

‘HOW TO READ A ROMAN PORTRAIT’? OPTATIAN PORFYRY, CONSTANTINE AND THE VULTVS AVGVSTI

by Michael Squire

This article takes its lead from research into the ‘language’ of Roman portraiture. More specifically, it explores a work that literalizes the idea of ‘reading’ a Roman portrait (to quote Sheldon Nodelman’s classic phrase): a picture-poem by Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius — a much maligned poet active in the first decades of the fourth century AD — that purports, through its iconotextual form, to visualize the countenance of the emperor Constantine (uultus Augusti). After a brief introduction to Optatian and his oeuvre, the article offers a close reading of his third poem, demonstrating the sophisticated ways in which it probes the latent iconic potential of written script. What particularly interests me about this case study is its underlying paradox: on the one hand, Optatian boasts that his painted page will outstrip antiquity’s most celebrated painter (it ‘will dare outdo the waxes of Apelles’, uincere Apelleas audebit pagina ceras); on the other, the actual form of the picture seems to eschew mimetic modes of representation, rendering Constantine’s ‘portrait’ a geometric pattern. So how should we make sense of this image? What does the poem reveal about ideas of portraiture in the fourth century? And how might we contextualize Optatian’s abiding fascination with the limits of ‘seeing’ and ‘reading’?

Questo articolo prende le mosse dalle ricerche sul ‘linguaggio’ del ritratto romano. Più nel dettaglio, analizza un’opera che prende alla lettera l’idea di ‘leggere’ un ritratto romano (per citare la classica frase di Sheldon Nodelman): un carme figurato di Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, poeta su cui molto si è malignato, attivo nei primi decenni del quarto secolo d.C. Il carme afferma, attraverso la sua forma icono-testuale, di visualizzare l’espressione del viso dell’imperatore Costantino (uultus Augusti). Dopo una breve introduzione a Optaziano e alla sua opera, l’articolo offre una lettura serrata del terzo carme, dimostrando i modi sofisticati con i quali indaga il latente potenziale iconico della parola scritta. Ciò che interessa particolarmente in questo caso è il paradosso sotteso: da un lato, Optaziano si vanta che la sua ‘pagina dipinta’ supererà il pittore più celebre dell’antichità (oserà sorpassare le cere di Apelle, uincere Apelleas audebit pagina ceras); dall’altro, la forma reale dell’immagine sembra rifuggire modi mimetici di rappresentazione, rendendo il ‘ritratto’ di Costantino con un motivo geometrico. Come è possibile dare un senso a questa immagine? Che cosa rivela il poema sull’uso del ritratto del IV secolo? E come potremmo contestualizzare la profonda fascinazione di Optaziano per i limiti del ‘vedere’ e del ‘leggere’?

In his seminal article ‘How to read a Roman portrait’, Sheldon Nodelman confronted the intrinsic semiotics of the genre.¹ Where scholars have often championed the ‘true-to-life’ (even so-called ‘veristic’) qualities of late

¹ Although the author first aired his ideas much earlier (Nodelman, 1975), the argument is most familiar from a subsequent version of the essay (Nodelman, 1993).

republican and imperial portraits,² Nodelman instead emphasized their status as *signa*.³ Despite their careful attention to physiognomy and form, Roman portraits can never be taken at face value, Nodelman argued. For what is so distinctive about Roman portraiture — indeed, what is wholly new ‘in the history of art’ — is its acute awareness of the spectator (Nodelman, 1993: 10):

Like all works of art, the portrait is a system of signs; it is often an ideogram of ‘public’ meanings condensed into the image of a human face. Roman portrait sculpture from the Republic through the late Empire — the second century BC to the sixth AD — constitutes what is surely the most remarkable body of portrait art ever created. Its shifting montage of abstractions from human appearance and character forms a language in which the history of a whole society can be read.

Since each element of a Roman portrait makes sense only in relation to every other, Nodelman likens the visual medium to a written or spoken ‘language’ of verbal communication. To understand the ‘formalized conventional references’, it follows, one has to approach the ‘abstract meaning-structure’ as ‘referential system’ (Nodelman, 1993: 15, 18, 17): learning to view Roman portraiture means learning to ‘read’ it — to interpret/translate/decipher its historically contingent ‘system of signs’.⁴

In this article, I explore an artwork that literalizes Nodelman’s metaphor of ‘reading a Roman portrait’. My subject lies in a little-known Roman author of the early fourth century AD: Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, or ‘Optatian’ for short. More specifically, I set out to revisit just one of Optatian’s poems (poem 3) — a work that, delighting in both the lisible and visible nature of its *signa*, confronts viewer-readers with a purported portrait of the emperor Constantine (Figs 5–8).⁵

² For the classic articulation of the claim see von Hartel and Wickhoff, 1895: 16: according to Wickhoff, Roman portraits ‘scheinen zu leben, und wir würden ihre Vorbilder, wenn sie uns auf der Straße begegneten, sogleich wiedererkennen’ (16). For the thinking — and an important scholarly rejoinder — see Giuliani, 1986: esp. 11–24: as Giuliani concluded, ‘an dieser Einstellung hat sich bis heute wenig geändert’ (259 n. 6). I have attempted to survey the bibliography on Roman portraiture and the history of its study in Squire, 2014a: for some useful introductions see, for example, Bažant, 1995; Lahusen, 1997; Borg, 2005; Schollmeyer, 2005: 31–3; Fejfer, 2008; P. Stewart, 2008: 77–107; Fittschen, 2010 (an impassioned defence of methods of ‘Kopierenrezension’); Lahusen, 2010; La Rocca and Parisi Presicce, 2011; Borg, 2012. On the relationship between Greek and Roman traditions of portraiture see also Jaeggi, 2008: esp. 14–18. Specifically on the phenomenon of republican ‘verism’ (‘a system of formalized conventional references whose specific content and polemical point are defined positively by the evocation of desired associations, and negatively by implied contrast with other images bearing an opposed content’: Nodelman, 1993: 15), see, for example, Gruen, 1992: 131–82; Kleiner, 1992: 31–47; Tanner, 2000 (with detailed bibliographic review); Meister, 2012: 28–41.

³ On the vocabulary of *signa* see P. Stewart, 2003: esp. 20–8, 184–95 (with references to further bibliography).

⁴ For the most developed attempt to explain the Roman ‘Bildsprache’ as ‘semantisches System’ see Hölscher, 1987 (translated into English — with an important introduction by Jaś Elsner — as Hölscher, 2004).

⁵ In what follows, references to the poems of Optatian follow the edition of Polara (1973): I use Roman numerals to refer to the hidden *uersus intexti* (again retaining Polara’s numbering); for

What interests me about this picture-poem is its capacity to open up larger questions about portraiture, signs and the nature of visual (as indeed verbal) representation in the early fourth century AD. For at the heart of Optatian's artefact is the conceit that — through the very fabric of the poem's crafted letters — the poet might visualize the facial 'countenance' (*ultus*) of the emperor. Exploiting the latent iconic potential of poetry, Optatian creates something that exists between the realms of language and imagery — a 'facial' figure that calls for reading and viewing alike. But how should that gesture be understood? How does Optatian play with Roman ideas about portraits? And what might our case study suggest about shifting attitudes towards representation in the early fourth century?

FACE TO FACE WITH CONSTANTINE: THE MULTIFACETED WORLD OF OPTATIAN

Before introducing my particular case study, let me begin with a few words about its Latin poet. 'Optatian' is a little-known name among classical philologists, historians and archaeologists. Indeed, the few scholars who have examined his work have generally condemned it as 'trivial', 'ridiculous' and 'decadent'.⁶ As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, the works of Optatian are ripe for reappraisal, and from a variety of different viewpoints: in terms of later Latin literary traditions, certainly; but also from the perspectives of fourth-century political, philosophical and theological history, not to mention contemporary visual culture.⁷

earlier editions see Müller, 1877 and Kluge, 1926. There is as yet no English translation. For attempted Italian and (selected) French versions, however, see Polara, 2004 (revising Polara, 1976) and Bruhat, 1999: 462–93; Ernst (2012: 21–63) offers a text and German translation of six poems (poems 1, 6, 10, 15, 21, and 25), complete with short commentaries.

⁶ Cf. Raby, 1957: I, 45; Bardon, 1975: 453; Alan Cameron, 1980: 134. The entry in *Pauly's Realencyclopädie* is broadly representative of twentieth-century views, dismissing Optatian as 'the author of hare-brained frivolities in verse' (Helm, 1959: 1928): 'Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius ... ist der Verfasser hirnverbrannter Versspielereien, bei denen man ebenso staunen muß, dass ein Mensch auf derartige mühselig ausgetüfelte Künsteleien seine Zeit vergeuden und sie für Poesie halten konnte, wie daß er damit bei einem Kaiser Beifall zu finden vermochte.' 'Seen as acutely experimental and idiosyncratic,' Rees (2012: 46) rightly concludes, 'Optatianus is hardly accommodated in broad schemes of Latin panegyric or even Latin poetry generally.' For a review of bibliography up to 1988 see Smolak, 1989; for more recent analyses see Squire, 2015b: esp. 88–90.

⁷ Cf. Squire, 2015b; Squire, forthcoming a; Squire, forthcoming b; Squire and Whitton, forthcoming. Among the most important re-examinations of Optatian's *œuvre* are the following: Doria, 1979; Levitan, 1985; Ernst, 1991: esp. 95–142 (with discussion of poem 3 at 109–13); Cox Miller, 1998: 122–6 (rearticulated in 2009: 48–52); Bruhat, 1999; González Iglesias, 2000; Edwards, 2005; Okáčová, 2006; Rühl, 2006; Scanzo, 2006; Hose, 2007: esp. 548–51; Letrouit, 2007; Okáčová, 2007; Bruhat, 2009; Pipitone, 2012a: esp. 95–146; Wienand, 2012a: 355–420; Wienand, 2012b; Wienand, 2012c; Peltari, 2014: 75–84. An international workshop on the

So who was Optatian, and what sorts of works did he compose? External evidence is frustratingly slight.⁸ Two extant inscriptions have been used to reconstruct Optatian's civic career, the first (of contested date) showing that he was governor of Achaëa, the second that he served as member of a priestly college in Rome (before AD 315, and most likely under Maxentius).⁹ We also find two fourth-century literary references: Saint Jerome records that, in AD 329, Optatian 'was released from exile after sending a remarkable volume (*insigne uolumen*) to Constantine';¹⁰ likewise, a table of *praefecti urbis Romae* between 254 and 354 informs us that 'Publilius Optatianus' held that office twice in the years 329 and 333.¹¹ Jerome's talk of exile is confirmed by additional references within the corpus of 31 poems ascribed to the poet: if Optatian sometimes alludes to his 'unjust lot' (*sors iniqua*, 20a.22) and 'sad destiny' (*fata | tristia*, 2.11–12), he also associates it with a 'false accusation' (*falso ... crimine*, 2.31; cf. 2.5–6).¹² Despite their best efforts, however, scholars cannot be sure of the exact chronology of Optatian's works, nor the precise form of any anthology dispatched to Constantine:¹³ as ever, we have only later manuscripts to work from, dating from between the eighth and seventeenth centuries. Although the extant corpus offers tantalizing glimpses into the relationship between poet and emperor — not least in the two letters purportedly exchanged between Optatian and Constantine¹⁴ — the precise history must remain a matter of speculation.

poetry of Optatian, held in July 2015, and hosted by the Internationales Kolleg Morphomata in Cologne, brought together an array of specialists for an interdisciplinary reappraisal (cf. Wienand and Squire, 2015): the subsequent book, based on the workshop discussions, will be the first edited volume dedicated to the poet (Squire and Wienand, [forthcoming](#)); two chapters discuss the third poem (Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle, [forthcoming](#) and Männlein-Robert, [forthcoming](#)), and I have learned a great deal from discussions with their authors.

⁸ The 21 most relevant testimonia are collected in Polara, 1973: II, 1–6; see also the 'nota biografica' in Polara, 2004: 25–6, and the brief analysis of Squire, 2015b: 90–1. More detailed discussions include Seeck, 1908; Barnes, 1975; Smolak, 1989; Bruhat, 1999: 2–31; Wienand, 2012a: 355–61. Wienand ([forthcoming](#)) provides the most recent attempt to reconstruct the poet's 'curious career'.

⁹ *SEG* XI 810 (= *AE* 1931: 6); *CIL* VI 41314. Both inscriptions are discussed by Wienand ([forthcoming](#)): Wienand advances a compelling case for dating the inscribed statue-base from Achaëa to the years AD 326–9, on the grounds both of its epigraphic formulae and findspot.

¹⁰ Helm, 1956: 232: *Porphyrius misso ad Constantinum insigni uolumine exilio liberatur*.

¹¹ *Chron. Min.* 1.68 (= Mommsen, 1892: 65–9, at 68). If both sources have their dates right, the transformation from exile to *praefectus urbis* was swift indeed (cf. Barnes, 1975: 175). An exile between c. AD 322–6 seems more likely: see Wienand, 2012a: 355–6 n. 1, 371–3; Wienand, [forthcoming](#).

¹² On the exile motif in the poetry of Optatian see Bruhat, 1999: 16–20 and Wienand, 2012a: esp. 359–60.

¹³ Cf. Bruhat, 1999: 31–43; Wienand, 2012a: esp. 371–3.

¹⁴ For the text of the two letters see Polara, 1973: I, 1–6. The letters have sometimes been thought later medieval forgeries (cf. Polara, 1973: I, xxxi–xxxii, II, 19–20). But there are good linguistic and contextual reasons for thinking them genuine: the fullest discussion is Bruhat, 1999: 23–31 (concluding that, despite problems of style and content, 'il ne semble pas possible de prouver que

	P	O	S	T	M	A	R	T	I	O	S	L	A	B	O	R	E	S	O	S	I	D	I	V	I	S	O	M	E	T	I	R	I	L	I	M	I	T	E	C	L	I	O																									
	E	T	C	A	E	S	A	R	V	M	P	E	R	E	N	N	E	S	V	N	A	L	E	G	E	S	V	I	V	N	O	M	A	N	A	N	T	I	A	F	O	N	T	E																								
	V	I	R	T	V	T	I	B	V	S	P	E	R	O	R	B	E	M	A	O	N	I	O	V	E	R	S	V	S	H	E	R	O	I	I	V	R	E	M	A	N	E	N	T	E																							
	T	O	T	L	A	V	R	E	A	S	V	I	R	E	N	T	E	S	A	V	S	V	R	O	D	O	N	E	T	M	E	T	R	I	F	E	L	I	C	I	A	T	E	X	T	A																						
5	E	T	P	R	I	N	C	I	P	I	S	T	R	O	P	A	E	A	A	V	G	E	R	I	L	O	N	G	O	P	A	T	I	E	N	S	E	X	O	R	D	I	A	F	I	N	E																					
	F	E	L	I	C	I	B	V	S	T	R	I	V	M	P	H	I	S	E	X	I	G	V	O	C	V	R	S	V	P	A	R	V	O	C	R	E	S	C	E	N	T	I	A	M	O	T	V																				
	A	V	G	V	S	T	A	R	I	T	E	S	A	E	C	L	I	S	V	L	T	I	M	A	P	O	S	T	R	E	M	O	D	O	N	E	C	F	A	S	T	I	G	I	A	T	O	T	A																			
	E	X	S	V	L	T	A	T	O	M	N	I	S	A	E	T	A	S	A	S	C	E	N	S	V	I	G	I	C	V	M	V	L	A	T	O	L	I	M	I	T	E	C	L	A	V	D	A	T																			
	V	R	B	E	S	Q	V	E	F	F	L	O	R	E	G	R	A	T	O	V	N	O	B	I	S	S	P	A	T	I	O	V	E	R	S	V	S	E	L	E	M	E	N	T	A	P	R	I	O	R	I	S																
10	E	T	F	R	O	N	D	I	B	V	S	D	E	C	O	R	I	S	D	I	N	V	M	E	R	A	N	S	C	O	G	E	N	S	A	E	Q	V	A	R	I	L	E	G	E	R	E	T	E	N	T	A																
	T	O	T	I	S	V	I	R	E	N	T	P	L	A	T	E	I	S	P	A	R	V	A	N	I	M	I	S	L	O	N	G	I	S	E	T	V	I	S	V	D	I	S	S	O	N	A	M	V	L	T	V	M															
	H	A	E	C	O	R	D	O	V	E	S	T	E	C	L	A	R	A	T	E	M	P	O	R	E	S	V	B	P	A	R	I	L	I	M	E	T	R	I	R	A	T	I	O	N	I	B	V	S	I	S	D	E	M														
	C	V	M	P	V	R	P	V	R	I	S	H	O	N	O	R	V	M	D	I	M	I	D	I	V	M	N	V	M	E	R	O	M	V	S	I	S	T	A	M	E	N	A	E	Q	V	I	P	E	R	A	N	T	E	M													
	F	A	V	S	T	O	P	R	E	C	A	N	T	V	R	O	R	E	H	A	E	C	E	R	I	T	I	N	V	A	R	I	O	S	S	P	E	C	I	E	S	A	P	T	I	S	S	I	M	A	C	A	N	T	V	S												
15	F	E	R	V	N	T	Q	V	E	D	O	N	A	L	A	E	T	I	P	E	R	Q	V	E	M	O	D	O	S	G	R	A	D	I	B	V	S	S	V	R	G	E	T	F	E	C	V	N	D	A	S	O	N	O	R	I	S											
	I	A	M	R	O	M	A	C	V	L	M	E	N	O	R	B	I	S	A	E	R	E	C	A	V	O	E	T	T	E	R	E	T	I	C	A	L	A	M	I	S	C	R	E	S	C	E	N	T	I	B	V	S	A	V	C	T	A										
	D	A	T	M	V	N	E	R	A	E	T	C	O	R	O	N	A	S	Q	V	I	S	B	E	N	E	S	V	B	O	S	I	T	I	S	Q	V	A	D	R	A	T	I	S	O	R	D	I	N	E	P	L	E	C	T	R	I	S										
	A	V	R	O	F	E	R	E	N	S	C	O	R	V	S	C	A	S	A	R	T	I	F	I	C	I	S	M	A	N	V	S	I	N	N	V	M	E	R	O	S	C	L	A	V	D	I	T	Q	V	E	A	P	E	R	I	T	Q	V	E								
	V	I	C	T	O	R	I	A	S	T	R	I	V	M	P	H	I	S	S	P	I	R	A	M	E	N	T	A	P	R	O	B	A	N	S	P	L	A	C	I	T	I	S	B	E	N	E	C	O	N	S	O	N	A	R	Y	T	H	M	I	S							
20	V	O	T	A	Q	V	E	I	A	M	T	H	E	A	T	R	I	S	S	V	B	Q	V	I	B	V	S	V	N	D	A	L	A	T	E	N	S	P	R	O	P	E	R	A	N	T	I	B	V	S	I	N	C	I	T	A	V	E	N	T	I	S						
	R	E	D	D	V	N	T	V	R	E	T	C	H	O	R	E	I	S	Q	V	O	S	V	I	C	I	B	V	S	C	R	E	B	R	I	S	I	V	V	E	N	V	M	L	A	B	O	R	H	A	V	D	S	I	B	I	D	I	S	C	O	R	S					
	M	E	S	O	R	S	I	N	I	Q	V	A	L	A	E	T	I	S	H	I	N	C	A	T	Q	V	E	H	I	N	C	A	N	I	M	A	T	Q	V	E	A	G	I	T	A	N	S	A	V	G	E	T	Q	V	E	R	E	L	V	C	T	A	N	S				
	S	O	L	L	E	M	N	I	B	V	S	R	E	M	O	T	V	M	C	O	M	P	O	S	I	T	V	M	A	D	N	V	M	E	R	O	S	P	R	O	P	R	I	V	M	Q	V	E	A	D	C	A	R	M	I	N	A	P	R	A	E	S	T	A				
	V	I	X	H	A	E	C	S	O	N	A	R	E	S	I	V	I	T	Q	V	O	D	Q	V	E	Q	V	E	A	T	M	I	N	I	M	V	M	A	D	M	O	T	V	M	I	N	T	R	E	M	E	F	A	C	T	A	F	R	E	Q	V	E	N	T	E	R		
25	T	O	T	V	O	T	A	F	O	N	T	E	P	H	O	E	B	I	P	L	E	C	T	R	A	D	A	P	E	R	T	A	S	E	Q	V	I	A	D	V	L	A	C	I	D	O	S	B	E	N	E	C	L	A	V	D	E	R	E	C	A	N	T	V	S			
	V	E	R	S	V	Q	V	E	C	O	M	P	T	A	S	O	L	O	I	A	M	Q	V	E	M	E	T	R	O	E	T	R	Y	T	H	M	I	S	P	R	A	E	S	T	R	I	N	G	E	R	E	Q	V	I	C	Q	V	I	D	V	B	I	Q	V	E	E	S	T
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50																																																

Fig. 1. Optatian [Publius Optatianus Porfyrius], poem 20 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Peltari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

The works of Optatian nonetheless offer an important — and underplayed — source for approaching the political, cultural and above all religious transformations of Constantine's principate. The poems themselves can leave little doubt about the ingenuity of their author. Most intriguing are the 'iconotextual' qualities:¹⁵ Optatian plays knowingly with ideas of reading and seeing; throughout the corpus, his self-declared *signa* oscillate between written and depicted 'signs'.¹⁶ In three examples, we find the poet imitating the picture-poems (*technopaegnia*) of Hellenistic Alexandria: by setting each letter within an evenly spaced grid, and by varying the number of letters in each line, Optatian exploits the outer shape of his verses to evoke the mimetic outlines of a water-organ (Fig. 1), an altar and a set of panpipes.¹⁷ The same working principle seems to have led Optatian to his favourite design, this time laid out within a 'gridded' arrangement (and sometimes referred to as *carmina cancellata*).¹⁸ Developing a penchant for acrostichs, mesostichs and telostichs, with verses that vertically trickle down the page,¹⁹ Optatian once again breaks down his words into their constituent alphabetic units. In the *carmina cancellata*, however, the writerly space of the poem emerges as a sort of artistic canvas: by highlighting textured patterns within the grid, and depicting them in multiple colours, Optatian could tease out additional 'signs' from the fabric of his ground-text. If these 'gridded poems' consequently vacillate between words and pictures, the written/drawn *signa* sometimes also fluctuate between Latin and Greek languages: in three examples, the individual Latin letters add up to phrases that make semantic sense in Greek — whether yielding a single hexameter (poem 23), three hexameters (poem 16), or an elegiac couplet (poem 19).²⁰

ces lettres sont des faux', p. 31); for further bibliography see Green, 2010: esp. 69–71; Pipitone, 2012b; Wienand, 2012a: 358 n. 6; Wienand, forthcoming.

