, 315).

which they can themselves inscribe their request. *Encaustum* (*incaustum*) normally means the dark red color of ink (ThLL 5.2.557.1-3, s.v. *encaustus*), but etymologically, *encaustus* as an adjective describes either the movement of a *stilus* drawing lines into wax or the movement of a burning iron or a fire vessel, which burns a painting into a wall.[48] This adjective therefore functions as a link between the textual and the pictorial level.

The elegiac topos, to which I have already alluded in the beforementioned passage, is explicitly turned upside down here: *Delere* is opposed to *scribere* and *figere ad vicem incausti*. From these passages, it is thus obvious that the parallel between text and image is constructed by vivid emotions, by pathos.[49] Contrary to what is asked for in rhetoric theory, the text does not stir up emotions, but emotions improve or enrich the text so that the text may be considered a picture. The close connection between text and image is therefore considered superior to a 'simple' text. The *tertium comparationis* to text and image are emotions. The emotionally moved person longs for the presence of the absentee. This is, in the first case, the dead daughter whom the author makes present in his epitaph and, in the second, the captive son whom the author tries to free (and thus return to his father) by the power of his ekphrastic description of the cross.

[43]

Figurate Poems or Textual Images?

When texts and images amalgamate, like in these iconotexts, attention is drawn towards the two distinct media and the processes of intermediality. In poetic texts, the compression of the medium exposes the specific resources of the medium and foregrounds the processes of self-reflection and self-generation (McGann 2005, 150)[50]. This is all the more valid for Fortunatus's iconotexts that foreground the individual letter. The individual letter as well as the textual and pictorial interplay of the individual letters are, in Fortunatus's poems, significant not only for literary but also for religious communication: "The material medium gains in religious significance [as] both the medium and its materiality are highlighted" (Krech et al. forthcoming).

[44]

Fortunatus's iconotexts are simultaneously both text and image. Depending on the perspective from which they are observed, they function one moment as text, the next as image. In the following, I will approach Fortunatus's iconotexts first from the text's and then from the image's perspective. Or, to put it differently: I will first explore the impact that the image has on the text and then the impact the text has on the image.

[45]

Let us first consider what the text gains and loses through the image. One point has already been made in the description of the figurate poems: The figure, i.e., the *intexti*, transforms the material by adding a materially distinct second layer (vertical and diagonal verses). This allows including a personal and temporally limited level to a poem that otherwise is rather general and atemporal. This clear distinction is mainly possible because the figure materially stands out from the surrounding letters that are not highlighted. Certainly, the two levels

[46]

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48 See ThLL 5.2.556.75-83, s.v. *encaustus* with Plin. nat. 35.149: *encausto pingendi duo fuere antiquitus genera, cera et in ebore cestro.* ("In ancient times there were two types of encaustic painting: with wax and with a burning pencil made of ivory.").

49 Pathos as a rhetorical quality can be seen also in the substantive *dolor*, a meaning which this word can take. In the following, we mean pathos in the sense of strong emotions.

50 Original: "Das Ziel des poetischen Textes ist es, das Medium so weit wie möglich – im wörtlichen Sinne – zu verdichten, um die spezifischen Ressourcen des Mediums gänzlich zu exponieren und die Prozesse der Selbstreflexion und Selbsterzeugung, also das, was Texte sind, in den Vordergrund zu stellen".

that express the general and the personal and temporally limited level (horizontal verses and *intexti*) consist primarily of text. However, it is the arrangement of the text that, with the emergence of the figure, makes the two levels appear separately. Thus, one could speak of horizontal vs. vertical/diagonal verses, or the foreground and background of the image, or also distinguish the levels through the 'normal' text and the figure.

The image makes it harder to decipher the verses because the reader has to decipher how to read the verses and how they relate to each other. For the author, the writing is more time-consuming than for a 'simple' poem; s/he has to figure out how to work the letters into the grid. The image, on the one hand, thus limits the choice of meter and words and their arrangement. On the other, the study of the text-image-relation of the letters' arrangement may be attributed a similar function as Biblical studies through paraphrases: Reading, analyzing, and rewriting the decisive episode of Christian theology is a way to better understand it and to show one's piety towards the transcendent.[51] The literary work, the hours spent by the author, are therefore turned from literary to pious activity.[52] Through the image, poetry becomes part of religious meditation on the *theologia crucis*[53] and the meditation offer is increased. [47]

Finally, the fact that the text is also an image means that it can be painted/written on material beyond papyrus, parchment, or paper, such as walls or banners, and can be published beyond a collection of poems. These iconotexts might be used as wall paintings[54] and veiling, but also for religious and military processions. Brennan (2019, 38) argues that Fortunatus's poems 2.4 and 2.5 [48]