¹⁵ For the language of the 'iconotext' see Wagner, 1995: 12 and 1996: 15–17.

¹⁶ For Optatian's talk of *signa* see Squire, forthcoming a. The language recurs throughout his works: cf. e.g. 4.1: *uicennia signa*; 5.2: *signare*; 6.34: *signare*; 7.12: *signatur*; 8.2: *pia signa*; 8.27: *insignia magna*; 8.i–ii: *salutari nunc haec tibi pagina signo | scripta micat*; 11.8: *insignit*; 13.iii: *aurea ... insignia*; 16.29: *signa*; 18.23: *suis signis*; 19.1: *caelestia signa*; 19.17: *signis ... notare*; 19.29: *signa ... laetissima*; 24.35: *aeturnum ... signum*.

¹⁷ Poems 20, 26 and 27; poem 26 nicely labels the conceit *imagines metrorum* (26.23). For a more detailed discussion of the three poems — and their relationship to Hellenistic traditions of 'picture-poetry' — see Squire, 2015b: 92–8.

¹⁸ Optatian does not himself use the term, although the language is anticipated at 22.i–ii: 'the Muses disperse verses that are intermingled either with circuitous windings or else with gridded bends that proceed in the opposite track' (*mixta per amfractus diducunt carmina Musae, | seu cancellatos spatia in contraria flexus*).

¹⁹ For introductions to the history of such acrostichs in Greek and Latin poetry see Vogt, 1966 and Courtney, 1990, along with the more recent bibliography surveyed in Squire, 2011: 216–28, pp. 225–7.

²⁰ On poem 16 see below, pp. 218–19 (Fig. 14); for the Greek couplet hidden in the Latin hexameters of poem 19 see below, n. 25. The interlinguistic feat depends not simply upon transliteration, but upon reading letter-forms by different alphabetic rules: C, for instance,

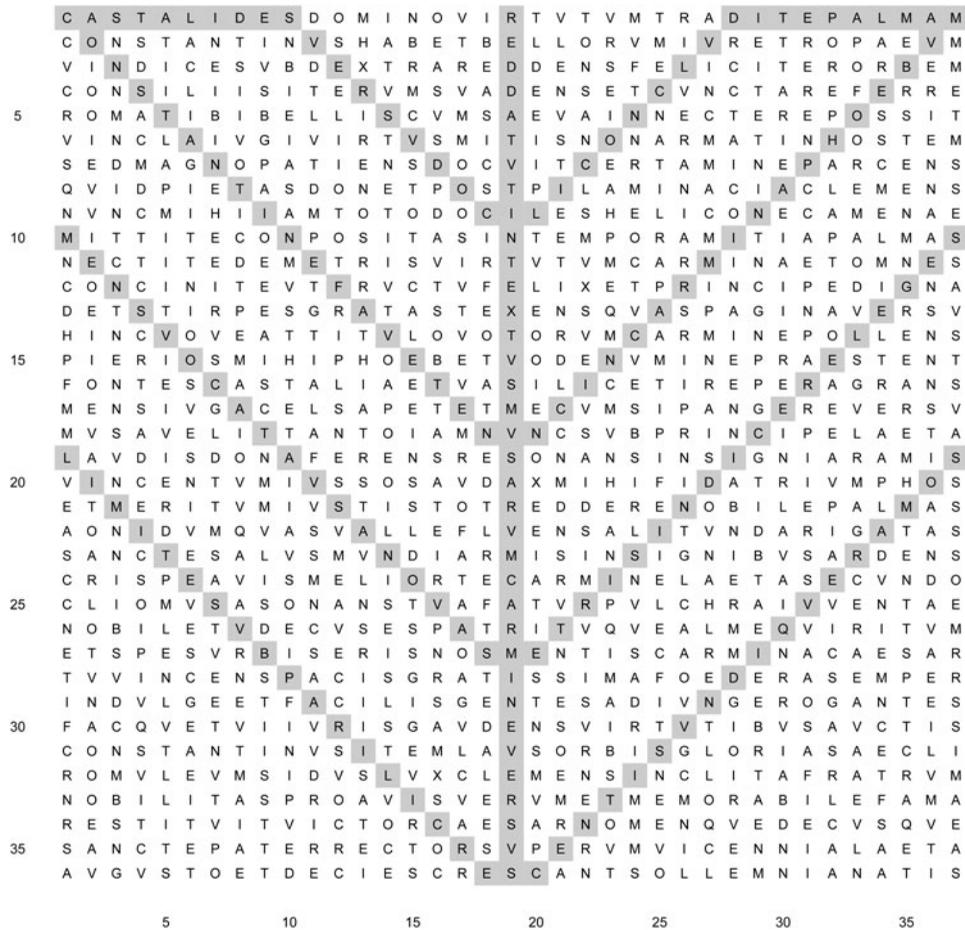


Fig. 2. Optatian, poem 9 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Pelttari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

Optatian exploited the form of his *carmina cancellata* to experiment with different designs and rationales. The most common format, recurring ten times, revolves around a square grid comprised of 35 letters along both the horizontal and vertical axes (poems 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 18, 24).²¹ In each case,

doubles as sigma, H as eta, P as rho, X as chi; Greek forms without Latin equivalent are supplied by proxy, whether logical ('T' provides theta as well as tau) or visual ('A' does duty for delta and lambda, as well as for alpha). Optatian's intermingling of Greek with Latin finds contemporary parallels: among the most dazzling is Ausonius' macaronic 45-verse epistle to Paulus, written a little later in the fourth century, and playfully mixing Latin and Greek in its 'two-tongued conversation' (*sermone ... bilingui*: Auson. *Epist.* 6.2, with commentary in Green, 1991: 614–17; for further discussion and bibliography see Pastorino, 1971: 119–21).

²¹ Five other poems amount to related gridded shapes of various (and sometimes uneven) dimensions: poem 9 (36 letters down: 37 letters across), poem 12 (18: 35), poem 19 (38: up to 38), poem 21 (16: up to 43) and poem 22 (10: 36). Doubts have been raised about the

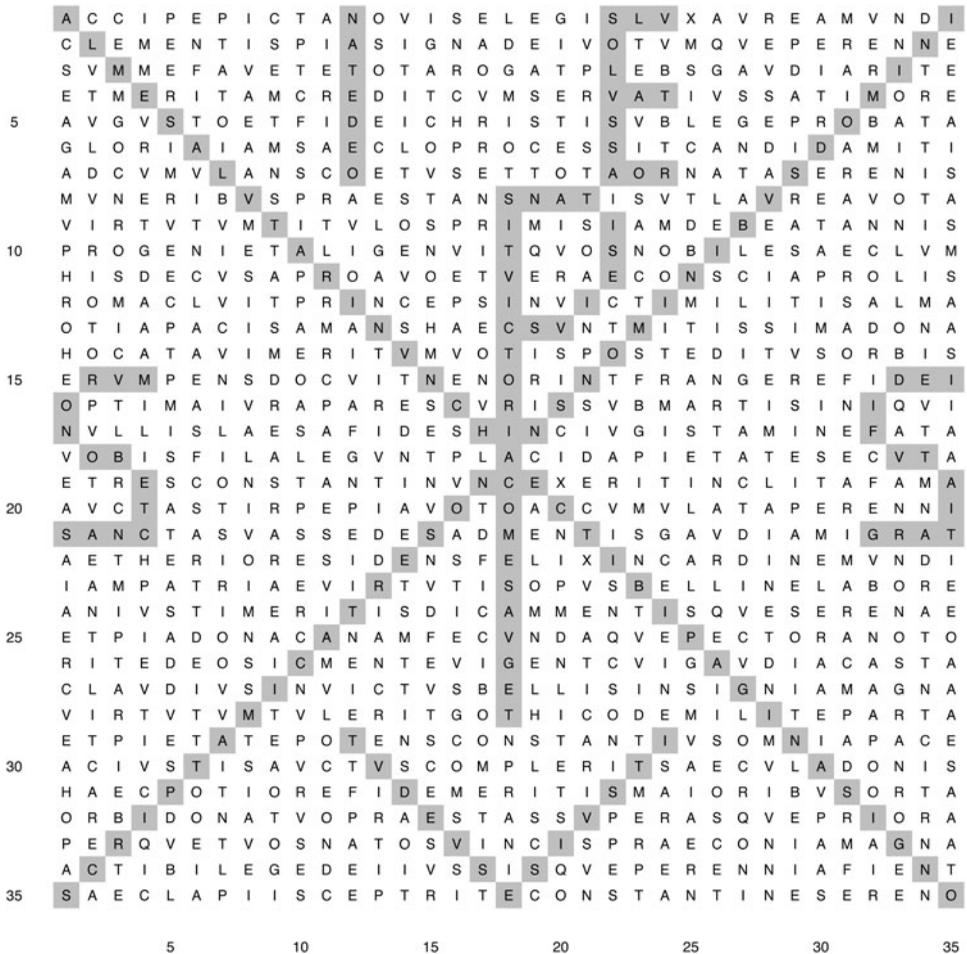


Fig. 3. Optatian, poem 8 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Pelttari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

Optatian looked to the internal space of the grid to figure various graphic forms, ranging from alphabetic and numerical letters, through abstract and ornamental patterns, to schematized mimetic forms.²² The individual letters of the poem consequently function like the tessellated pieces of a mosaic; indeed, the very forms figured within the poems parallel the different verbal, decorative and iconic designs found in contemporary mosaics of the early fourth

authenticity of both poems 22 and 24, but the situation is complex, and there are good reasons for thinking both — if not Optatianic — at least fourth-century in date (cf. Squire and Whitton, forthcoming on poem 24).

²² For the categories ('geometrische Gittergedichte', 'literale carmina cancellata' and 'gegenstandsmimetische Gittergedichte') see Ernst, 1991: 108–35; cf. Bruhat, 1999: 134–70; Rühl, 2006: 81–2 ('graphische Muster', 'Bilder' and 'neue Buchstaben').

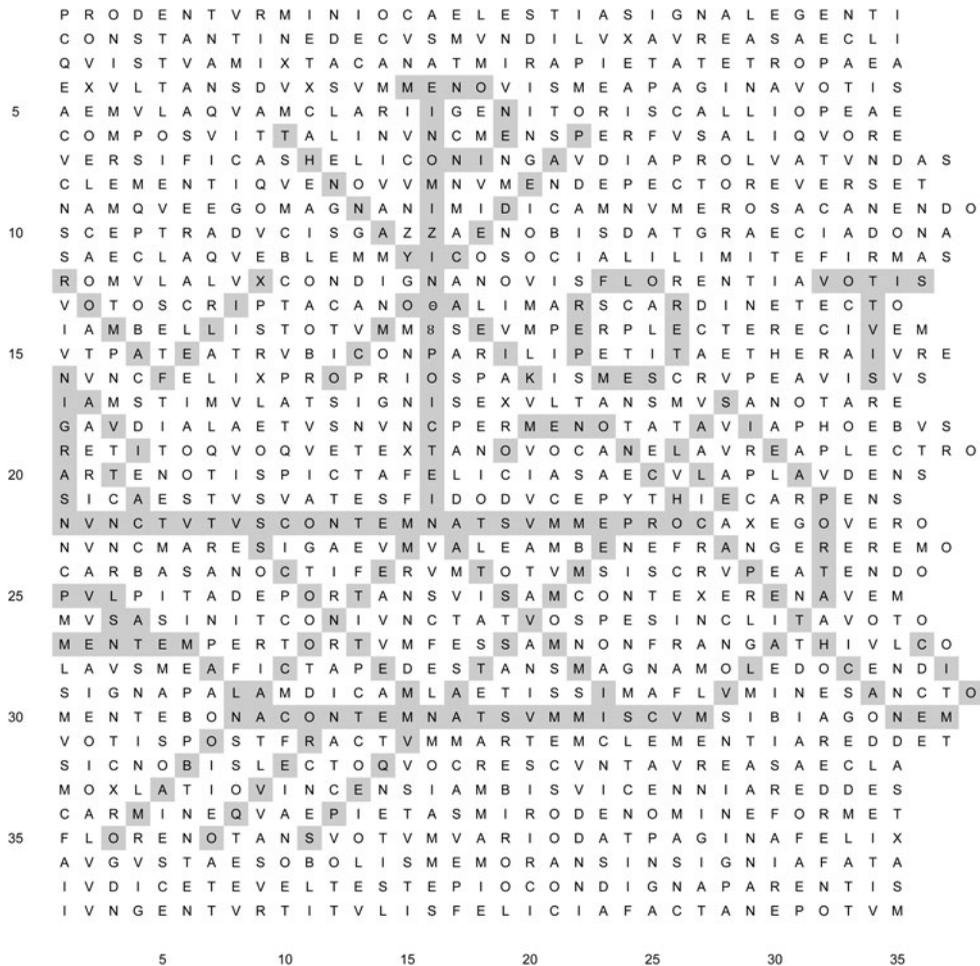


Fig. 4. Optatian, poem 19 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Peltari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

century.²³ Some of the figures amount to geometric shapes or apparent floral adornments (for example, poems 2, 7, 12, 18, 21, 22 and 23). Others give rise to schematic pictures — a possible shield in poem 7, a palm frond in poem 9 (Fig. 2), and a *quincunx* army formation in poem 6. Still other examples sketch letters and numbers within the grid: so it is, for example, that the abbreviation *AVG. XX CAES. X* is embroidered within poem 5 ('Augustus twenty [years], the Caesars ten' — celebrating the twentieth imperial anniversary of Constantine and the *decennalia* of his two sons in the year 326); likewise, in poem 8, the

²³ On the parallels between Optatian's poetry and contemporary fourth-century mosaics see especially Bruhat, 1999: 136–41 (with reference to poems 7, 12, 18, 21, 22 and 23); more generally on the analogy between late antique poetry and tessellated mosaics, the classic analysis is Roberts, 1989: esp. 57, 70–3.

name *IESVS* is spelled out around an emblazoned chi-rho christogram (Fig. 3).²⁴ Poem 19 is arguably the most complex of all, bringing together different rationales (Fig. 4). In visual terms, the grid yields a ship (complete with tiller, rudder, oars and ramming spike), topped with a mast and sail in the shape of a chi-rho. While the image of this poem is drawn from highlighted Latin letters, additional alphabetical forms are emblazoned within its pictorial space, spelling out *VOT* above (an abbreviated reference to the *uota* or ‘vows’ mentioned at 19.4, 12, 13, 26, 31, 35), and *XX* below (figured within the ship’s hull, and alluding numerically to the twentieth anniversary of the emperor, as well as the ten-year jubilees of his two sons). Most remarkably of all, the Latin letters that make up the ship’s mast, sail, tiller and rudder conceal a Greek elegiac couplet: hidden within the ground-text, the constituent letters of the image furnish a ‘paratextual’ commentary on the picture seen.²⁵

It is within this framework of *carmina cancellata* that my specific case study — the third poem within the corpus — should likewise be understood. I illustrate the poem via a new typeset rendition (Fig. 5), as well as through three extant manuscript presentations (Figs 6–8): first, a page of an early sixteenth-century codex in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel (where the internal patterns are marked in red and through yellow block-highlighting); second, a ninth-century folio in Bern that this time writes its letters in lower-case script (using orange to distinguish the internal letters and to bind them together); and third, a late sixteenth-century manuscript in Munich where gold lines set out the internal pattern (with all the letters written in majuscule quadrata script, and in black).²⁶ Since — so far as I know — the poem has never before been translated into English, let me begin with a first attempt, following the ‘knotty’ (*nodosos*, v. 30) forms of Optatian’s Latin syntax:²⁷

²⁴ Optatian characteristically blurs any straightforward distinction between the alphabetical and the ornamental — nowhere more so than in his chi-rho forms: see below, pp. 216–17, along with Squire and Whitton, *forthcoming*.

²⁵ On the iconic form and significance of the hidden Greek text which makes up the mast, sail and tiller/rudder of the picture see Bruhat, 2008 and Squire, 2015b (with translation and further bibliography). The transliterated Latin text yields the following Greek couplet: τὴν ναῦν δεῖ κόσμον, σὲ δὲ ἄρμενον εἶνι νομίζω | θούροις τεινόμενον σῆς ἀρετῆς ἀνέμοις (‘One must think that the ship is the world, and that you are the hoisted rigging within, tautened by the strong winds of your virtue’).

²⁶ For a description of the various manuscripts (albeit without illustrations) see Polara, 1971: 7–35; there are brief commentaries on the different presentational formats in Wienand, 2012a: 364 and Squire, *forthcoming b*. Figs 6–8 are taken from Codex Guelferbytanus 9 Augustaneus 4^o (which Polara [1971] labels ‘W’), Codex Bernensis 212 (‘F’) and Codex Latinus Monacensis 706^a (‘M’). The third poem features in all the most important manuscripts: cf. Polara, 1971 (summarized in Polara, 1973: I, vii–xxxiv and 2004: 33–8); Ernst, 1991: 209–21; Wienand, 2012a: 371–3. Limitations of space likewise prevent me from discussing the Carolingian and medieval reception of Optatian’s works: in addition to Ernst, 1991: esp. 143–842 (with overview at pp. 831–42), see, for example, Kluge, 1924: 328–36; Higgins, 1987: 25–53; and Squire, *forthcoming b* (with figs 1.7–11 and plates 1–12); cf. also below, n. 121.

²⁷ The only translations known to me are those of Bruhat, 1999: 467 (French) and Polara, 2004: 68–71 (Italian). I am grateful to Christopher Whitton for his extensive help in untangling the syntax.

Fingere Musarum flagrarem numine uultus,
 alme parens orbis, perfecta in munia uersu
 uotaque, si ratio non abnuat ordine Phoebi.
 gesta canunt, quos Aonium placabile numen
 uatis sorte frui dat; donis carminis ex hoc 5
 sustollens et uersu instigans ora sonare,
 tu mentem inspiras uatis; tu gaudia semper
 in te, sancte, uocas. tu quiuis docta Camenae
 edere dicta fauens, tu laetus uota secunda,
 ut rata sint, audis; tua mitis rector Olympi 10
 tempora praecipua seruat pietate serena.
 aurea iam toto, uictor, tua saecula pollent,
 Constantine, polo. hace nexus lege solutis
 dicturus metris magno mouet agmine Musas,
 at mea uix pictis dum textit carmina Phoebi 15
 Calliope modulis, gaudet, si uota secundet
 Delius, intexta ut parili sub tramite Musa
 orsa iuuat, uersu consignans aurea saecula.
 sed tibi deuotam rapiunt ad gaudia mentem
 audenterque loqui suadent per deuia uoto 20
 Aonides fretae, et, quantis sua uerba tueri
 legibus adstrictae, te tota mente fideque
 uatis uoce tui, tua, princeps inclite, tanta
 bella canunt, et Pegaseo noua carmina potu
 exercent, nexuque uolunt nunc rite sonare 25
 egregium imperium, tanto cur munere fungi
 et praecelsa iuuat uersu per scrupea fari.
 mentis opus mirum metris intexere carmen
 ad uarios cursus; uix, arto in limite clausa,
 nodosos uisus artis cata praeferat ex hoc, 30
 et tamen ausa loqui tanto mens aestuat ore,
 nec dignum uotis carmen sic reddere retur,
 tali lege canens; quae nostrum pagina sola,
 ex Helicone licet, complebit, munus amoris,
 picta elementorum uario per musica textu. 35

I would be burning to fashion your face in verse with the power of the Muses, kindly father of the world, in fulfilment of my duties and prayers, should my scheme (*ratio*) not depart from the rule of Phoebus. They sing of deeds, whom the kindly Aonian power permits to enjoy the lot of a bard; thereafter, elevating them with gifts for poetry and encouraging mouths to resound with verse, you inspire the mind of the bard; you constantly call joys, holy one, to yourself; you, encouraging him in every way to produce learned words of the Muse, joyfully hear favouring vows, so that they may be ratified; your age the gentle ruler of Olympus preserves serene with special piety.

(12) Your golden age, victorious Constantine, is now mighty in all the world. He who would tell all this in metres freed from the law of the weave moves the Muses in a great herd; but *my* songs, as Calliope weaves them with difficulty in Phoebus' painted measures, she rejoices if the Delian would favour my vows, so that the Muse may help my woven endeavours along an equal path, sealing the golden age in verse.

(19) But the Aonian Muses, trusting in the vow, transport into joy the mind devoted to you and bid him speak boldly through untrodden paths; and, as strict the laws that bind them to take care of their words, they sing of you, glorious *princeps*, and your wars so

great, with all heart and faith through the voice of your bard, and they work new songs with Pegasean draught, and want now duly to sound the glorious empire in their weave, for they delight to perform so great a task and to speak forth in verse along rocky heights.

(28) A wondrous work of the mind, to weave a song into the verses in various directions: trapped in narrow confine, it [the mind] might scarcely carry the knotted visions of its art, clever though it be, beyond that confine; and, daring nevertheless to speak with such mighty mouth, my mind is in turmoil, and thinks not to offer up a poem worthy of its vows, singing by such a law, vows which my duty of love will fulfil, a page — only one, though it come from Helicon — painted according to the Muses' lore with varied weave of elements.

Readers will quickly see the connection with my opening comments about 'how to read a Roman portrait'. The object that faces us may look rather different from the sorts of painterly portraits with which classical archaeologists usually deal — whether sculpted busts, mosaics or painted images like the imperial 'mummy-portraits' remarkably preserved in Fayoum (for example, Fig. 9).²⁸ And yet, in this explicit address to Constantine, Optatian suggests that the very form of his poem might emulate a painted portrait of the emperor: the opening theme is the *uultus* of Constantine (v. 1), and the poem makes much of its promise of materializing that form in verse (*uersu*, vv. 2, 6, 18, 27).

We will return a little later to the schematic graphic pattern of the grid. For now, I restrict myself to two preliminary observations. First, we should note that the poem does not supply any precise information about date. The only clue comes in vv. 12–13: Optatian here describes Constantine as 'victor', one whose 'golden age' is now prevailing 'in all the world' (*aurea iam toto, uictor, tua saecula pollent*, | *Constantine, polo*). Although beyond proof, the reference most likely suggests a date soon after Constantine's victory over Licinius in AD 324; if so, the whole encomium might be understood as an allusion to Constantine's *Vicennalia* in AD 325–6 (an anniversary which Optatian celebrates in several other poems).²⁹

Second, and no less importantly, the poem draws attention to its material appearance on the page. Not only are individual letters marked out within the grid, but those letters can be read in their own written right. Once we transform the tessellated units back into words, we find six additional hexameters. Two of these are derived from the poem's horizontal and vertical crux, the one forming a mesostich at the symmetrical centre (from top to

²⁸ For the materials from Fayoum see especially Doxiadis, 1995; Borg, 1996; and Walker and Bierbrier, 1997. On Fig. 9 specifically see Thompson, 1982: 42–3, no. 6. On painted portraits in Graeco-Roman art, the best introduction remains Nowicka, 1993, discussing painted imperial portraits at pp. 32–62 (with reference to Constantine at pp. 48–54).

²⁹ Cf. Polara, 1973: II, 34–5 (discussing earlier opinions), with p. 36 on 3.12–13; Barnes, 1975: 178; Ernst, 1991: 109; Bruhat, 1999: 501; Wienand, 2012a: 386, 390–1. Edwards (2005) attempts to date this and other poems with respect to the developing complexity of their *uersus intexti* designs: concerning our poem, Edwards concludes that the visual pattern, together with the references to the victorious Constantine, suggest that 'the poem can be placed among the early presentation pieces' (p. 454); the logic strikes me as wholly flawed.

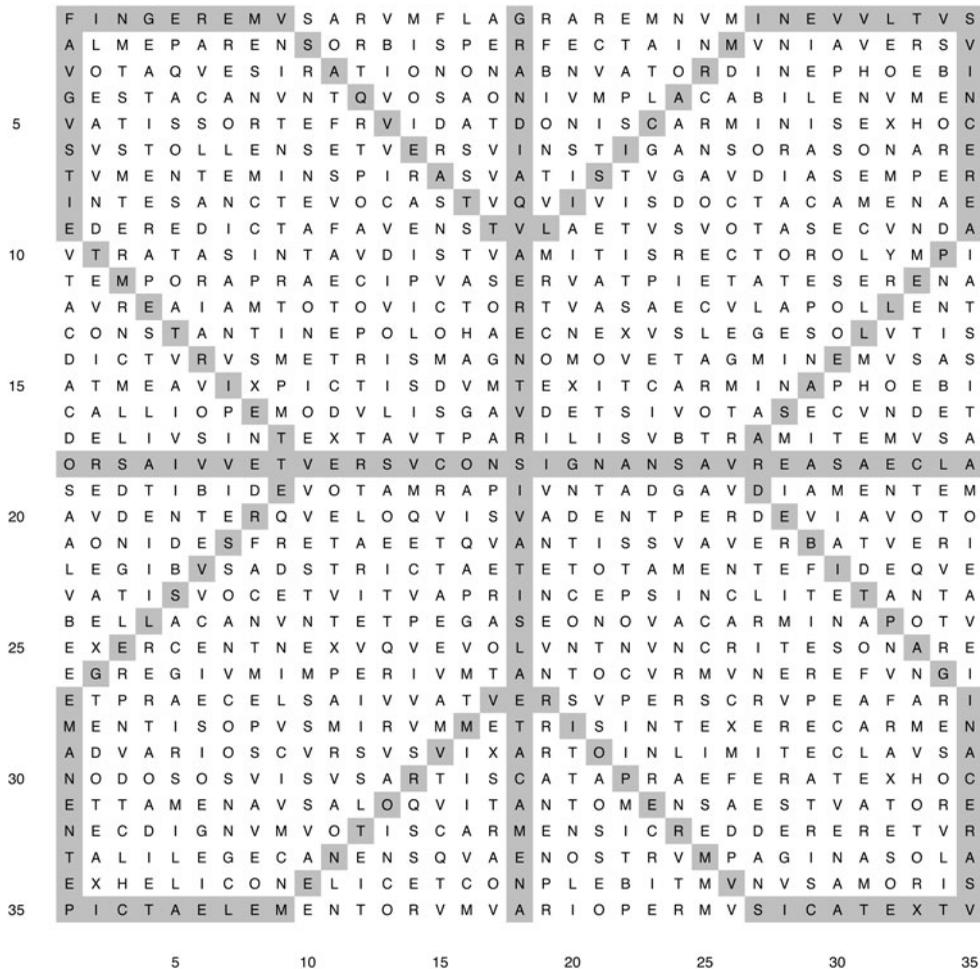


Fig. 5. Optatian, poem 3 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Peltari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

bottom in the eighteenth column), the other occupying the symmetrical horizontal axis (in line with the eighteenth verse).³⁰ To read the other four hexameters, audiences must zigzag across the grid: in each case, we have to start near the outer corner and then proceed in a variety of horizontal, vertical and diagonal directions.³¹ Because the lines are arranged spatially, there is no fixed order for

³⁰ The central cross-shape of Optatian's third poem is paralleled in other *carmina cancellata*: quite apart from the chi-rho shapes of poems 8, 14, 19 and 24, note especially the use of the same device in poem 2 (where the central intersecting lines both repeat the hexameter that frames all four sides of the grid) and in poem 18 (where the central crux intersects with additional cross-shapes within the poem).

³¹ The idea of the poem as a spatial 'path' — and one that allows the reader to move in multiple directions — recurs throughout the poem: in addition to vv. 28–9 (*mentis opus mirum metris intexere carmen | ad uarios cursus*, 'a wondrous work of the mind, to weave a song into verses in

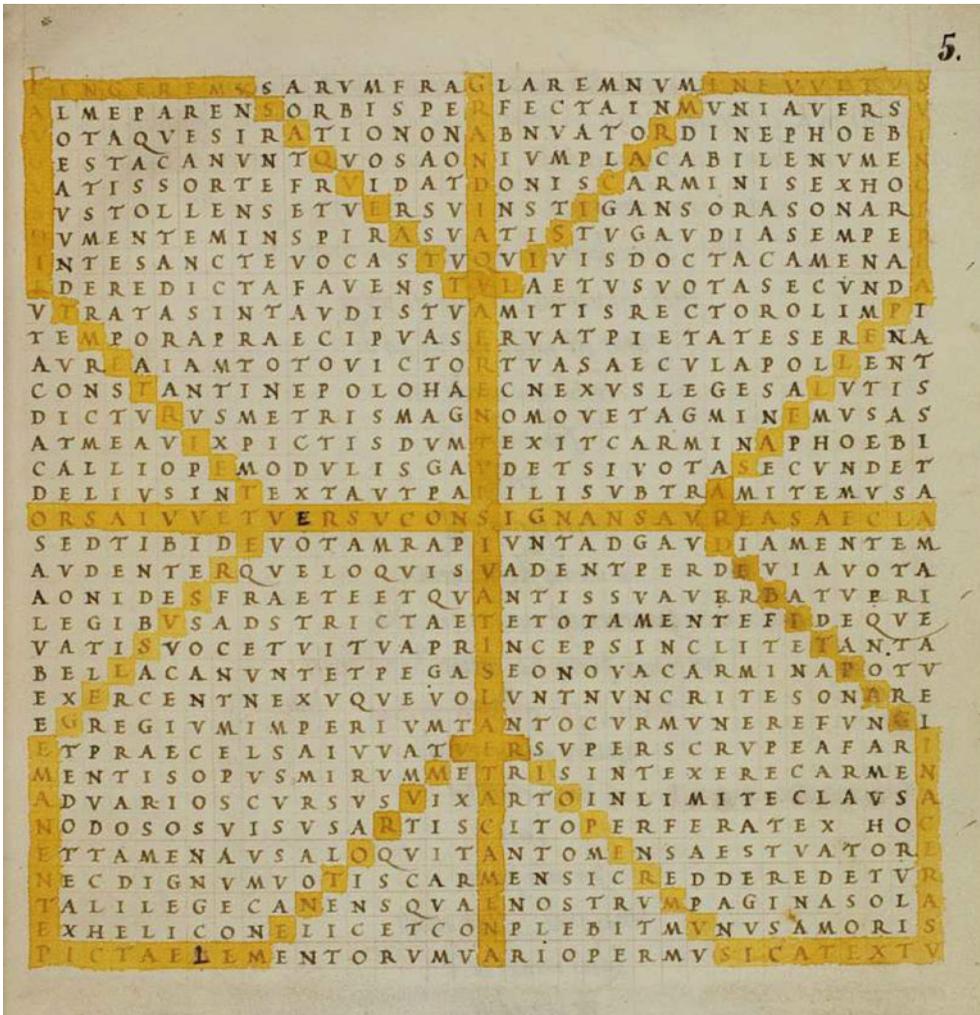


Fig. 6. Optatian, poem 3, as presented in the sixteenth-century Codex Guelferbytanus 9 Augustaneus 4° (folio 5r). (Reproduced by kind permission of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.)

reading them; likewise the two verses that form the central crux of the poem can be read either before or after the other four.³² The Latin syntax nonetheless suggests the following arrangement:

various directions'), note e.g. *parili sub tramite* ('along an equal path', v. 17) and *per deuia* ('through untrodden paths', v. 20).

³² Cf. Ernst, 1991: 109: 'Im Unterschied zu Carmen II fehlt hier ein quadratischer Intextrahmen, weil die seitenbegrenzenden Intexte nicht linear verlaufen, sondern auf halben Weg nach innen abknicken, so daß sich in Verbindung mit der zentralen Kreuzfigur vier Hexagone mit gleicher Letternmasse konstituieren.'

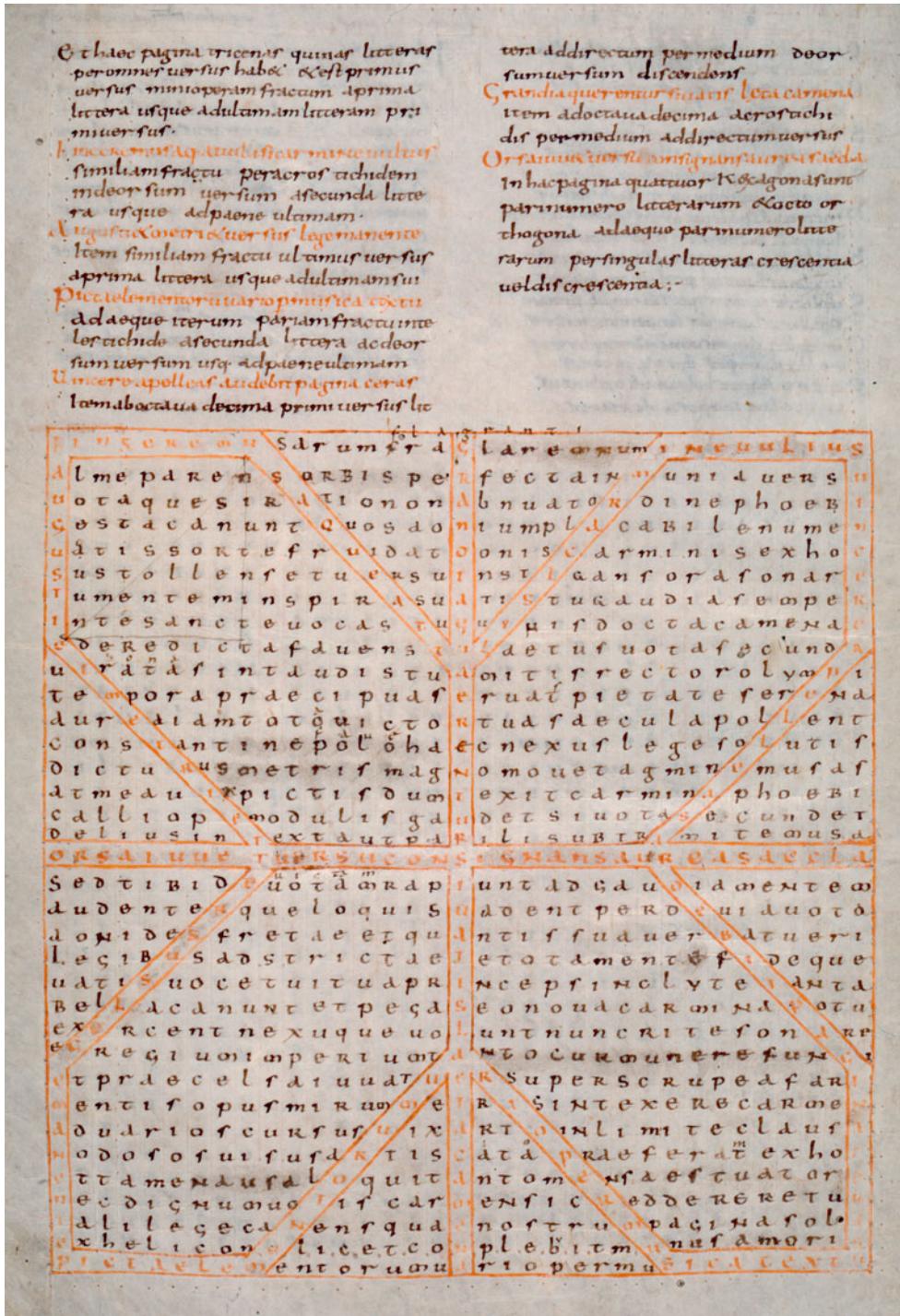


Fig. 7. Optatian, poem 3 (with scholion above), as presented in the ninth-century Codex Bernensis 212 (folio 111v). (Reproduced by kind permission of the Burgerbibliothek, Bern.)

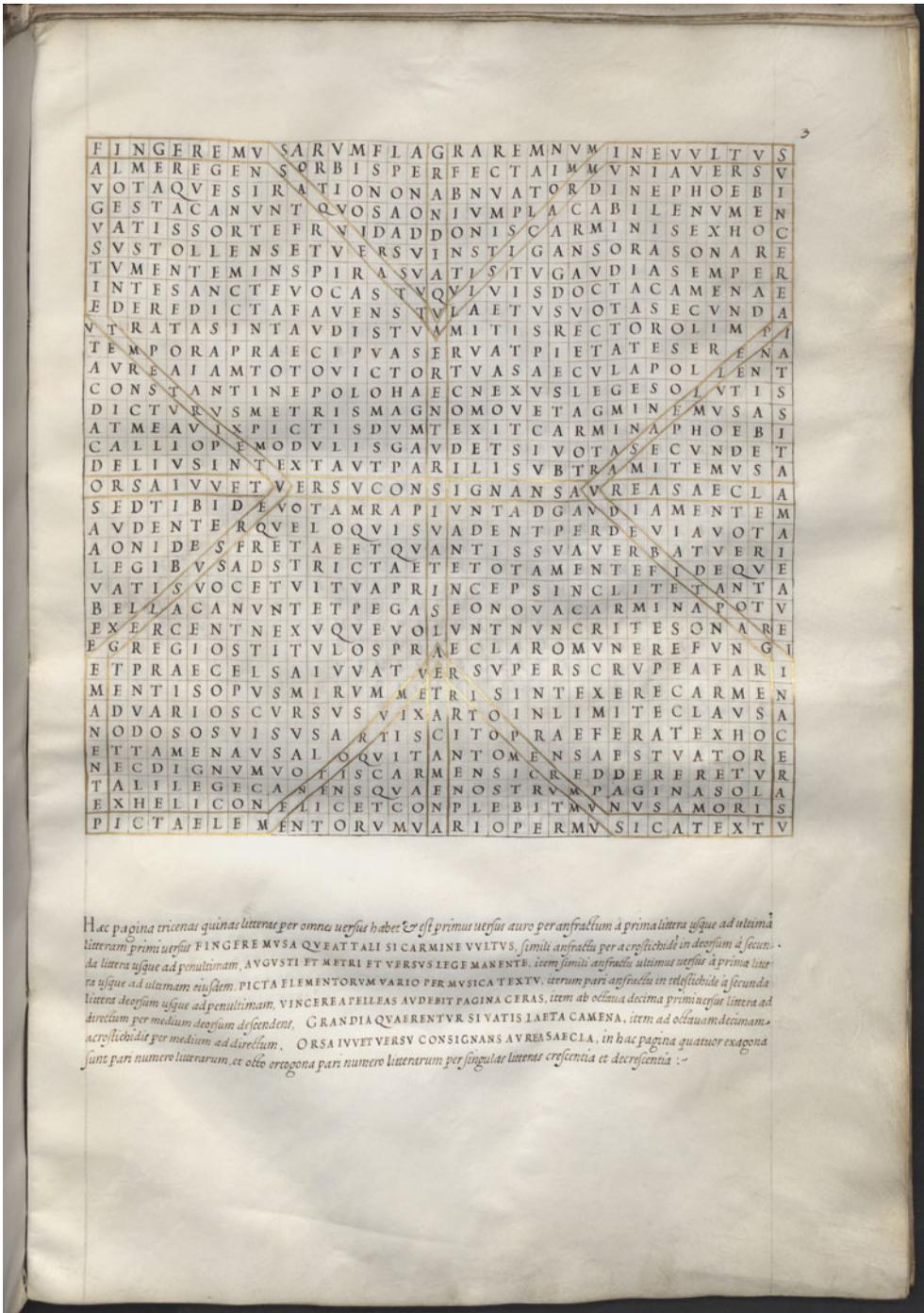


Fig. 8. Optatian, poem 3 (with scholion below), as presented in the sixteenth-century Codex Latinus Monacensis 706^a (folio 3r). (Reproduced by kind permission of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.)