> were possibly intended as textile designs for decorative liturgical veils, for the Convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, and that both poems allude to veils/sails in a metaphoric way that may also draw upon the materiality of the actual cloths on which the poems were intended (perhaps) to be displayed.[55] [49]

On the contrary, the word *arma* ("weapon," 2.5 acrostic) alludes to cross-banners carried as signs of military triumphs; as such, they are also used in religious ceremonies (Fels 2006, 97–98). This is also true for the word *velum* ("sail/hangings;" 2.5 mesostic), which might refer to the metaphor of the Church as a ship.[56] In such contexts, it would not have been necessary to decipher the entire poem; the letters' main function consists in serving as material support [50]

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51   For religious poetry, we can find predecessors, such as the genre of Biblical paraphrasis. However, by creating an image inside and through a poem, Fortunatus updates the content transmitted through Biblical paraphrases: He translocates completed history into contemporary actions.

52   We might consider the incomplete poem 2.5 as an invitation to the reader to try to fill in the grid him- or herself. In this case, this remark about the author is also valid for the reader.

53   See Ernst (1991, 155): "His figurative poems, in which the ludic element recedes completely, not only breathe unspecifically Christian spirit, but are concretely in the service of the patristic *theologia crucis* and its imagery, which is characterized by the biblical hermeneutic procedure of allegoresis." (Original: "Seine figurativen Gedichte, bei denen das ludische Element völlig zurücktritt, atmen nicht nur unspezi-fisch christlichen Geist, sondern stehen konkret im Dienst der patristischen *theologia crucis* und ihrer Bilder-sprache, die von dem bibelhermeneutischen Verfahren der Allegorese geprägt ist.").

54   See Ernst ed. (2012, 104): "Instead of a calligram on parchment and thus an ingredient of book culture, the form of lapidary epigraphy emerges as a medial alternative as part of an architecture, which in its materiality and apotropaicity is reminiscent of the magical letter squares originally handed down as graf-fito." (Original: "Statt als Kalligramm auf Pergament und damit Ingredienz der Buchkultur zeichnet sich als mediale Alternative die Form lapidarer Epigraphik als Teil einer Architektur ab, die in ihrer Materialität und Apotropäik an die ursprünglich als Graffito überlieferten magischen Buchstabenquadrate erinnert.").

55   See also Brennan (2019, 51–52).

56   For the *velamen*'s pun with a veiling and the mast of a ship, see Brennan (2019, 51). He stresses that this verse "makes both the shaft of the cross and the mast of a ship under sail". For an iconic use of veils, see below.

for the image. Brennan (2019, 52–53) states that this might even be the case if the text was put onto veils inside the Church:

> The text really would have come to life if it were displayed on a *velum* that might [51]
> have caught the breezes in a church. Parts of the lexical text might have been
> hidden suddenly, only to be revealed dramatically later. At such times the back-
> ground lexical text might not have been completely accessible. Yet the cross shape
> of the central figure on the veil could still have been apprehended by the viewer
> as a meaningful 'iconotext' even if the *velum* were fluttering or billowing.

Usually, this is the way these iconotexts are read: as enriched texts (or twisted verses).[57] This [52] might stem from the fact that they are transmitted to us in a collection of poems and that we know Venantius Fortunatus as a poet and not a painter. However, one can also approach these iconotexts from the other side. If we take them primarily as images, the text also endows them with additional dimensions. They are then images that are presented to the viewer together with a commentary. The cross-symbol's meaning is explained in the horizontal verses (in 2.4 and 5.6a) as well as on the cross in 2.5. This commentary also explains the religious power that emanates from the symbol. Therefore, it hints at the reason why the prayer is addressed to the cross: The author invokes this religious power when he implores protection through this abstract symbol (2.4) and parallels it with Syagrius's act, through which it increases in religious meaning as well (5.6a). Among Fortunatus's other poems, there are verses that are supposed to be written underneath/besides/above paintings of episodes of St. Martin's life. In the iconotexts, image and commentary amalgamate.

The idea of commentary is also significant in that the commentary part of the text is the [53] image's background: the verses that are not highlighted. In the foreground of the image, on the other hand, we find the actualizations of the history of salvation. That is why the image also has a special relation to time and temporality: Accomplished religious history comments on current events and gives them meaning.