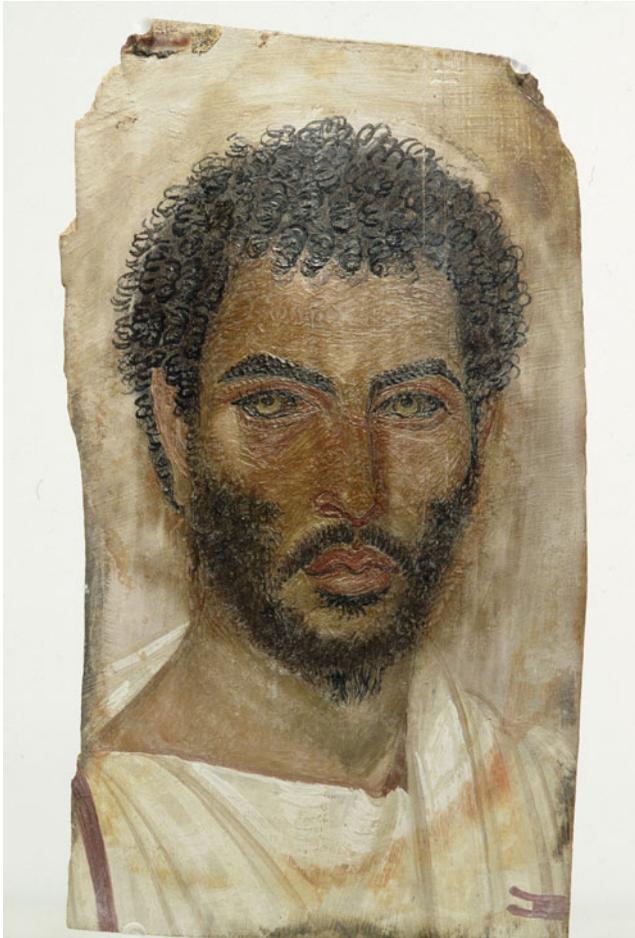


Fig. 9. Funerary portrait from Er-Rubayat, late second century AD. Malibu, Getty Villa: inv. 74.AP.11; © HIP / Art Resource, NY.

For all its nods to the emperor, this is an artefact that reflects knowingly on its feat of literary and artistic composition.³⁵ Before tackling the issue of ‘reading’ the poem’s ‘portrait’, I therefore begin by exploring the verbal imagery with which Optatian draws out his project. I restrict myself here to just six themes: each concerns a specific characteristic of the metapoetic — as indeed metapictorial — commentary of our text; cumulatively, however, these ‘medial reflections’ will form the backdrop for my subsequent remarks about the pattern figured within.

My first observation concerns the explicit presentation of this work as poem and picture alike. Of course, the bulk of the text is dedicated to the challenges

³⁵ For a broader introduction to ‘Optaziano metapoeta’ see Pipitone, 2012a: 95–146.

of poetic composition.³⁶ One thinks of vv. 17–18, for example, which talk of arranging the ‘woven endeavours’ (*intexta ... orsa*) ‘along an equal path’ (*parili sub tramite*) — that is, of ensuring each vertical and horizontal line is made up of an ‘equal’ number of 35 letters. When Optatian elaborates on the metrical laws that bind the poet to take care of his words (*quantis sua uerba tueri | legibus adstrictae*, vv. 21–2), the thinking proves to be no less metaliterary: after all, the poet must keep an eye not only on the number of lettered constituents in each line, but also on the metrical lengths of his *uerba*. Yet the commentary of the poem does not concern poetry alone. For alongside his reflections on literary composition, Optatian also draws attention to the ‘painterly’ dimensions at work. In vv. 15–16, the poet expressly refers to ‘painted measures’ (*pictis ... modulis*), just as v. 35 constructs the page as something ‘painted’ (*picta* — reused in v. vi).³⁷ Still more explicit is the reference to the ‘knotted visions of art’ (*nodosos uisus artis*, v. 30). Optatian here relies on the multiple connotations of the term *ars* — a word that (like *technē* in Greek) can refer to feats of literary and artistic craftsmanship alike. At the same time, he emphasizes the visual dimension of his written text: we are dealing with something not just to be read, but also to be *seen*.

In this connection, second, it is worth noting the poetic-pictorial conceit underlying the ‘golden age’ of Constantine. Optatian emphasizes this idea at two places within the poem (*aurea ... saecula*, v. 12; *aurea saecla*, v. 18), capitalizing on a long-standing tradition of imperial panegyric;³⁸ in its repetition of v. 18, the highlighted horizontal verse at the centre repeats the sentiment, telling how the poet ‘seals the golden age in his verse’ (*uersu consignans aurea saecla*, v. v). But what should we make of this ‘goldenness’?

³⁶ Those difficulties are most conspicuous in the use of single letters to make up not just two words, but even three: in v. 10, the letter ‘A’ is recycled three times in the words *tua*, *quaerentur* and *tali*; likewise, in v. 26, the same letter can again be found in the words *tanto*, *laeta* and *uario*.

³⁷ For other references to Optatian’s ‘painterly’ creations see, for example, 1.4 (*picto limite dicta notans*); 4.7 (*uicennia picta*); 5.7–8 (*Musa | ... pingit*); 5.25 (*spe pinget carmen*); 5.26 (*uersu ... picto*); 5.iii (*pingens ... mea Camena*); 6.34 (*depictis ... metris*); 7.7 (*picto sub carmine*); 8.1–2 (*picta nouis elegis ... | clementis pia signa dei uotumque perenne*); 10.9 (*pingentem* — although the reading is debated, cf. Polara, 1973: 73–4); 18.21 (*pictorum*); 19.20 (*arte notis picta*); 22.9 (*pingit*, repeated in 22.12); 22.viii (*bene picta Musa metris*); 22.xiii–xiv (*picta notabo | iura Camenis*).

³⁸ For the celebration of Constantine’s ‘golden age’ (*aurea saecula*) cf. 5.28, 7.24, 14.19, 15.6, 19.2, 19.32 — with discussion in Rühl, 2006: 79 and Wienand, 2012a: 373–96. The second poem delights in a similar game as the third, this time explicitly signalled in its choice of verb (*disponere*): contained within the grid — which is surrounded on all four sides with the same request for the emperor to have mercy on the exiled poet — are the words *aurea sic mundo disponas saecula toto* (‘May you thus set out in order your golden age throughout the whole world’, 2.ii; cf. Rühl, 2006: 84–6). One might also compare the allusion to the *aurei saeculi restaurator* emblazoned in poem 10 (10.v); the ‘golden signs’ of poem 12 (*aurea ... insignia*, 12.iii — in turn associated with the *felicitis tempora saeculi*); and the reference to the ‘golden light’ in poem 18 (*aurea uictorem pietas sonat ubere lingua*, 18.iv). In each case, as in our third poem, the physical presentation of these *uersus intexti* may have materialized the figure of ‘goldenness’.

Needless to say, we do not know how this poem was originally presented: our only evidence comes in the form of much later medieval manuscripts (Figs 6–8).³⁹ It nonetheless seems important that, at least in other contexts, Optatian talks of the multicoloured hues of his poems: nowhere is this more vivid than in the first poem, where Optatian describes his former *œuvre* as ‘written with letters that glitter in silver and gold’ (*argento auroque coruscis | scripta notis*, 1.3–4).⁴⁰ Were we to think — as seems likely — that some of the letters within our poem might likewise have been inscribed in gold (cf. Fig. 8), the very sentiment of the ‘golden age’ would have been manifested through the written form of the text.⁴¹ The play on the word *consignans* (‘sealing’ — and thereby ‘establishing’, ‘indicating’ and ‘authenticating’), emblazoned along the crux of v. 18 (*uersu consignans aurea saecla*), nicely champions the point: as combined poetic and pictorial *signa*, the marks on the page offer a visual literalization — which is to say also a literal visualization! — of an imperial ‘golden age’.⁴²

A third, and again related, theme lies in the rhetoric of *elementa*. In the final line of the poem (v. 35), Optatian refers to its ‘elemental’ units (*picta elementorum uario per musica textu*), playfully ‘varying’ the spatial layout of the same hexameter at the bottom of the page (v. iii): the artefact, we are told, is ‘painted according to the lore of the Muses with varied weave of elements’.⁴³ But what should we make of these *elementa*? By the time Optatian was writing, there was a long tradition of discussing the cosmological ‘elements’ of the universe in relation to the constituent units of language. In the first century BC Lucretius had turned to the example of alphabetic letters to expound his Epicurean theory of *elementa* (DRN 2.682–92; cf. 1.196–7): as the elemental

³⁹ On the manuscript traditions see above, n. 26.

⁴⁰ For other related passages see Bruhat, 2009: 116 (with p. 115 n. 36 — citing 1.4, 3.15, 3.35, 3.iii, 4.7, 5.8, 5.25, 5.iii, 6.34, 7.7, 8.1, 18.21, 19.20). More generally on the luxury codices of late antiquity see Mazal, 1999: 95–8 (mentioning Optatian at p. 96); Mratschek, 2000; Zimmerman, 2001.

⁴¹ Admittedly, the scholia (on which see below, p. 202) refer to a cinnabar-red colour, not to a gilded presentation (*et est primus uersus minio per amfractum a prima littera usque ad ultimam litteram primi uersus*). But this reference need not apply to earlier presentations of the poem. It is perhaps also revealing that one manuscript (codex M: Codex Monacensis Latinus 706^a [Fig. 8]) substitutes the word *minio* with *aureo*, in light of its own ‘golden’ presentation (cf. Pipitone, 2012a: 36, with discussion of the same substitution in the context of the scholia on poem 2 at pp. 32–3). Although we cannot be sure about the original presentation of Optatian’s poems, ‘indubbiamente, è naturale, la prima edizione doveva essere quella di lusso’ (Pipitone, 2012a: 33 n. 19).

⁴² Optatian’s talk of *pagina* (vv. 33, iv) seems significant, and is paralleled in numerous other passages (cf. 4.2, 4.9, 7.11, 8.i, 9.13, 19.4, 19.35; for *charta* cf. 1.7) As Wienand (2012a: 364) writes, it is plausible ‘dass damit lose Seiten gemeint sind, möglich — und wohl insgesamt wahrscheinlicher — ist aber auch, dass die einzelnen *paginae* zu einem Codex gebunden waren’ (cf. also Ernst, 1991: 141; Ernst, 2012: 1.59–60). More generally on the development of the codex see, for example, C.H. Roberts and Skeat, 1983; Blanck, 1992: 75–101; Mazal, 1999: 125–51; Stanton, 2004; Schipke, 2013: esp. 143–52; cf. Engels and Hofmann, 1997b: 67–76.

⁴³ For related references to the *elementa* of Optatian’s creations see 20b.9, 26.22 — with more detailed discussion in Squire, forthcoming a.

building-blocks of linguistic expression, letters were analogous to the raw elements of nature.⁴⁴ This ‘atomistic’ view of language was played out in multiple other Roman contexts — from Quintilian’s prescription that young children should play with ‘ivory forms of letters’ in order to learn their syllables (1.1.26)⁴⁵ to the linguistic games of the so-called *tabulae lusoriae* (in which players joined up segregated verbal units to form a variety of Latin words).⁴⁶ Late antique grammarians also took up the thinking. As Sergius puts it (most likely writing in the fifth century AD), individual letters are the essential elements of verbal communication: for ‘the letter alone cannot be split into any further division’ (*littera sola non habet quo solvatur*), we are told, and ‘it is for this reason that it is called “indivisible” by philosophers’ (*ideo a philosophis atomos dicitur*).⁴⁷ The overriding game of Optatian’s poem is premised upon a related view of language, whereby individual words can be broken down into their constituent components. But the poet also delights in the fact that his *elementa* can be put together to form new compound entities: the elements are building-blocks for manufactured creations that function visually and verbally at once; the picture that the poem yields, in short, exploits the *elementa* to generate further words, phrases and poetic hexameters in turn.

My fourth observation pertains to the poetic imagery in which the poet interlaces this act of manufacture: namely, as an art of *weaving*. At numerous points within the poem (*textit*, v. 15; *intexta*, v. 17; *intexere*, v. 28; *textu*, v. 35), we find Optatian crafting an analogy between the process of poetic and pictorial composition and that of manufacturing a textured fabric. As a self-proclaimed *nexus* (vv. 13, 25), the very form of this artefact is imagined in terms of something sewn or interlaced.⁴⁸ Of course, the figurative analogy between composing poetry and spinning a yarn had a long literary history among Greek and Latin authors alike.⁴⁹ Among Optatian’s contemporaries, it was also replayed in the genre of the *cento* — that is, of poems ‘stitched’

⁴⁴ For discussion of the Lucretian passages (and analysis of the earlier intellectual debts that inform them) see Dionigi, 1988: 34–7. For the relevance of Lucretius to Optatian see Buisset, 2006: 202–4, proposing a direct allusion in poem 25 (‘L’image, très parlante, des lettres constituant les mots convient à Lucrèce pour illustrer la théorie des atomes, et il est certain que les vers d’Optatian évoquaient ce passage pour son public’, p. 203).

⁴⁵ On this passage and other related testimonia cf. Baroin, 2010: 79–80; Squire, 2014b: 413–15.

⁴⁶ For the extant Roman ‘gaming tablets’ see the catalogue of Ferrua 2001 (with references to Ferrua’s earlier catalogues of 1946, 1948 and 1964); cf. Purcell, 1995: 17–28 (citing earlier bibliography at p. 18 n. 69); Friedrich, 2001: 81–100; and Habinek, 2009: 125–7. The parallel with Optatian’s grid-poems is discussed in Körfer, *forthcoming*.

⁴⁷ *GL* IV, 475; cf. Gualandri, *forthcoming*.

⁴⁸ The punning language of ‘weaving’ (*texere*) a manufactured ‘fabric’ is a mainstay throughout the corpus: cf. 4.9 (*textu*); 6.2 (*textit*); 9.13 (*texens*); 9.v (*intextus uersus*); 16.5 (*alio textu*); 17.8 (*uerbum textum*); 19.19 (*texta*); 19.25 (*uisam contexere nauem*); 20b.4 (*texta*); 21.16 (*texti ... uersus*). On the metapoetic language see in particular Bruhat, 1999: 107–14 and 2009: esp. 116–17, 124–5.

⁴⁹ On the metaphor and its metapoetic significance see Scheid and Svenbro, 1996, along now with Scheidegger Lämmle, 2015 (with stimulating discussion of Optatian at pp. 176–83).

together from the fabric of the poetic past (above all, lines from Virgil).⁵⁰ For Optatian, this materialist metaphor seems to take on an additional significance, brilliantly figuring a unique sort of poetic–pictorial cross-stich. It is in this context that we should understand the term that Optatian coins for the verses interlaced within the gridded poems: in the ninth poem, one such apparition is described as an *intextus ... uersus* — an ‘interwoven verse’ embroidered into the tapestry of the text (9.v; cf. 21.16: *texti ... uersus*). When, in our poem, Optatian tells how Calliope ‘weaves the songs with difficulty in Phoebus’ painted measures’ (*mea uix pictis dum textit carmina Phoebi | Calliope modulis*, vv.15–16) — or how the page is ‘painted according to the Muses’ lore with varied weave of elements’ (*picta elementorum uario per musica textu*, v. 35 — repeated in v. vi) — the poet interlaces the literary metaphor over a materialist rhetoric of artistic manufacture: part of the ‘variety’ of this production lies in its textile combinations of painted figure and textured word.

But — and this is my fifth point — our *textus* is not simply something ‘written’, ‘painted’ or indeed ‘woven’. As a script that must be animated by the voice of the reading respondent, this poem is presented as something to be performed.⁵¹ If the poet declares himself to be a *uates* (vv. 5, 7, 23, v), he likewise heralds his creation as *carmen* — not just a ‘poem’ on the page, but also a ‘song’ for oral recital (*carminis*, v. 5; *carmina*, vv. 15, 24; *carmen*, vv. 28, 32; *carmine*, v. i). Almost as soon as the first verse introduces the topos of the *uultus*, Optatian underscores the point, telling how the Muses are now *singing* of Constantine’s deeds (*gesta canunt*, v. 4; cf. *canunt*, v. 24; *canens*, v. 33). So great are those feats, it seems, that they call for a vocal response in turn (*uoce*, v. 23; cf. *ore*, v. 6; *ore*, v. 31), responding to the call of Constantine himself (*uocas*, v. 8). Just as Constantine will ‘hear’ the resulting artefact (*audis*, v. 10), so too will this creation itself sound (*uersu instigans ora sonare*, v. 7; *sonare*, v. 25): not only does the creation promise to ‘speak’ and ‘be proclaimed’ (*loqui*, v. 20; *fari*, v. 27; *loqui*, v. 31), it responds to things already spoken (*dicta*, v. 9), and likewise points to the potential of future speech (*dicturus*, v. 14).

From this perspective, Optatian might be said to enact a lesson not just in ‘reading’ a Roman portrait, but also, as it were, in ‘singing’ one: words, images and sounds are all interwoven within the multimedial tapestry. This performative aspect is echoed in the final line of the poem — a verse, as we have said, which is also laid out in ‘varied’ spatial form towards the bottom of the grid: *picta elementorum uario per musica textu* (vv. 35, iv). Like so many

⁵⁰ On the sixteen extant Latin *centones* and their history (stretching back to at least the second century AD, but reaching a climax in the fourth and early fifth) see, for example, Charlet, 1997: 533–7; McGill, 2005; Bažil, 2009; Hernández Lobato, 2012: 262–317; Peltari, 2014: esp. 96–112; Elsner, forthcoming.

⁵¹ For a recent championing of the point see Männlein-Robert, forthcoming (with stimulating discussion of poem 3). More generally on ancient literature’s concern with sonority and oral performance see the provocative introduction of Butler, 2015.

others, the verse proves difficult to render into English. In the translation above, I opted for ‘painted according to the Muses’ lore with varied weave of elements’. But the substantive adjective *musica* is rather more multifaceted. On one level, *musica* of course refers to things that pertain to the Muses. And yet, on another, the adjective can simultaneously refer to things that are ‘musical’, ‘tuneful’ and ‘melodious’. It is not just ‘pictorial’ elements that make up Optatian’s ‘varied weave’, in other words. Intrinsic to Optatian’s feat is also an idea of musical performance — inscribed within something ‘painted according to *music* with varied weave of elements’.⁵²

This takes me to a sixth preliminary observation — and to a paradox. For despite all the talk of sound, this interweaving of poem and picture is predicated upon an audience *viewing* the artefact on the page (*pagina*, v. 33) rather than hearing it spoken or sung. To put the point negatively, we might say that the very promise of performance — so emphatically championed throughout the text — threatens to disentangle the pictorial–poetic cross-stitch. The observation goes hand in hand with the repeated talk of ‘limitations’.⁵³ When in vv. 28–9 Optatian declares it a ‘wondrous work of the mind to weave a song into verses in various directions’ (*mentis opus mirum metris intexere carmen | ad uarios cursus*), his image of cognitive freedom is set against the idea of boundaries, constraints and restrictions — of being ‘trapped in narrow confine’ (*arto in limite clausa*, v. 29).⁵⁴ No less important are vv. 13–14, addressing the potential of a poem to ‘move’ (*mouet*) the Muses — albeit in the context of a poem, distinct from the poet’s present verses (*at mea . . . carmina*), which are poignantly not ‘in their metres freed from the law of the weave’ (*nexus lege solutis | . . . metris*). Despite its loaded potentiality — for picture, as indeed for song — this is an artefact that emblazons the question of ‘limits’ first and foremost.

MASQUERADE: READING BETWEEN THE LINES?

It is at this point that I want to proceed from the text of our poem to the image of its woven apparition (Figs 5–8). For just what kind of *uultus* is shown here? How should we make sense of its form? And how might any interpretation of the picture align with a reading of the poetic text that figures it?

⁵² Needless to say, this underlying idea of ‘music’ in the third poem chimes with numerous other examples within the corpus: not for nothing, for example, do two of Optatian picture-poems visualize a ‘water-organ’ and set of panpipes (poems 20 [Fig. 1], 27), so that the very form of the text substantiates the promise of musical performance.

⁵³ For the best discussion see Bruhat, 2009, discussing this poem at pp. 115–17.

⁵⁴ Rühl (2006: 96) nicely compares the first three *uersus intexti* of poem 5: *cum sic scripta placent, audent sibi deuia Musae | per uarios signare modos deuotaque mentis | gaudia, quae pingens loquitur mea, Phoebe, Camena*.

One way of reconstructing what earlier audiences might have seen in the picture is to examine the extant scholia.⁵⁵ After drawing out each of the *uersus intexti*, the scholiast tradition characterized the figurative scheme as a polygonal pattern: ‘on this page there are four hexagons with an equal number of letters, and eight orthogonal triangles, again with equal numbers of letters, which increase or decrease in turn by way of single letters’ (*in hac pagina quattuor hexagona sunt pari numero litterarum, et octo orthogona adaeque pari numero litterarum per singulas litteras crescentia uel decrescentia*). According to this geometric interpretation, the figure amounts to a series of linear forms: first, the scholiast divides the pattern into four eight-sided shapes (each occupying a symmetrical quarter of the page); second, he proceeds around the edges of the grid, noting a series of triangular patterns that vary from nine to ten letters along their two equilateral lengths.⁵⁶

But how might such a shape be understood — by any stretch of the imagination — to figure the *uultus* of Constantine? The problem has vexed modern readers, and none more so than Giovanni Polara.⁵⁷ Over and above any other living scholar, Polara has strived to rehabilitate Optatian’s scholarly standing. But Polara was stumped by the pictorial form of this particular example. According to his 1973 commentary, the pattern is said to have functioned as an elaborate *praeteritio*: it offers a poetic explanation as to why such a *uultus Augusti* would be impossible (hence the metapoetic reflections not only in the main text, but also in the *uersus intexti*, with their reference to the ‘unbroken law of the metre and verse’, *metri et uersus lege manente*, v. ii). Later, Polara ventured an alternative suggestion, supposing that the poem might have served as a preface to a different work. According to this subsequent argument, Optatian wrote a poem that *did* succeed in visualizing the *uultus* of the emperor — but one very different from the text at hand, and long since lost.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ On the scholia see the important discussion of Pipitone, 2012a, discussing this particular commentary at pp. 35–9: Pipitone argues that the scholia on poem 3 — like those on poems 2, 5–8, 10, 12–16, 20–1 and 25 — belong to the earliest group; he likewise speculates that they might even date to the time of Constantine himself (Pipitone, 2012a: 28–30, 91–3, a view endorsed by Wienand, 2012a: 371 n. 44).

⁵⁶ Some triangles, we might note, are equilateral with nine letters on all three sides, while others are isosceles with ten letters along two lengths and nineteen letters along the unmarked space of the margin.

⁵⁷ Polara, 1973: II, 39; cf. Polara, 1978: 345–8; 2004: 68. Polara also compares scenarios in other poems (e.g. Polara, 1978: 346 n. 60 on the promise of visualizing Iris at 21.8–10, with Polara, 1973: II, 137, 138–9); cf. Gualandri, 1977: 185; Bruhat, 1999: 141–6; Pozzi, 2002: 155–6 (noting later imitations); Rühl, 2006: 82, 93–4; Bruhat, 2009: 117; Pipitone, 2012a: 37–9.

⁵⁸ Cf. Polara, 2004: 68: ‘... la mancata rispondenza fra l’immagine geometrica rappresentata dai *uersus intexti* e questo programma è evidente, e si potrà forse pensare che qui il poeta esponga un suo progetto da realizzare in altre composizioni, così come alle fine del c. VI (33–35) è preannunciato un carne raffigurante un trofeo, che può essere il c. VII. In questo caso, bisognerà concludere che il carne col volto dell’imperatore non fu poi composto, o non ci è pervenuto.’ Compare also Rühl, 2006: 82: ‘Aufgrund der fehlenden technischen Möglichkeiten hat der rubrizierte Intext dann aber

In my view, neither of these explanations is satisfactory. For whatever else we make of the poem, Optatian seems to paint a rather more complex picture. As we read the text and its *uersus intexti*, we find the poet reflecting knowingly on the (im)possibility of representing a portrait of the emperor. The very question of whether the image is a portrait, no less than what viewers/readers should make of it, is — deliberately — left open.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the poem's opening lines (vv. 1–3):

Fingere Musarum flagrare numine uultus,
alme parens orbis, perfecta in munia uersu
uotaque, si ratio non abnuat ordine Phoebi.

I would be burning to fashion your face in verse with the power of the Muses, kindly father of the world, in fulfilment of my duties and prayers, should my scheme not depart from the rule of Phoebus.

Optatian opens the poem with an elaborate conditional sentence. But, as Petra Schierl and Cédric Scheidegger Lämmle remind us, these verses combine different registers of conditional possibility.⁵⁹ The phrase expressing the condition ('protasis') is delayed, so as to appear in the third verse. But it differs in tense — and hence meaning — from the opening main clause ('apodosis'): while the sentence begins with an apodosis in the unreal present (*fingerere ... flagrare* — marking an impossibility through its imperfect subjunctive), the protasis of v. 3 is couched in a present subjunctive (*abnuat*), holding out a remote — but not excluded — possibility.⁶⁰

A similar tension recurs in the *uersus intexti* that zigzag across the four sides of the grid (cf. above, p. 195). In these verses we find a conditional sentence that subtly reconfigures the opening lines of the poem, beginning in the verse that runs along the top of the page. Instead of the unreal present of the opening apodosis within the main poem (*fingerere Musarum flagrare numine uultus*), this first hexameter furnishes the phrase *fingerere Musa queat tali si carmine uultus ...* ('Were the Muse able to fashion the face in such song ...', v. i). At least three transformations have taken place. First, there is a change in subject: we move from the speaking poet (addressing his audience in the first person: *fingerere ... flagrare*) to a statement about the Muse (*fingerere Musa queat*). Second comes a shift in both tense and meaning: not only does the verb *queat* thrust questions of ability to the fore, it does so in the potential (rather than unreal) realm of a present subjunctive. Third, the apodosis of the main text — dependent on the

eben nicht die Form von Konstantins Konterfei, sondern nur die eines Musters, das Ähnlichkeit mit einem vierblättrigen Kleeblatt besitzt.'

⁵⁹ Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle, [forthcoming](#); cf. Polara, 1973: II, 35, 39 (with further comments in Gualandri, 1977: 185, comparing Virg. *Georg.* 4.116–19); Bruhat, 1999: 142 n. 268. I have not been able to consult Chmiel, 1930: 31 (as cited by Polara, 1978: 345–6 n. 57).

⁶⁰ As Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle ([forthcoming](#)) ask, '[L]iegt hier ein unsauberer Modus-Gebrauch vor, oder eine Selbstkorrektur im Fortgang des Gedankens?'

delayed subordinate clause of v. 3 (*si ratio non abnuat ordine Phoebi*) — has been turned inside out: the main clause of the ground-text has been reconfigured as a subordinate protasis. It is only when we look to the verse running along the right-hand side of the grid that we find the corresponding main clause of the conditional sentence: *uincere Apelleas audebit pagina ceras* (v. iv). Where the main poem had tendered an unreal suggestion in the imperfect subjunctive (*flagrarem*, v. 1), the mood of this apodosis has shifted (*audebit*, v. iv): the declaration that ‘the page will dare outdo Apellean waxes’ is now made to signal a very real prospect in the future indicative.⁶¹

That Optatian leaves these different registers of possibility unresolved is confirmed by the two verses that criss-cross the centre of the grid (vv. v–vi):

grandia quaerentur, si uatis laeta Camena
orsa iuuuet, uersu consignans aurea saecla.

Great things will be sought, should the joyful Muse favour her bard’s endeavours, sealing the golden age in verse.

With these hexameters, the poet inscribes a conditional sentence right at the literal and metaphorical crux of the poem; indeed the protasis and apodosis are themselves split across the criss-crossing verses, so that both occupy the horizontal and vertical axes alike. But these lines hardly settle the conditional ambiguities. On the one hand, the subordinate protasis is staked upon a less real future in the present subjunctive (*iuuet*). On the other, the apodosis is once again couched in a realizable passive future indicative (*quaerentur*). These central lines ‘seal’ the poem with a possibility that rests uneasily between different moods and tenses. And as with the other conditional phrases, the syntax turns out to be highly tactical, leaving readers to puzzle over the possible or impossible hypotheticals introduced: with each protasis and apodosis, we shift back and forth between a wholly unreal present prospect (imperfect subjunctive: *flagrarem*), a possibility in the less real future (present subjunctive: *abnuat*, *queat*, *iuuet*) and a more realizable future potential (future indicative: *audebit*, *quaerentur*).

Such syntactical ambiguities go hand in hand, I think, with the phrase that describes the project of ‘fashioning’ a portrait of Constantine: *fingere ... uultus* (vv. 1, i). The choice of both noun and verb strikes me as significant. In Latin, the word *uultus* does not quite equate to ‘face’. It refers instead to a ‘look’ or ‘countenance’ (which Optatian here renders in an accusative plural) — that is, to a mode of facial animation and expression.⁶² Numerous Latin authors help pinpoint the semantic range, above all by associating the *uultus* with a person’s

⁶¹ At the same time, the talk of ‘daring’ (*audebit*) echoes the main text’s prospect of speaking ‘boldly through untrodden paths’ (*audenterque loqui ... per deuia*, v. 20). One might likewise note here, following Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle ([forthcoming](#)), that the future indicative of the *uersus intexti* is mirrored in the syntax of the main poem’s final lines, with its talk of vows that the ‘painted ... page will fulfill’ (*pagina ... complebit ... picta*, vv. 33–5).

⁶² See *OLD* s.v. ‘*uultus*’. For further discussion see Hallett, 2005: 281–95, esp. pp. 282–5; cf. e.g. Pékary, 1985: 101–3; Giuliani, 1986: 222–38 (esp. p. 327 n. 33, comparing Q. Cic. *Comm. pet.* 44

mores ('character'). According to Cicero, who discusses the *uultus* as something moulded by the mind (*uultus, cum mentis, a qua is fingitur ...*, *Tusc.* 3.31), the 'countenance' could be called both the *imago animi* ('mirror of the emotions': *De or.* 3.221; cf. *Orat.* 60) and *sermo tacitus mentis* ('silent speech of the mind', *Pis.* 1.1).⁶³ Noting that the Greeks have no corresponding word, Cicero likewise observes that 'what we call the *uultus*, which can be found in no living creature save man, is a mark of *mores*' (*is, qui appellatur uultus, qui nullo in animante esse praeter hominem potest, indicat mores*, *Leg.* 1.27).⁶⁴ If the *uultus* gives outward form to something so 'internal' and 'invisible' as the rational soul (*animus*), abstract things could also have a *uultus* attributed to them — among them 'law' (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.31), rhetorical 'eloquence' (e.g. Tac. *Dial.* 18.3) and 'oratory' (e.g. Quint. 9.1.21).⁶⁵

The multiple connotations of the word *uultus* — referring to something that can be both concrete and abstract — should be understood in connection with the infinitive verb *fingere*.⁶⁶ The primary meaning of this verb is of course to 'mould' or 'shape' — especially in the context of plastic media (thereby adding a third 'sculptural' dimension to Optatian's talk of 'painting').⁶⁷ Yet this image of physical 'fashioning' could also be applied to works of literary 'fiction': *fingere* could refer metaphorically to the act not just of 'coining' words, but also of 'composing' poems. No less importantly, the word can suggest a *mental* picture — that is, the idea of conjuring up an image in the mind's eye of the subject (translating the Greek word *πλάττειν*).⁶⁸ With the phrase *fingere uultus*, then, Optatian loads his poem with a range of ideas, suggesting at once a physical, literary and conceptual mode of forging Constantine's *uultus*. Depending upon how seriously we take the variations in the conditional

— where the *uultus ac frons* is referred to as the *animi ianua*); Corbeill, 2004: 147–50; Meister, 2012: 53–7, esp. p. 54; Squire, 2014a: 66–9.

⁶³ Corbeill (2004: 150) compares Quint. 11.3.72: in this passage, Quintilian explains how, in a rhetorical performance, the facial countenance 'dominates most of all', since 'through it we obtain the best understanding' so that often 'it takes the place of all words' (*dominatur autem maxime uultus ... hoc plurima intellegimus, hic est saepe pro omnibus uerbis*).

⁶⁴ On the passage see especially Corbeill, 1996: 30–5, along with Kenter, 1972: 115 and the further parallels listed by Dyck, 2004: 140–1 ad loc.

⁶⁵ For *uultus* as 'an aspect, appearance (of abstr. things)' see *OLD s.v. 'uultus'* 6.

⁶⁶ As Optatian must have known full well (cf. Bruhat, 1999: 142), there were good reasons for eschewing any such physical likeness of the emperor's face. The creation and dissemination of imperial portraiture was carefully controlled, and by the later fourth century laws were in place to prevent the propagation of such 'unofficial' representations: particularly relevant (in the context of *picturae professors*) is *Cod. Theod.* 13.4.4: cf. Pekáry, 1985: 14; Nowicka, 1993: 56).

⁶⁷ That three-dimensional aspect is perhaps further nuanced by the reference to 'Apellean waxes' (*Apelleas ... ceras*, v. vi): the allusion is of course to encaustic painting, but Optatian goes out of his way to emphasize material facture.

⁶⁸ See *OLD s.v. 'fingo'* (with 6a for the meaning 'to compose (poems and other literary works)' — as attested by e.g. Cic. *Leg.* 1.27, *Ad Her.* 1.13 and Hor. *Ars P.* 119, 151, 338); on the additional meaning to 'form or convey a mental picture, conjure up in the mind, visualize' (*OLD s.v. 'fingo'* 8a) and the relationship with *πλάττειν* cf. below, pp. 225–6.

clauses, we might detect an additional semantic resonance too: taken together, the Latin phrase *fingere uultus* could refer to acts of ‘modifying’ or ‘transforming’ facial expression — that is, of ‘disguising’, ‘hiding’ or indeed ‘masquerading’ one’s true character.⁶⁹

Our artefact might be thought the ultimate in ‘masquerade’: as we have observed, it raises the prospect of visualizing a *uultus* , while remaining non-committal about whether that prospect has been/is being/will be (or for that matter *could* be) fulfilled. Optatian leaves such questions poignantly unanswered. Yet in playing with the very possibility of rendering a *uultus* in verse, he also situates his conceit against a particular literary critical backdrop. For whatever we make of the actual pattern of his verses, Optatian draws upon a long-standing literary topos about the respective ability of words and pictures to fashion a ‘true’ portrait of their subject.

One important intertext — as first noted by Marie-Odile Bruhat — comes in an epigram by Martial, addressed to Caecilius Secundus. Within a poem expressly devoted to the comparative resources of painting and language, above all their capacity to fashion a *uultus* , Martial had staged a comparison between a purported ‘painted tablet’ (*picta tabella*) and poetry (7.84):⁷⁰

Dum mea Caecilio formatur imago Secundo
spirat et arguta picta tabella manu,
i, liber, ad Geticam Peucen Histrumque iacentem:
haec loca perdomitis gentibus ille tenet.
parua dabis caro, sed dulcia, dona sodali:
certior in nostro carmine uultus erit;
casibus hic nullis, nullis debilis annis
uiuet, Apelleum cum morietur opus.

While my portrait is being made for Caecilius Secundus, and while the picture, painted by a skillful hand, seems to breathe, go, my book, to the Getic Peuce and the submissive Danube; this is his post, among the conquered people. You will give a little gift to my dear friend, but a sweet one: my countenance will be surer in my verse. This [*uultus* of verse] will live, indestructible by accidents or lapse of years, while the work of Apelles shall die.

This self-declared *carmen* provides a striking precedent for our poem. Just as Martial adduces an *Apelleum opus* as a counterpart to poetry, Optatian develops the same analogy, relating his *carmine uultus* (v. i) to ‘Apellean waxes’

⁶⁹ Cf. e.g. Caes. *Gall.* 1.39.4: *uultum fingere* ; Cic. *De off.* 2.43: *quodsi qui simulatione et inani ostentatione et ficto non modo sermone, sed etiam uultu stabilem se gloriam consequi posse rentur, uehementer errant* ; *Clu.* 72: *fictos simulatosque uultus* ; Ov. *Met.* 4.319: *finxit uultum* . On the literary topos of the counterfeit *uultus* in Tacitus’ *Annals* compare O’Gorman, 2000: 78–105; see also the wide-ranging analyses of Corbeill, 2004: esp. 140–67 and Meister, 2012: 249–55.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bruhat, 1999: 145–6. On the poem see the commentary of Galán Vioque, 2002: 455–8 (supposing that the portrait ‘is probably referring to a picture intended to go at the beginning of an edition of his work’, p. 455). For an introduction to the long-running literary contest between poetry or statuary as the more efficient monumental memorial see Benediktson, 2000: esp. 12–40, and above all Steiner, 2001: 251–94 (esp. pp. 279–81 on Isoc. *Evag.* 2.73–5).

(*Apelleas ceras*, v. iv); indeed, Optatian even uses the same adjectival form found in the earlier epigram.⁷¹ If Optatian alludes to Martial's poem, he nonetheless goes beyond its critical framework. While Martial ultimately stages a distinction between poem and picture, Optatian tenders the promise of uniting the two: the *uultus* is rendered within the *carmen*, and the *carmen* is constructed out of the *uultus*. Such knowing recourse to literary precedent also has significance in its own right: both the themes and language of Optatian's poem are comprised from the *spolia* of the literary past — paralleling, among other things, the sorts of spoliation found in Constantinian art (and nowhere more programmatically than on Constantine's eponymous triumphal arch at Rome).⁷²

But Martial forms just part of the literary critical picture. For both Optatian and Martial alike play upon a still longer topos of poetically responding to portraiture. In this connection, it is worth recalling what we have said about the poem's multiple references to its sonorous qualities, not least through its repeated references to 'speaking', 'declaring' and 'singing' (cf. above, pp. 200–1). Within the generic frameworks of Greek and Latin epigram, especially epigrams on painted or sculpted portraits, this element of 'speech' was a mainstay for contemplating the respective workings of poetic and pictorial composition. It was Simonides who, in the early fifth century BC, famously declared painting to be 'silent poetry' and poetry poem to be 'speaking painting'.⁷³ By the Hellenistic period, we find Greek epigrammatists contemplating portraits in closely related terms.⁷⁴ Among the most celebrated examples is an epigram on a painting of Agatharcis preserved in the *Greek Anthology*, and attributed to Erinna (*Anth. Pal.* 6.352 = Erinna 3 G–P):⁷⁵

⁷¹ For other examples of the adjective *Apelleus* see — in addition to Mart. 11.9.2 — e.g. Prop. 1.2.22 (*Apelleis ... tabulis*); Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.100 (*Apelleae ... cerae*); 2.2.64 (*Apellei ... colores*); 5.1.4–6 (*Apelleo ... colore*). Of these, the most important parallel is Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.100 (= *DNO* IV, 192–3, no. 2946): in his poem on the equestrian statue of the emperor Domitian, not only does Statius anticipate Optatian's phrasing (*Apelleas ... ceras*), but he does so in the context of an analogy between 'painting' and 'writing' (*Apelleae cuperent te scribere cerae*, *Silv.* 1.1.100; cf. Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle, *forthcoming*).

⁷² For some of the intertexts see the presentation of the poem in Polara, 1973: I, 15–16. On Constantine and the aesthetics of spoliation on his eponymous arch see Elsner, 2000 (noting the parallel with Optatian at p. 175); cf. Prusac, 2012 and Varner, 2014 (on Constantine's reuse of earlier imperial portraits, discussing the arch at pp. 64–70).

⁷³ See Plut. *Mor.* [*De Glor. Ath.*] 346f = Simonides frg. 190b Bergk: 'Simonides says that a picture is a silent poem, and a poem a speaking picture' (ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποιήσιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποιήσιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν). For discussions see, for example, Carson, 1992; Sprigath, 2004; Männlein-Robert, 2007a: 20–2; Squire, 2013a: 161 (on the debts to the Homeric 'shield of Achilles' description at *Il.* 18.478–608). On the related Horatian maxim of *ut pictura poesis* (*Ars P.* 361) see especially Hardie, 1993, along with the wide-ranging treatment of the posthumous reception in Barkan, 2013.

⁷⁴ For some introductions see — now amid a burgeoning bibliography — Gutzwiller, 2002; Meyer, 2005; Petrovic, 2005; Männlein-Robert, 2007a; Männlein-Robert, 2007b; Tueller, 2008: esp. 141–54; Squire, 2010a; Squire, 2010b: esp. 82–8; Christian, 2015: esp. 28–107. On the late antique reception of these ideas, Boeder, 1996 remains fundamental.