A second consequence is that pictorial forms become more abstract. Even though Fortu- [54] natus's predecessors played with forms such as vases or eggs as iconotexts (e.g., Chatelain 1926; Ernst 1991), this form of imagery does not allow producing images rich in detail. This is implemented here by resorting to various Christian symbols that are geometric.

If you only had the image without the text, it would be iconic in that an image known as [55] a Christian symbol is used. Through the text (and the context of the poetry collection) it is inscribed in a specifically Christian context. While all three iconotexts glorify Christ's sacrificial death, image 2.4 in particular reveals a veneration of the cross—and this cross presents itself as an image. The iconotexts are both content and medium of salvation. This leads us, finally, to the relation of aniconism, iconism, and anti-iconism in Fortunatus's iconotexts.

Image and Religion

In his *carmina*, Venantius Fortunatus thus draws attention to the relation of text and image [56] through various means: He uses metapoetic remarks that link text to image but refuse their

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57 Graver (1993, 225), on the contrary, states: "It goes without saying that some portion of the figure-poem's rhetorical effectiveness derives solely from its pictorial quality. The visual element serves at the very least to draw attention to the poem; in some cases, it also reinforces the chosen theme with an appropriate emblem or symbol."

identity, while in other places he insists on the possibility to unite text and image. And he creates poems that can also be considered pictures. He plays with poetic forms and genres, but also creates a new model for religious images by linking two media that are normally separated and even competing. However, despite these experiments, he does not metapoetically talk about the relation between text, image *and* religion.

Regarding the question of (an[ti]-)iconism, it is important to stress that there is no reflection on the use of religious images in these poems. The question of anti-iconism, for example, is only dealt with concerning pagan icons in Fortunatus's *carmina* (see e.g. 10.6.125-128). We do not find any theoretical reflections on the use of Christian images. Iconism or anti-iconism, however, do not necessarily have to be addressed to be present.

[57]

Interestingly, one may classify these iconotexts as both iconic and anti-iconic. Let us consider this question first on the image level and second on the level of the text-image-relation. On the image level, we can observe that the image consists of different geometric forms that can be interpreted as Christian symbols. We thus find a cross pattée, a cross with equal length bars and an iota-chi monogram. The recourse to such abstract forms can be considered aniconic or even anti-iconic.[58] However, we can also take into consideration the historical and literary context: The cross also figures prominently in other poems of Fortunatus that were written to honor the reception of a Cross relic.[59] This is a clear indicator for the iconic veneration of the cross, just as the cross is presented as a means of salvation and subject of prayer. Fels (2006, 90–94) also proposes that the iconotexts were woven onto linens to veil the cross relic (except for feasts) or the altar. Even though they probably did not have a singular function and we cannot say much about the intended use, this would be interesting with regards to iconism: The image would, on the one hand, hide the representation of transcendence (relic, altar) and, on the other, present it by being such a representation itself.

[58]

Let us now consider the question on the level of the text-image relation. The image is at the same time hidden and emphasized by its textual character. On the one hand, one might approach the classification by considering the iconotext primarily as an image. In this case, one might speak about anti-iconism, since Fortunatus does not draw on an 'ordinary' cross symbol but hides it inside his poem. Using the topology that Radermacher et al. have worked out and presented in the introduction (Krech et al. forthcoming), we can classify this phenomenon among "Don't show. Concealing, Covering, and Veiling Artifacts."

[59]

On the other hand, taking the iconotexts above all for texts, Fortunatus stresses their picturality, both by creating them and by talking about them in titles, lexemes, and cover letters. By this, attention is drawn to what at first appears hidden: "By hiding something from view, the cloth, veil, or other material covering the object becomes the object of direct visual perception" (Krech et al. forthcoming). The text functions as a commentary on the image, which explains its iconic value. This becomes tangible in the prayer to and the benediction through the cross. With this, Fortunatus promotes his poems' iconic value. Therefore, we could describe these iconotexts as the execution of both iconism and anti-iconism. However, when we see the difficulties already posed by the classification of a single poem, it is perhaps appropriate to point out the permeability and combinability of these categories.

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58   There are, however, religions that also reject abstract forms and symbols. One might think, for example, of the Paulicians, who rejected the Christian cross and crucifix. See, for the Paulicians' rejection of the cross, Garsoian (1967, 165).

59   According to Graver (1993, 222–23), 2.4 and 2.5 might have been written to obtain a relic of the Holy Cross. Filosini (2015, 107) explains that three other poems on the cross, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.6 were composed for the relic's arrival.

Abbreviations

ThLL *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae editus iussu et auctoritate consilii ab academiis societatibusque diversarum nationum electi.* Leipzig 1900.   [61]

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