⁷⁵ For recent discussions of the poem see Skinner, 2001: 206–9; Gutzwiller, 2002: 88–91; Meyer, 2007: 197–8; Männlein-Robert, 2007a: 38–43; Tueller, 2008: 142–3.

Ἐξ ἀταλῶν χειρῶν τάδε γράμματα· λῶσθε Προμαθεῦ,
 ἔντι καὶ ἄνθρωποι τὴν ὁμαλοὶ σοφίαν.
 ταύταν γοῦν ἐτύμως, τὴν παρθένον ὅστις ἔγραψεν,
 αἱ καλῶν ποτέθηκ', ἧς κ' Ἀγαθαρχίς ὄλα.

This painting/writing [*grammata*] is the work of delicate hands. Most excellent Prometheus, there are humans as clever as you! At least if the person who so accurately depicted/wrote [*egrapsen*] this girl had only also added a voice, you would be Agatharchis complete.

While punning on the dual meanings of the Greek words *graphein* and *gramma*, and thereby drawing out an analogy between written words and painted imagery, Erinna's poem supplies the voice that painting, *qua* painting, lacks. There can be no doubt that Optatian was aware of this critical tradition. What is so special about his creation, however, is once again its *fusion* of words and images: where Cicero had labelled the *uultus* the 'silent speech of the mind', the text of Optatian's *uultus* promises to talk, sound and sing. Indeed, one of the ways in which the resulting page might be said to 'dare outdo the waxes of Apelles' (*uincere Apelleas audebit pagina ceras*, v. vi) lies precisely in its promise of bestowing voice on the picture.

We will return a little later to literary responses to portraits. Before proceeding, however, it is worth pausing to say a little more about the reference to Apelles specifically. In my view, the very allusion to Apelles here supplies an additional prompt to see the poem's *uultus* as more than mere literary fiction. By the time Optatian was writing, 'Apellean' was of course a byword for painterly virtuosity: the work of this fourth-century BC painter was synonymous with the very best in Classical Greek painting.⁷⁶ But it is perhaps significant that Apelles was also legendary for his portraits of a particular patron: according to long ancient tradition, Alexander the Great entrusted Apelles with painting his portraits, just as he gave Lysippus and Pyrgoteles a monopoly in representing him in statuary and glyptic gems.⁷⁷ Within a poem expressly dedicated to the theme of depicting Constantine, the reference to the preferred portraitist of Alexander seems particularly pointed. As Marie-Odile Bruhat has noted, Apellean images of Alexander were a live topic among earlier Roman imperial writers, who exploited them to debate the nature of the emperor's imperial image (no less than modes of literary patronage).⁷⁸ Still more important is the fact that, in fashioning his own self-image, Constantine seems to have

⁷⁶ Cf. *DNO* IV, 185–93, nos. 2936–49. In connection with our poem, one might further note the Plinian reference to Apelles as someone who 'also painted things that cannot be painted' (*pinxit et quae pingi non possunt*, *HN* 35.96).

⁷⁷ For the numerous anecdotes see *DNO* IV, 128–31, nos. 2582–9, along with e.g. *DNO* IV, 167–73, nos. 2910–18.

⁷⁸ Bruhat, 1999: 144–5 (discussing Hor. *Epod.* 2.1.264–70): 'En prétendant surpasser Apelle, Optatien indique ... qu'il se range parmi les artistes les plus dignes de représenter l'empereur et que, grâce à son procédé poétique à double facette, il compte bien le faire à la fois comme peintre et comme poète' (p. 145); cf. Bruhat, 2009: 119; Schierl and Scheidegger Lämmle, *forthcoming* (comparing Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.7).



Fig. 10. Gold *solidus* of Constantine (minted in Siscia, c. AD 326–7). London, British Museum: inv. CM R.244; © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY.

knowingly nodded to Alexandrian iconographic models.⁷⁹ Quite apart from the emperor's studied recourse (from AD 313 onwards) to a young imperial image — apparently alluding to Julio-Claudian models (above all Augustus), as well as to that of Trajan⁸⁰ — there are various iconographic references on Constantinian coins. From AD 324 onwards, we find not only the motif of an upward gaze (emulating and adapting a type developed by Alexander),⁸¹ but also the addition of a kingly diadem, often studded with jewels and diamonds (Fig. 10): once again, the motif imitates a stylistic feature common on the coinage of Alexander and his immediate successors (for example, Fig. 11).⁸² When approached from the perspective of Constantine's own self-image in the 320s, the promise of outdoing 'Apellean waxes' takes on a political hue: it relates the imperial *uultus* of the poem to iconographic models that were being intensely revisited during the period.

⁷⁹ The most important introduction to Constantinian portraiture remains L'Orange, Unger and Wegner, 1984: 37–80. Other overviews include Bruun, 1966: esp. 24–46; Harrison, 1967; Wright, 1987: esp. 505–6; Alföldi, 1999: 172–89; Hannestad, 2001; Elsner, 2006: 260–4; Walter, 2006: esp. 14; Hannestad, 2007; Bardill, 2012: esp. 11–27; compare also Rowland Smith, 2007: esp. 177–8, 223–5 (on fourth-century imperial attitudes towards Alexander). On the history of Alexander's own image, R.R.R. Smith (1988) and A. Stewart (1993) provide standard introductions.

⁸⁰ For the change in iconography as 'the most extraordinary transformation of an emperor in the history of Roman portraiture' see Kleiner, 1992: 433–42 (quotation on p. 434); cf. Hannestad, 2001: esp. 95–8.

⁸¹ On the upward gaze, look down to pp. 226–30.

⁸² See Bardill, 2012: 11–19 (with further bibliography on the use of the diadem at p. 25 n. 24); cf. also Hannestad, 2001: 95–6, 100–1, and Wienand, 2012a: 393–5 (with additional references). On Fig. 10 (= London, British Museum, inv. CM R.244) see Bruun, 1966: 451, Siscia, no. 206.

There seems to be at least one other possible resonance to this reference to Apelles. If the allusion brings to mind the Alexandrian debts of Constantine's imperial self-image, it might also spark more metapoetic reflections. Particularly relevant is the well-known anecdote recorded by Pliny the Elder about a makeshift competition between Apelles and Protogenes. Here is the story in full (*HN* 35.81–3):⁸³



Fig. 11. Silver tetradrachm with a posthumous portrait of Alexander the Great (adorned with the ram's horns of Zeus-Ammon and wearing the royal diadem), 297–281 BC. Berlin, Staatliche Museen (Münzkabinett); © bpk / Münzkabinett, SMB (photograph by Reinhard Saczewski) / Art Resource, NY.

⁸³ *DNO* IV, 139–41, no. 2870. Compare also Plin. *HN* 35.84 (= *DNO* IV, 185, no. 2936), on how Apelles never let a day go by without drawing a line — ‘which has come through him to be proverbial’ (*Apelli fuit alioqui perpetua consuetudo numquam tam occupatum diem agendi, ut non lineam ducendo exerceret artem, quod ab eo in prouerbiū uenit*).

scitum inter Protogenen et eum quod accidit. ille Rhodi uiuebat, quo cum Apelles adnauigasset, audius cognoscendi opera eius fama tantum sibi cogniti, continuo officinam petiit. aberat ipse, sed tabulam amplae magnitudinis in machina aptatam una custodiebat anus. haec foris esse Protogenen respondit interrogauitque, a quo quaesitum diceret. ab hoc, inquit Apelles arreptoque penicillo lineam ex colore duxit summae tenuitatis per tabulam. et reuerso Protogeni quae gesta erant anus indicauit. ferunt artificem protinus contemplatum subtilitatem dixisse Apellen uenisse, non cadere in alium tam absolutum opus; ipsumque alio colore tenuiorem lineam in ipsa illa duxisse abeuntemque praecepisse, si redisset ille, ostenderet adiceretque hunc esse quem quaereret. atque ita euenit. reuertit enim Apelles et uinci erubescens tertio colore lineas secuit nullum relinquens amplius subtilitati locum. at Protogenes uictum se confessus in portum deuolauit hospitem quaerens, placuitque sic eam tabulam posteris tradi omnium quidem, sed artificum praecipuo miraculo. consumptam eam priore incendio Caesaris domus in Palatio audio, spectatam nobis ante, spatiosae nihil aliud continentem quam lineas uisum effugientes, inter egregia multorum opera inani similem et eo ipso allicientem omnique opere nobiliorem.

A clever incident took place between Protogenes and him [i.e. Apelles]. Protogenes lived at Rhodes, and Apelles sailed there from a desire to make himself acquainted with Protogenes' works, whom he knew only by reputation. He went at once to his studio. The artist was not in, but there was a panel of considerable size ready on the easel for painting, which was in the charge of a single old woman. When he asked, she told him that Protogenes was not at home, and asked who it was she should say wanted him. 'Say it was this person,' said Apelles, and taking up a brush he painted in colour across the panel an extremely fine line. When Protogenes returned the old woman showed him what had taken place. The story goes that the artist, after looking closely at the subtlety, immediately said that it was Apelles who had come: so perfect a piece of work tallied with nobody else; and he himself, using another colour, drew a still finer line exactly on the top of the first one, and leaving the room told her to show it to him if he returned, and to add that this was the man he was looking for. And so it turned out: for Apelles came back and, ashamed to be defeated, cut the lines with another in a third colour, leaving no room for any further display of minute work. Hereupon Protogenes admitted he was defeated, and flew down to the harbour to look for the visitor; and it was decided that the panel should be handed down to posterity as it was, to be admired as a marvel by everybody, but particularly by artists. I am informed that it was burnt in the first fire which occurred in Caesar's palace on the Palatine; it had previously been admired by us, containing nothing on its vast surface other than the almost invisible lines, so that among the outstanding work of many artists it looked like an empty space, and by that very fact attracted attention — and was more esteemed than any masterpiece.

According to Pliny, this encounter confirms the special place of the artist within the history of Greek painting: Apelles is said to have surpassed all painters before and after him (*omnes prius genitos futurosque postea superauit Apelles*, HN 35.79). Yet what interests me about the anecdote is the suggestive terminology in which the 'lines' of Apelles and Protogenes are described. With these virtuoso strokes, the Hellenistic poetics of *leptotês* or 'finesse', translated into the associated Latin terminology of *tenuitas* and *subtilitas*, finds a pictorial counterpart. In a series of diminishing strokes on a 'panel of considerable size' (*tabulam amplae magnitudinis*), Apelles' initial line of great finesse (*lineam summae tenuitatis*) spurs an even thinner (*tenuiorem*) pictorial response from Protogenes; that second mark is in turn outdone by the third and final line of

Apelles — who leaves ‘no room for any further display of minute work’ (*nullum relinquens amplius subtilitati locum*).⁸⁴ What we find here, in short, is Pliny discussing the aesthetics of painting in the language of Hellenistic literary criticism.

Pliny’s anecdote perhaps provides an additional lens for approaching Optatian’s painterly creation. For those so minded, the artefact might be seen as transforming the painterly *miraculum* of Apelles and Protogenes — as described in the language of poetic *subtilitas* — back into literal poetic–pictorial ‘wonder’ (*mirum*, v. 28). What we find is a line-painting that constructs its subtle strokes from the very fabric of poetic verse: on the one hand, the multicoloured lines of the page echo the polychrome creation of the Plinian Apelles and Protogenes (*ex colore ... alio colore ... tertio colore*); on the other, this feat is predicated on the idea of a series of divisible lines — something that the virtuoso artist can ‘cut’ (*secuit*). Where Apelles and Protogenes only managed three lines between them, ‘leaving no space for further subtlety’, Optatian outdoes both artistic predecessors at once: thanks to his poetic–pictorial ingenuity, he is able to divide the lines of his verses multiple times — and in a plurality of different directions. In that sense, at least, this is a poetic artwork that outstrips the most celebrated of classical painters — a display of artistry that dares to trump the virtuosity even of the great Apelles himself.

A CHRISTIAN INTERFACE? THE ‘SAVING SIGN’ OF THE *VULTUS*

The story of the line-painting by Apelles and Protogenes takes us back to the challenge of making sense of Optatian’s picture as a *uultus Augusti*. Just as the legendary *tabula* of Apelles is described as looking like something empty (*inani similem*) — that is, as something devoid of significance, and even of artistic facture — so too the promise of depicting Constantine’s portrait might seem metaphorically vacant. Despite its carefully delineated verses, the ‘invisibility’ of this artefact might be thought to outdo the scarcely perceptible traces of Apelles, so as to recall that panel ‘containing nothing on its vast surface other than the almost invisible lines’ (*spatiose nihil aliud continentem quam lineas uisum effugientes*).

But anecdotes about Apelles provide only part of the poem’s literary framework. If Optatian’s intermedial feat resonates with ancient traditions of artistic criticism, the talk of fashioning a verbal *uultus* also develops a literary figure. As we have already noted, there were numerous precedents for the idea of forging a poetic portrait — parallels which lead us to Hellenistic Greek epigram, as well as to the purported *imago* of Martial (cf. above, pp. 206–8). But by the time Optatian was writing, the trope of ‘painting’ a portrait in

⁸⁴ Cf. Squire, 2011: 271–4 and 2015a: 183–5; for other discussions see, for example, van de Waal, 1967; Gage, 1981; Elkins, 1995.

words had seeped into all manner of non-poetic literary genres. Particularly important here is the comparison between the portraitist and the biographer. Consider the following passage from Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, penned in the late first century AD (*Alex.* 1.3):

ὡσπερ οὖν οἱ ζωγράφοι τὰς ὁμοιότητας ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν ὄψιν εἰδῶν, οἷς ἐμφαίνεται τὸ ἦθος, ἀναλαμβάνουσιν, ἐλάχιστα τῶν λοιπῶν μερῶν φροντίζοντες, οὕτως ἡμῖν δοτέον εἰς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα μᾶλλον ἐνδύεσθαι καὶ διὰ τούτων εἰδοποιεῖν τὸν ἐκάστου βίον, ἐάσαντας ἑτέροις τὰ μεγέθη καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας.

Just as painters acquire the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression of the eyes, in which the person's character shows itself, yet make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests.

Here, at the outset of his biography of Alexander, Plutarch draws an analogy between the verbal art of fashioning a biographical narrative and the painterly art of forging a subject's 'likenesses' (ὁμοιότητας): just as a portraitist must take his lead from the face and expression of eyes (ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν ὄψιν εἰδῶν), so the biographer must focus on the 'signs of the soul' (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα). Subsequent writers would develop the analogy, not least in the context of imperial biographical 'portraits'. Given the Constantinian subject, one particularly informative parallel comes in the opening of the *Life of Constantine* written by Eusebius (probably in the late 330s). At the beginning of his biography, Eusebius explains that, for all the difficulties of treating so great a subject, it is 'nonetheless necessary to model oneself on the human painter, and dedicate an image of words in memory of the God-beloved' (ὁμῶς ἀναγκαῖον μιμήσει τῆς θνητῆς σκιαγραφίας τὴν διὰ λόγων εἰκόνα τῆ τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς ἀναθεῖναι μνήμη, *Vit. Const.* 1.10.1).⁸⁵ In interrogating the possibility of fashioning a facial countenance through language, our poem certainly develops a long-standing metaphor of verbal description as visual representation. Crucially, though, Optatian literalizes Eusebius' notion of fashioning a Constantinian image through words (τὴν διὰ λόγων εἰκόνα): he exploits the iconic potential of writing to bring a material *eikōn* before the eyes.

Much more might be said about this literary critical backdrop. On the one hand, the underlying idea of 'seeing' a verbally evoked subject might lead us to contemporary rhetorical ideas about ecphrasis (in turn literalized through Optatian's poem): the imperial Greek *Progymnasmata* of Theon, Hermogenes, Nikolaus and Apollonius all introduce ecphrasis in terms of 'a descriptive passage

⁸⁵ On Eusebius' apparent debt to Plutarch's imagery see Cameron and Hall, 1999: 190, along with pp. 191–2 on Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.11.1. On the trope of biography as portraiture, one might also note a reference to one of Roman antiquity's most famous biographical texts being accompanied by painted portraits (cf. Nowicka, 1993: 180–1): according to Pliny (*HN* 35.11), a treatise by Varro was 'somehow accompanied by portraits of the 700 famous people' discussed (*insertis ... septingentorum inlustrum aliquo modo imaginibus*), thereby ensuring that their figurative likenesses (*figuras*) would not disappear.

which brings the subject that is shown before one's eyes with visual vividness' (ἔκφρασις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον);⁸⁶ still more importantly, all four authors introduce the evocation of *prosôpa* — that is, the description of both literal 'faces' and more figurative 'persons' — as a particularly germane subject for ecphrastic description.⁸⁷ On the other hand, this poem takes its place against a series of closely related Second Sophistic 'graphic' attempts to summon up portrait-pictures through words.⁸⁸ Among numerous other examples, one might think of the *Imagines* of Lucian, a dramatic skit staged between Lycinus and Polystratus, revolving around an attempt to evoke an image of a described female subject.⁸⁹ Just as Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* distinguished between the material resources of painting and the immaterial 'signs of the soul' (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα, 1.3), the protagonists of this dialogue discuss the possibility of sketching an 'image' through language (τὸ εἶδος ... τῷ λόγῳ, *Imag.* 3). While Lycinus complains that not even the likes of Apelles, Zeuxis or Parrhasius could paint so magnificent a model (nor indeed Pheidias or Alcmenes sculpt her), the various artistic *comparanda* that follow end up championing the power of literary ecphrasis over material portraiture. As Polystratus concludes, promising to render the dialogue into book-form (εἰς βιβλίον καταθέμενοι), the spoken exchange results in something 'more enduring than the works of Apelles and Parrhasius and Polygnotus' (μονιμωτέρα ... τῶν Ἀπελλοῦ καὶ Παρρασίου καὶ Πολυγνώτου): for 'it would not be made of wood and wax and colours,' Polystratus explains, 'but is portrayed with inspirations from the Muses, and this will be found the most accurate kind of image, since it simultaneously discloses beauty of body and nobility of soul' (ὄσῳ μὴ ξύλου καὶ κηροῦ καὶ χρωμάτων πεποιήται, ἀλλὰ ταῖς παρὰ Μουσῶν ἐπιπνοίαις εἰκασται, ἥπερ ἀκριβεστάτη εἰκὼν γένοιτ' ἂν σώματος κάλλος καὶ ψυχῆς ἀρετὴν ἅμα ἐμφανίζουσα, *Imag.* 23).

Comparanda like these certainly help in sketching the rhetorical setting for our poem. They are less enlightening, though, when it comes to the graphic form of the *uersus intexti*. For just what sort of *uultus Augusti* is revealed in Optatian's geometric figure, and how is so abstract a pattern to be visually understood?

It is worth stating unequivocally that Optatian does not provide any single answer to such questions. As we have noted, the poem wavers uneasily between

⁸⁶ Theon, *Prog.* 118.7 (= Patillon and Bolognesi, 1997: 66). On the closely related definitions of other *Progymasmata* see Webb, 2009: 51–5, along with the appendix of passages at pp. 197–211. Webb (2009) provides the most important recent discussion of rhetorical ideas about ecphrasis; on the debts to longer tradition of literary composition and criticism, however, see the overview of Squire, 2009: 139–46 and 2015c (with references to the extensive literature).

⁸⁷ On definitions of the subjects of ecphrasis in the *Progymnasmata* see Webb, 2009: 61–86, 213–14.

⁸⁸ On *graphein* wordplay in ancient Greek, referring at once to the acts of 'drawing' and 'writing' alike, see, for example, Lissarrague, 1992; Squire, 2011: 235–43; Squire and Grethlein, 2014: esp. 316–19.

⁸⁹ On the dialogue (and the subsequent 'sequel' in which Lucian has his characters offer a defence of it) see especially Maffei, 1986; Romm, 1990: 87–90; Goldhill, 2001: 184–93; Steiner, 2001: 295–306; Elsner, 2004: 159–61; Vout, 2007: 213–39; Cistaro, 2009.

different hypothetical registers: the conditional clauses slip and slide between a real and unreal possibility of depicting Constantine's face; likewise, the very notion in Latin of 'fashioning a countenance' (*fingere ... uultus*) can encompass a series of figurative meanings — whether physical and real or figurative and abstract. Although some scholars have tried to solve the enigma by viewing the pattern in terms of some mimetic referent — a butterfly, four-leaf clover, eagle or military standard, for example⁹⁰ — I do not think that Optatian need be taken at his word. Indeed, the very talk of *signa*, as heralded in the poet's metaphor of 'sealing in verse' (*uersu consignans*, vv. 18, vi), suggests that we are dealing with a more sophisticated sort of lettered 'portrait': Optatian, I think, constructs an interpretive framework that can encompass metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical registers of significance alongside the literal.

With those caveats in view, I want to propose that there might be more to this pattern than first meets the eye. Although Optatian eschews any single mode of interpreting the picture — indeed, allows his readers to view its design in relation to an elaborate poetic *praeteritio* — one way of making sense of this shape is as two interlaced cross-formations: the first cross is constructed from the axial intersection at the centre of the poem (two single lines meeting at the letter 'S' in the eighteenth row and column); the second is derived from a more elaborate sixteen-sided shape, rotated at a 45-degree angle from the first. The arrangement strikes me as potentially important.⁹¹ For those minded to approach it in this way, the poem furnishes the potential to read the artefact not just as an imperial panegyric, but also as a veiled religious reference: it turns the *uultus Augusti* into something pregnant with potential *Christian* symbolism. In her 1999 doctoral dissertation, Marie-Odile Bruhat briefly touched upon such an interpretation, arguing that the 'double image of the cross could well be the key to the figure' (albeit sagely adding that such interpretation 'is difficult to confirm').⁹² In what follows, I set out to develop some of Bruhat's arguments: just as the poem flits between verbal and visual modes, as indeed between different registers of potential, so too might its picture oscillate between different semantic frameworks.

Before explaining what I mean here, it is perhaps worth countering the objection that Optatian was an exclusively 'pagan' author, or that such

⁹⁰ For the *farfalle* suggestion see, for example, Perono Cacciafoco, 2011: 146–7 and Pipitone, 2012a: 37; for the four-leaf clover ('vierblättriges Kleeblatt'), see Rühl, 2006: 82. Männlein-Robert (*forthcoming*) examines both ideas, and tentatively also suggests an 'Adler' or 'Vogel Phönix'.

⁹¹ Although we do not know how Optatian originally marked out the *uersus intexti* of our poem, it is at least possible that the intersecting central lines were laid out in a different colour from the others (thereby emphasizing their distinct cruciform shape). Extant manuscript presentations sometimes use multiple colours within the same poem (cf. Fig. 12). In the case of the third poem, moreover, such a presentation would also make interpretive sense: semantically, the two verses running along the central horizontal and vertical axis of the grid stand apart from the four verses that skirt around its outer frame.

⁹² Bruhat, 1999: 141–6, quotations on pp. 142 ('double image de la croix pourrait bien être la clé de la figure'), 143 ('est difficile de l'affirmer'). Cf. Bruhat, 2008: 9–15; Pipitone, 2012a: 37–8.

‘Christian’ registers have no place in his poems. When it comes to the cultural milieu in which Optatian was writing in the 320s, such neat modern scholarly polarities prove hopelessly reductive.⁹³ It is certainly true that overtly ‘Christian’ references are relatively few and far between within the corpus.⁹⁴ Yet Optatian’s *signa* fluctuate between different frames of reference, always dependent on the perspective of their viewer-reader. Nowhere is this multivalence more evident than in the cross-shapes that recur in Optatian’s *uersus intexti*. In the four *carmina cancellata* emblazoned with chi-rho christograms (poems 8 [Fig. 3], 14, 19 [Fig. 4] and — if genuine — 24), Optatian plays upon the multiple semantics of the motif, above all its combined role as both imperial emblem and Christian sign. Chiastic formations recur elsewhere too, sometimes even radiating out from the centre of the grid, as in the tenth poem (Fig. 12).⁹⁵ Whatever else we make of such designs, it is clear that they were paralleled in other contemporary media, not least Constantinian coins: on a series of bronze examples minted in Thessalonica, we even find an obverse portrait of Constantine paired with the figure of Sol (with globe in his left hand) on top of a structure of overlaid X-formations (Fig. 13);⁹⁶ although interpretations of the coin have been contested, it seems to reflect one puzzled attempt to make sense of the chi-rho — this time rendering the figure of Sol himself as an alphabetical rho within the christogram.⁹⁷

Once we approach the poems of Optatian with an eye to Christian symbolism, we find further patterns of possible religious significance within the corpus. The nineteenth poem, with its ship and chi-rho mast/sail (Fig. 4), for example, taps into a favoured Christian motif as well as into the the imagery of the ‘ship of state’;⁹⁸ likewise the palm-frond of poem 9 has at least the potential to bring to

⁹³ See Squire, [forthcoming a](#); Squire and Whitton, [forthcoming](#); cf. also Wienand, 2012a: 396–420. More generally on the ‘high degree of fluidity, of uncertainty, and of indeterminate positioning between the poles’ between ‘Christian’ and ‘pagan’ in the literary works of the 310s and 320s see above all Green, 2010 (quotation on p. 67).

⁹⁴ Apart from poems 16 (discussed below [Fig. 14]) and 24 (of contested authenticity), the most overt reference comes in poem 8: here Optatian refers to the ‘law of Christ’ explicitly (*Christi ... lege*, 8.3), and within a poem that uses its *uersus intexti* to embroider the name *IESVS* around its central chi-rho (Fig. 3).

⁹⁵ For one later account of the Christian symbolism inherent in the letter ‘X’ (which, like the letter ‘T’, signifies the cross through its shape) see Isidore, *Etym.* 1.3.11. Later poets would of course imitate and take up such cross-shape forms — and within the context of expressly Christian poems: the best example is Venantius Fortunatus 2.4 (Reydellet, 1994: 54–5, with commentary at pp. 182–4); for discussion see also Higgins, 1987: 36, and cf. below, n. 121.

⁹⁶ Bruun, 1966: 507, Thessalonica, nos. 66–71 (Fig. 13 = Thessalonica, no. 66: London, British Museum inv. B.3915); I am grateful to Richard Abdy for the reference.

⁹⁷ For discussions see Mostecky, 1991; Christodoulou, 1998: 61, with n. 83; and Wienand, 2012a: 304–6. The X-shape has also been interpreted — unsatisfactorily, in my view — as a schematic image of a Roman camp, or as steps leading to the base of the statue.

⁹⁸ Cf. Bruhat, 2008: 59–60 (with n. 57); Squire and Whitton, [forthcoming](#). More generally on the Christian symbolism of the ship see, for example, Bruun, 1963: 129–30; Daniélou, 1964: 58–70; and Jensen, 2000: 138–41.



Fig. 12. Optatian, poem 10 (with scholion below), as presented in the fifteenth-century Codex Parisinus 8916 (folio 75r). (Reproduced by kind permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.)

mind motifs loaded with religious symbolism (Fig. 2).⁹⁹ Throughout the corpus, Optatian seems aware of such semantic fluctuation — the capacity of his *signa* to slip and slide not only between writing and drawing, but also between

⁹⁹ For discussion of poem 9 see Ernst, 1991: 127–9; on the palm as an early Christian symbol see, for example, Bruun, 1963: 142–3.



Fig. 13. Bronze *nummus* of Constantine (minted in Thessalonica, c. AD 319). London, British Museum: inv. CM B.3915. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

different semantic frames. Nowhere is this more evident than in the sixteenth poem, which has plausibly been dated to the first half of the 320s (Fig. 14).¹⁰⁰ Reading the poem's 38 hexameters, we find Constantine invoked as 'lord', 'Roman father', 'splendour of the world', 'glorious light' and 'saviour' (*dominum*, 16.10; *parentem* | *Romanum*, 16.10–11; *decus orbis*, 16.15; *lux inclyta*, 16.21; *saluator*, 16.33). As audiences switch from the horizontal axis to the vertical acrostich and mesostichs, however, they find a different semantic configuration. While the left-hand acrostich dedicates the poem, in Latin, 'to our lord Constantine, the perpetually August' (*domino nostro Constantino perpetuo Augusto*), the three subsequent mesostichs disguise Greek hexameters, presenting Constantine's 'kingship' as an explicit gift from 'Christ'.¹⁰¹ In this case, the semantic switch — literalized in the twin movement from horizontal to vertical on one hand, and from Latin to Greek on the other — is echoed in the poet's talk of a 'double voice' (*duplicem ... uocem*, 16.6): 'the mind dares to compose dissonant things out of words that are entwined together' (*dissona conexis audet componere uerbis* | ... *mens*, 16.1–2), as Optatian puts it.

It is with this semantic 'dissonance' in view that I approach the *uultus Augusti* of the third poem. As so often with his works, Optatian furnishes no explicit prompt to read the design in Christian terms: with the numerous references to

¹⁰⁰ For the date see Polara, 1973: II, 94 (reviewing earlier scholarship), with Barnes, 1975: 182 (suggesting AD 324) and Bruhat, 1999: 496 (dating the poem between 321 and 323).

¹⁰¹ 16.ii–iv: νεῖμέν σοι, βασιλεῦ, Χριστὸς καὶ σοῖς τεκέεσσι | τίμιον εὐσεβίης κρατέειν ἀρετῆς τε βραβεῖον | εὐνομίας ἄρχειν τε καὶ Αὐσονίοισιν ἀνάσσειν ('To you and your sons, o King, Christ has conceded — in honour of your piety and as prize for your virtue — the power of command: to rule over good governance, and to be sovereign over the Ausonians').

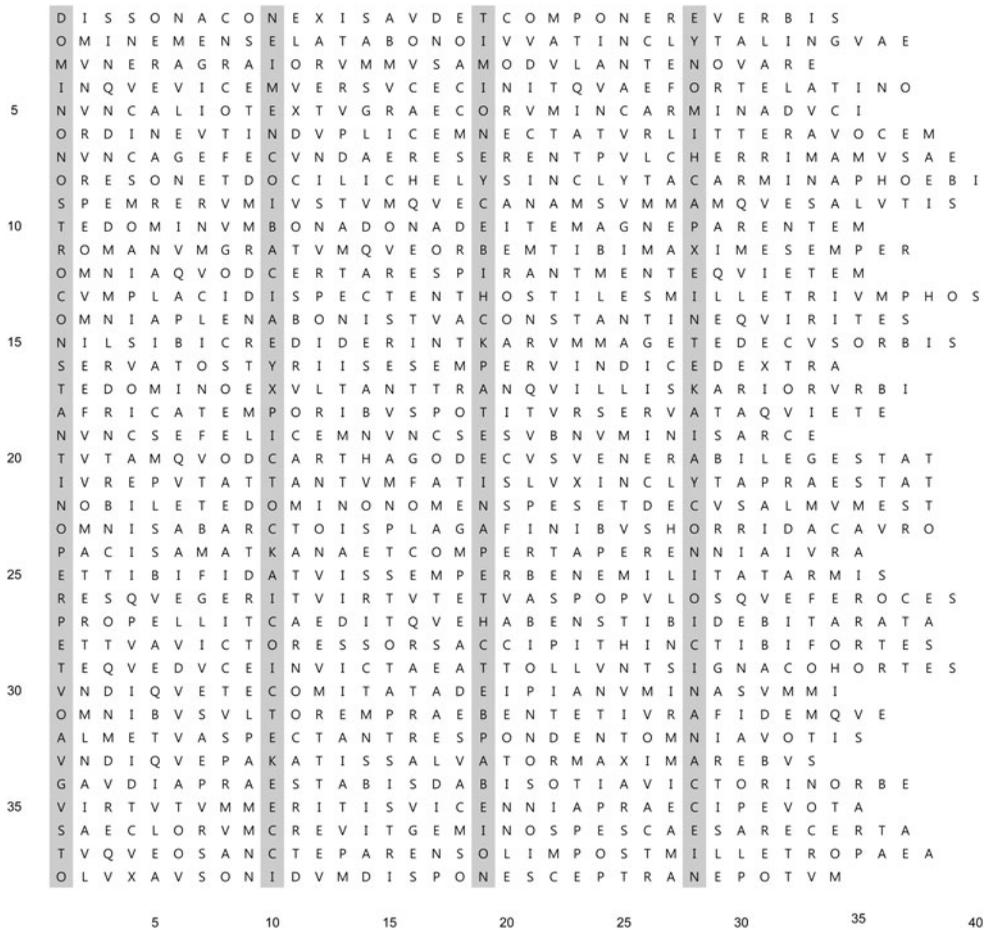


Fig. 14. Optatian, poem 16 (text after Polara, 1973). (Typeset by Aaron Pelttari, and reproduced by kind permission.)

the Muses (vv. 1, 8, 13–18, 21, 35), and not least the nods to Phoebus Apollo and Zeus ('gentle ruler of Olympus', *mitis rector Olympi*, v. 10),¹⁰² the very fabric of the poem fits squarely within a classical literary tradition. But despite the verbal constituents of the text, the cruciform visual pattern has the potential to lead audiences along a different interpretative path: it tenders the possibility of wholly more figurative modes of interpretation.

So what might it mean to associate the *uultus* of Constantine with a twin sign of the cross? At the time when the poem was produced — following Constantine's legendary vision of the Christian *signum* before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in

¹⁰² The phrasing might remind one of the *regnator Olympi* of e.g. *Aen.* 2.779, 7.558 and 10.437. For the parallel — and the image of Constantine as Jupiter — cf. Wienand, 2012a: 390–2 (with numismatic *comparanda*).



Fig. 15. Obverse of a silver medallion (struck in Ticinum — modern-day Pavia — c. AD 315): Constantine is portrayed carrying a sceptre or standard over the left shoulder; he wears a helmet complete with chi-rho monogram on the crest (top left). Munich, Staatliche Münzsammlung; © The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

AD 312 — the significance of the cross was of course a live topic.¹⁰³ Whatever the precise form of the apparition that Constantine allegedly witnessed, we know that the emperor quickly appropriated the chi-rho as personal emblem. Already by the mid-310s, it was associated with the imperial image on Constantinian coins; indeed, one of the earliest appearances shows it integrated — revealingly, perhaps — within his portrait, as crowing emblem within the helmet (Fig. 15).¹⁰⁴ So enamoured was Constantine with this ‘symbol’ (σύμβολον),

¹⁰³ The precise form of that ‘cross’ — and the sign that Constantine subsequently emblazoned on the shields of his soldiers — has been endlessly debated: should it be imagined as a staurogram or chi-rho? For discussions see (from among a substantial bibliography) Bruun, 1962: esp. 31–2; Sulzberger, 1925; Cecchelli, 1954: 73–9, 164–5; Burzachechi, 1955–6; Dinkler, 1967; Black, 1970; Bruun, 1997: esp. 43–5; Dinkler-von Schubert, 1997: esp. 33–4; Girardet, 2010: 52–62; Bardill, 2012: 159–202, esp. pp. 160–8. Astoundingly, none of these discussions have taken Optatian’s chi-rho monograms into consideration (cf. Squire and Whitton, *forthcoming*).

¹⁰⁴ On Fig. 15 (= Bruun, 1966: 364, Ticinum, no. 36) see Overbeck, 2005; Bardill, 2012: 177–8; and Bleckmann, 2015: 324–7; on ‘Constantine and Christianity’ on Constantinian coinage more generally cf. Bruun, 1966: 61–4.

according to Eusebius, that he even emblazoned it within his palace (*Vit. Const.* 3.49):¹⁰⁵

τοσοῦτος δὲ θεῖος ἔρωσ τὴν βασιλέως κατελήφει ψυχὴν, ὡς ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀνακτόροις τῶν βασιλείων, κατὰ τὸν πάντων ἐξοχώτατον οἶκον τῆς πρὸς τῷ ὀρόφῳ κεχρυσωμένης φατνώσεως κατὰ τὸ μεσαίτατον, μεγίστου πίνακος ἀνηπλωμένου μέσον ἐμπεπῆχθαι τὸ τοῦ σωτηρίου πάθους σύμβολον ἐκ ποικίλων συγκείμενον καὶ πολυτελῶν λίθων ἐν χρυσῷ πολλῶ κατειργασμένων. φυλακτήριον δὲ ἐδόκει τοῦτο αὐτῆς βασιλείας τῷ θεοφιλεῖ πεποιῆσθαι.

So great a divine passion had seized the emperor's soul that in the royal quarters of his imperial palace themselves, on the most eminent building of all — at the very middle of the gilded coffer adjoining the roof, in the centre of a very large panel — had been fixed the emblem of the saving Passion, made up of a variety of precious stones and set in much gold. It seemed to have been made for the God-beloved as a protection for his empire.

The emblem that Eusebius describes here, 'made up of a variety of precious stones and set in much gold' (ἐκ ποικίλων συγκείμενον καὶ πολυτελῶν λίθων ἐν χρυσῷ πολλῶ κατειργασμένων), might remind us of the polychrome page of Optatian, 'all shining in purple, written with letters that glitter in silver and gold (*ostro tota nitens, argento auroque coruscis | scripta notis*, 1.3–4). But no less important is Eusebius' talk of the cross as 'the emblem of the saving Passion' (τὸ τοῦ σωτηρίου πάθους σύμβολον). Just as Eusebius frequently refers to the Christian emblem as a 'saving sign' (σωτηρίον σημεῖον), describing how Constantine exploited it in all manner of contexts,¹⁰⁶ so too does Optatian make recourse to a closely related set of terms: in the eighth poem, for example, he alludes to the poem's emblazoned christogram (Fig. 3) as a *salutari ... signo* (8.i); likewise, amid the figured patterns of the nineteenth poem (with its chi-rho of a mast and sail [Fig. 4]), Optatian describes his patterns as 'heavenly signs' (*caelestia signa*, 19.1), alluding to the language used by Lactantius to describe the vision of Constantine in AD 312.¹⁰⁷

If at least some contemporaries were aware of the Christian significance of such cruciform *signa*, they also seem to have been sensitive to the idea of 'reading' the face as a Christian cross. By the time Optatian was writing, there was in fact long-standing Judaeo-Christian precedent for the thinking.¹⁰⁸ Already in the second century, Justin Martyr introduced the physiognomy of the face as a demonstration of the universal symbolism of the crucifix. The representation of the cross, writes Justin, is the greatest symbol of God's power and rule (τὸ μέγιστον σύμβολον τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ ἀρχῆς), and something imitated in all manner of shapes and forms — whether in the mast of the ship, the plough that tills the

¹⁰⁵ Translation adapted from Cameron and Hall, 1999: 140.

¹⁰⁶ See especially Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.28–32; *Hist. eccl.* 9.9.10–11; *Tric. or.* 9–10.

¹⁰⁷ For Lactantius' delineation of the 'heavenly sign' (*caeleste signum*) seen by Constantine before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge see *De mort. pers.* 44.5.

¹⁰⁸ For discussion see now Barton, 2015 (analyzing the metaphor of the face in Saint Paul's letters, especially at 1 Cor. 13:12, 2 Cor. 2:18 and 2 Cor. 4:6).

land or the military banner. But the most significant manifestation of this Christian revelation could be seen in the human face itself (*Apol.* 1.55.4–5):¹⁰⁹

τὸ δὲ ἀνθρώπειον σχῆμα οὐδένι ἄλλω τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων διαφέρει ἢ τῷ ὀρθόν τε εἶναι καὶ ἔκτασιν χειρῶν ἔχειν καὶ ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ μετωπίου τεταμένον τὸν λεγόμενον μῦξωτῆρα φέρειν, δι’ οὗ ἢ τε ἀναπνοή ἐστι τῷ ζώῳ, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο δεῖκνυσιν ἢ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ σταυροῦ. καὶ διὰ τοῦ προφήτου δὲ ἐλέχθη οὕτως· Πνεῦμα πρὸ προσώπου ἡμῶν Χριστὸς κύριος.

And the human form differs from that of the irrational animals in nothing else than in its being erect and having the hands extended, and having on the face extending from the forehead what is called the nose, through which there is respiration for the living creature; and this shows no other form than that of the cross. And so it was said by the prophet: ‘The breath before our face is the Lord Christ.’

According to Justin, the crux of the nose reflects ‘no other form than that of the cross’ (οὐδὲν ἄλλο δεῖκνυσιν ἢ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ σταυροῦ); indeed, it is through this cruciform shape, Justin adds, that we draw our life-breath — the spiritual *pneuma* through which Christ is made manifest. This text is not alone in comparing the face with the sign of the cross. Just as Justin sees the human *prosôpon* as a cruciform apparition, so too could other authors approach the face as a site for ‘inscribing’ saving insignia. In the Revelation of Saint John, for example, it is the signs written on the face that segregate the saved from the damned (Rev. 7:3, 9:4, 14:1). According to the apocalyptic narrative that ensues, itself harking back to Old Testament precedent (above all Ezekiel 9:4–6),¹¹⁰ a *sphragis* on the forehead could suffice to seal the fate of those spared from damnation, marking them with the ‘name of the Father of Christ written/drawn on their foreheads’ (τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν, Rev. 14:1).

There is precedent, then, for treating the face as Christian sign, as well as a site for ‘sealing’ subjects with the mark of Christian salvation. But is there any evidence for associating the cross with the face of Constantine specifically? The parallels discussed above might not perhaps add up to much were it not for some additional testimony, preserved again in *The Life of Constantine*. So enamoured was Constantine with Christ’s ‘saving sign’ (σωτηρίῳ ... σημείῳ), Eusebius relays, that the emperor openly ‘impressed’ his face with it (*Vit. Const.* 3.2.2):¹¹¹

καὶ τί νεώτερον ἦν <ἦ> τὸ θαῦμα τῆς βασιλέως ἀρετῆς ἐκ θεοῦ σοφίας τῷ θνητῷ γένει δεδωρημένον; τοιγάρτοι τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ σὺν παρρησίᾳ τῇ πάσῃ πρεσβεύων εἰς πάντας διετέλει, μηδ<έν> ἐγκαλυπτόμενος τὴν σωτήριον ἐπηγορίαν, σεμνολογούμενος δ’ ἐπὶ τῷ

¹⁰⁹ Translation after Barnard, 1997: 62–3; for analysis of this passage and others see Sulzberger, 1925: 354–66, esp. pp. 355–7.

¹¹⁰ For the Hebrew letter tau here as an anticipation of the cross-shaped letter tau see, for example, Jensen, 2000: 137; cf. Daniélou, 1964: 136–45 and Fergusson, 2009: 196.

¹¹¹ Translation after Cameron and Hall, 1999: 121–2. On the relevance of the passage for approaching the poem of Optatian see Bruhat, 1999: 143 and 2009: 117.

πράγματι, φανερόν δὲ αὐτὸ καθίστη, νῦν μὲν τὸ πρόσωπον τῷ σωτηρίῳ κατασφραγιζόμενος σημείῳ, νῦν δ' ἐναβρυνόμενος τῷ νικητικῷ τροπαίῳ.

And what could have been more novel than the marvel of the emperor's virtue, bestowed by God's wisdom on mankind? For he continually announced the Christ of God with complete openness to all, in no way concealing the title of the Saviour, but instead taking pride in the practice. He made it quite plain, at one time sealing his face with a saving sign, at another proudly delighting in the victorious trophy.

Quite what to make of this account is unclear: Eusebius may be referring to some material insignia that Constantine wore or inscribed on his face, or else (perhaps more likely) to the performed act of making the sign of the cross.¹¹² In any event, the image of Constantine 'sealing' his face with the saving sign of the cross (τὸ πρόσωπον τῷ σωτηρίῳ κατασφραγιζόμενος σημείῳ) takes us back to the imagery in the Revelation of Saint John. As Franz Josef Dölger long ago demonstrated in his foundational study of the *sphragis* as 'altchristliche Taufbezeichnung', the image of 'sealing' with the sign of the cross was, by the fourth century, synonymous with the act of baptism: to christen a subject was to 'seal' the physical body with the saving sign, impressing it with the character of Christian salvation.¹¹³ The metaphor was widespread in the fourth century, and it would later be played out in the act of chiselling the sign of the cross onto the head of 'pagan' statues (for example, Fig. 16).¹¹⁴ But it is perhaps no coincidence that the same image seals Optatian's poem in turn: at the literal and figurative crux the poem is stamped with the idea of poetically 'sealing' the golden age of the emperor (*uersu consignans aurea saecla*, v. vi).¹¹⁵

Immediately after the passage cited above, Eusebius continues his *Life of Constantine* with a further association between the emperor's 'face' (τὸ πρόσωπον) and the 'saving sign' (σωτήριον σημεῖον) of the Christian cross. According to Eusebius, the same emblem — set within a high panel before the entrance to the palace, and 'for the eyes of all to see' (τοῖς πάντων ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾶσθαι) — was painted above the heads of the emperor and his two sons, this time within an allegorical picture that showed Constantine vanquishing the devilish forces of a dragon: the painting depicted the 'saving sign' directly over Constantine's head (τὸ μὲν σωτήριον σημεῖον ὑπερκείμενον τῆς αὐτοῦ κεφαλῆς, 3.3.1), we are told, thereby demonstrating how the emperor vanquished his enemy 'through the power of the saving trophy set above his head' (δυνάμει τοῦ

¹¹² Cf. the commentary of Cameron and Hall, 1999: 255, comparing *Vit. Ant.* 13.5, 78.5.

¹¹³ Dölger, 1911: esp. 171–9; the most detailed discussion is now Fergusson, 2009 — discussing the 'sealing' analogy (and the signing of the forehead) at e.g. pp. 218–20, 297–8, 459, 485–7, 524.

¹¹⁴ For discussion of such cases see Dölger, 1930 — along with Hjort, 1993 and the numerous examples analysed in Kristensen, 2013; on Fig. 16, and the 'demise of paganism' at Ephesus, see Foss, 1979: 32.

¹¹⁵ For the cross as 'seal' compare also Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.55.1: within a letter from Constantine supposedly dispatched to the eastern provinces, the emperor tells how he has 'led a conquering army that makes your seal his protection everywhere' (τὴν σὴν σφραγίδα πανταχοῦ προβαλλόμενος καλλινίκου ἡγησάμην στρατοῦ, 2.55.1)

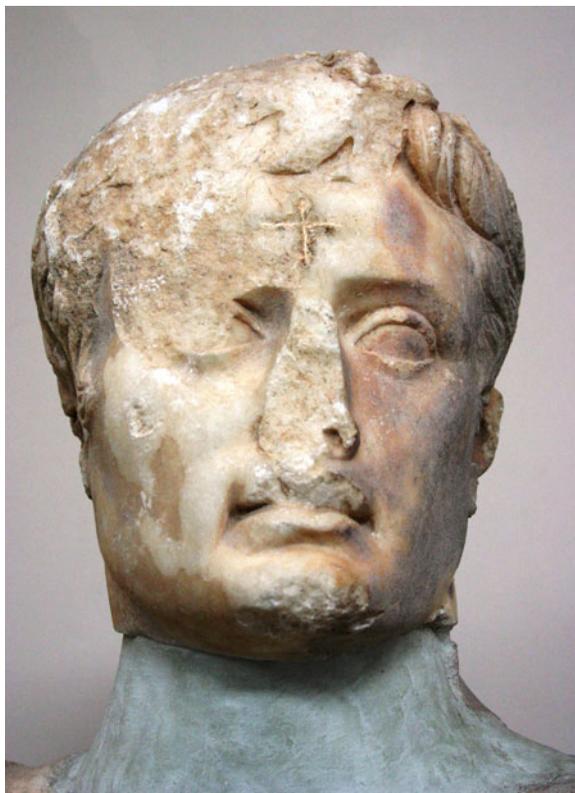


Fig. 16. Portrait of Augustus from Ephesus, with cross later chiseled onto the forehead (most likely in the fifth century AD). Ephesus, Archaeological Museum. *(Photograph by the author.)*

ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἀνακειμένου σωτηρίου τροπαίου, 3.3.2). Whatever this painting might have looked like, the important point lies once again in the assimilation — at least for a Christian apologist like Eusebius — between the projected face of the emperor and the symbolic shape of the cross.¹¹⁶

All this has a particular relevance for approaching the purported *uultus* of our poem. Unlike the ‘saving sign’ discussed by Eusebius, ‘in no way concealed’ by Constantine (μηδ<έν> ἐγκαλυπτόμενος), the potential Christian significance of these two intersecting crosses calls for active deciphering: Optatian does not ‘openly’ (φανερόν) display the significance, but instead relies upon a reader-viewer’s capacity to transform abstract geometric pattern into pregnant symbol. What is needed, in short, is an active leap of the imagination: in the terms of Richard Wollheim, such an interpretation requires viewers not to ‘see as’ but rather to ‘see in’; the schematic outline accordingly serves as a stepping-stone for an intellectual sort of insight, one that trumps physical vision by ‘uploading’

¹¹⁶ On this lost encaustic painting see Mango, 1959: 23–4, along with the commentary of Cameron and Hall, 1999: 255–6.

into the form a significance beyond face values.¹¹⁷ Although they could not of course fall back on Wollheim's terminology, Optatian and his contemporaries did have a related critical language, not least a distinction — as most famously articulated in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by the Elder Philostratus — between *phantasia* and *mimēsis*.¹¹⁸ Like the 'cloud-paintings' discussed by Philostratus (VA 2.22), the figurative outline of our poem invites respondents to make creative sense of the abstract design: it goads us into thinking about the significance of the shape by thinking beyond what can physically be seen.

Such interplay between image and imagination also leads back to the fluctuation between words for reading and images for seeing. As we follow the verses that make up the fabric of the poetic apparition, we find numerous allusions to acts of mental agility and imagination. This is a poem that reiteratively emphasizes 'reason' (*ratio*, v. 3) and 'mind' (*mentem inspiras*, v. 7; *mentem*, v. 19; *tota mente fideque*, v. 22; *mens*, v. 31): in vv. 28–30, Optatian explicitly introduces the idea that it is 'a wondrous work of the mind, to weave a song into verses in various directions' (*mentis opus mirum metris intexere carmen | ad uarios cursus*); the subsequent talk of the mind being 'trapped in narrow confine' (*arto in limite clausa*, v. 29) is further related back to the 'knotted visions' of the art in which this figure itself appears (*nodosos uisus artis*, v. 30). Just as Optatian introduces his own composition as a creative wonder, so too might our modes of poetic and pictorial response amount to a *mentis opus* — an intellectual work that weaves the *nodosos uisus* into meaningful insight: as the central cruciform lines of the *uersus intexti* remind us, the 'great things' promised by the poem must actively be 'sought' (*grandia quaerentur*).¹¹⁹

In that connection, it is worth returning one last time to the opening word of our poem: *ingere*. As we have said, the verb applies to the act of physical crafting — of fashioning something into a three-dimensional shape — as well as to associated creations of literary composition. But like the Greek verb *πλάττειν*, the word *ingere* can also refer to an act of imaginary visualization — that is, of conjuring up a mental picture in the mind's eye.¹²⁰ Right from the very outset, and in a deeply programmatic way, Optatian inscribes his poem

¹¹⁷ Wollheim, 1980: esp. 80.

¹¹⁸ On VA 2.22 and 6.19 see especially Birmelin, 1933: 153–80, 392–414; Onians, 1980: 12–14; Miles, 2009: 147–56. For debates about *phantasia* and *mimēsis*, as refracted through the *Imagines* and other works of the Elder Philostratus, see Squire, 2013b: esp. 101–4; cf. also Koortbojian, 2005.

¹¹⁹ On the whole history of conceptualizing 'imagination' in antiquity see now Sheppard, 2014; for Optatian's place within that history cf. the preliminary comments in Moreschini, 2013: 597–617.

¹²⁰ Cf. *OLD s.v.* 'fingo' 8a, with Hose, 1996: esp. 271–3. For the puns on *πλάττειν* in the context of Greek epigrams on artworks see Männlein-Robert, 2007a: 90–3 (with references to the further literature) and Squire, 2010a: 604; cf. Webb, 2009: 169 on the language of *πλάττειν/ingere* in ancient rhetoric, emphasizing the ambiguous suggestions of both narrative invention and lying (the most important contribution remains Barwick, 1928). For an excellent introduction to ancient thinking about 'fiction' more generally see now Halliwell, 2015 (with more detailed bibliographic review).

with an ambiguity about its art of fabrication. Moreover, he invites his reader-viewers to continue — in their own mind's eye — his own creative process: while forging an image, Optatian nonetheless leaves it to his audience to endow his emblem with insightful meaning.

CONCLUSION: VIEWING AND READING THE PORTRAITURE OF CONSTANTINE

I do not mean to suggest that a Christian interpretation provides the *only* way of making sense of our poem, still less of reading its 'portrait'. As I have emphasized, Optatian's works play upon multiple and layered levels of meaning; they give combined verbal and visual form to an inherent interpretative instability. But if, as I have suggested, the third poem confronts its audience with a visual puzzle, my argument has been that a Christian perspective might offer one possible response — a response, moreover, that develops various aspects of the text's own verbal fabric.¹²¹ Whether or not one agrees with my 'reading', I hope to have shown that Optatian offers a fascinating lens through which to inspect fourth-century Roman portraiture: on the one hand, this poem demonstrates the self-reflexive sophistication with which Roman portraits could be thought about in late antiquity; on the other, both poem and poet open up new vistas into the political, religious and intellectual history of Constantine's principate.

Allow me to end on a different note. Throughout this article, I have touched upon the interconnections between the poems of Optatian and contemporary visual culture. But how, one might ask, does this purported 'portrait' relate to extant images of Constantine, above all those found on Constantinian coins and

¹²¹ In this connection, it is worth noting that Optatian's medieval successors *do* seem to have read the pattern of our poem in expressly Christian terms. Although Optatian's complex Carolingian reception is too big a subject to be addressed here (cf. above, n. 26), there can be no doubt that Rabanus Maurus knew Optatian's *uultus Augusti* poem, reconfiguring it in his ninth-century *De laudibus sanctae crucis* (for a general introduction see Ernst, 1991: 222–332 and 2012: 117–234; for the debts to Optatian, cf. Polara, 1978: 347 n. 61, Ernst, 1991: 109 and Bruhat, 1999: 143–4; the most recent bibliography is surveyed by Ganz, 2013 and Squire, forthcoming b). In the imitations of Rabanus — as in those of Venantius Fortunatus, Alcuin and others before him — the cruciform shapes figured within Optatian's poems are explicitly introduced as Christian signs of the 'holy cross' (*sanctae crucis*). In one picture-poem (= Perrin, 1997: 74–6, B8), we find Rabanus Maurus drawing on a closely related visual schema within a Christian celebration of its cruciform shapes (criss-crossed with the verses *In cruce nunc menses, uenti, duodenaque signa. I grex et apostolicus decoratur luce corusca*: see Ernst, 1991: 228–32, with p. 230, fig. 67; cf. Bruhat, 1999: 143–4); in others, the poet delivered on Optatian's original promise to paint a picture of his imperial honorand — whether revealing Louis the Pious as a fully fledged Roman Christian emperor (Ernst, 1991: 292–7, with p. 294, fig. 93; cf. Ernst, 2012, 130–5, on Perrin 1997, 10–12, A5), or else fashioning a portrait of Louis' second wife, Judith of Bavaria (Ernst, 1991: 297–300, with p. 299, fig. 94; the poem appears within a commentary on the Books of Judith, Esther and the Maccabees, and plays upon an association between Louis' wife and the Old Testament figure).

statues? Needless to say, extant images of Constantine hardly resemble the schematic form of Optatian's diagram. But in its invitation to look *beyond* material form, and to probe different modes of symbolic and allegorical meaning, our poem may perhaps speak to one important aspect of Constantinian portraiture.

As we have already said, one of the most striking features of Constantine's portraiture — at least from the 310s onwards — is the emphasis on the subject's upward gaze (cf. Fig. 10). Sculptors made a point of incising the irises and pupils of the emperor's eyes, and contemporary coin-impressions developed the effect through an upward turn of the neck. The famous marble portrait of Constantine in the Metropolitan Museum — the recutting of which was probably more or less contemporary with Optatian's poem — nicely demonstrates the point (Fig. 17): with his gaze focused above, Constantine is made to avert his look from the earthly realm (and indeed his viewer), fixing it instead on a higher plane.¹²²

Now, Constantine was of course not the first emperor to exploit this iconographic motif: inscribed pupils and irises, made to look upwards, can already be found in the third quarter of the third century, not least in the imperial portraiture of Gallienus.¹²³ But Constantine's contemporaries were the first to make a programmatic point about this visual feature, associating it with a particular cosmology (sometimes connected with the Christian outlook of the emperor).¹²⁴ According to Eusebius' laudatory oration of AD 336, Constantine directs his gaze upwards: 'arrayed in the image of heavenly kingship, he governs by looking up to the archetype of heaven and rules those below' (τῆς οὐρανόου βασιλείας εἰκόνι κεκοσμημένος, ἄνω βλέπων κατὰ τὴν ἀρχέτυπον ἰδέαν τοὺς κάτω διακυβερνῶν ἰθύνει, *Tric. or.* 3.5). In his *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius went even further — commenting not only on the emperor's upward gaze, but also his ban on worshipping the emperor's image (*Vit. Const.* 4.15–16):¹²⁵

¹²² On Constantine's 'heavenward gaze' see Bardill, 2012: 19–24. Bardill discusses Fig. 17 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 26.229) at p. 22, offering a much more detailed bibliographic guide: the portrait was evidently recut after a Trajanic model (see Schäfer, 1999, along more generally with Prusac, 2011: esp. 63–9, Varner, 2014: 63–4 and Varner, 2015: 79–83).

¹²³ Cf. Mathew, 1943: 67–8 — and the broader discussions of L'Orange, 1947: esp. 95–129; L'Orange, 1965: esp. 31–3, 110–25; and Wood, 1986 (on 'the emergence of an abstract style' and the 'victory of abstraction' in third-century portraiture).

¹²⁴ As Wienand (2012a: 395) concludes, 'die christliche Lesart war also eine mögliche, aber keine zwingende Deutung der schillernden Semantik des neuen Herrscherbildes'; cf. Hannestad, 2001: 98, on how, 'in imperial art of the Constantinian era, the same symbol, type of portrait etc. can be interpreted very differently indeed'.

¹²⁵ My translation follows Cameron and Hall, 1999: 158–9, but departs from their rendition of the closing clause ('so that he might not be contaminated by the error of forbidden things even in replica'): with this reference to σκιαγραφίας τῆ πλάνης, Eusebius frames the passage in the loaded language of art criticism, and not least Platonic thinking about images (for the term see Rouveret, 1989: esp. 24–6 and most recently Tanner, 2016: 115–21).



Fig. 17. Marble portrait of Constantine, most likely from between AD 324 and 337 (but recut from a Trajanic prototype). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Bequest of Mary Clark Thompson, 1923: inv. 26.229); © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.

ὄση δ' αὐτοῦ τῇ ψυχῇ πίστεως ἐνθέου ὑπεστήρικτο δύναμις, μάθοι ἄν τις καὶ ἐκ τοῦδε λογιζόμενος, ὡς ἐν τοῖς χρυσοῖς νομίσμασι τὴν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ εἰκόνα ὧδε γράφεσθαι διετύπου, ὡς ἄνω βλέπειν δοκεῖν ἀνατεταμένου πρὸς θεὸν τρόπον εὐχομένου. τούτου μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐκτυπώματα καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ῥωμαίων διέτρεχεν οἰκουμένης. ἐν αὐτοῖς δὲ βασιλείοις κατὰ τινὰς πόλεις ἐν ταῖς εἰς τὸ μετέωρον τῶν προπύλων ἀνακειμέναις εἰκόσιν ἐστῶς ὄρθιος ἐγράφετο, ἄνω μὲν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἐμβλέπων, τὸ χεῖρε δ' ἐκτεταμένος εὐχομένου σχήματι. ὧδε μὲν οὖν αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν κἀν ταῖς γραφαῖς εὐχόμενον ἀνίστη. νόμῳ δ' ἀπεῖργεν εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ εἰδῶλον ἐν ναοῖς ἀνατίθεσθαι, ὡς μηδὲ μέχρι σκιαγραφίας τῇ πλάνῃ τῶν ἀπειρημένων μολύνουτο <ἡ γραφή>.

The great strength of the divinely inspired faith fixed in his soul might also be deduced by considering the fact that he had his own portrait so depicted on the gold coinage that he appeared to look upwards in the manner of one reaching out to God in prayer. Impressions of this type were circulated throughout the entire Roman world. In the imperial quarters of various cities, in the images erected above the entrances, he was portrayed standing up, looking up to heaven, his hands extended in a posture of prayer. Such was the way he would have himself depicted praying in works of graphic art. But by law he forbade images of himself to be set up in idol-shrines, so that he might not be contaminated by the error of replicating forbidden things.

A related sentiment can be found in Constantine's *Oration to the Saints* — a purported Greek translation of a speech delivered by the emperor in Latin, and preserved as an appendage to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*: the emperor is said to have declared that 'the only power in man which can be elevated to a comparison with that of God' (μόνη . . . ἀντίρροπος θεοῦ δυνάμεως ἀνθρωπίνη δύναμις) comes from raising our affections above the things of earth, and directing our thoughts, as far as we may, to high and heavenly objects (τὸ μὴ εἰς γῆν νενευκέναι ἄλλ', ὄση δύναμις, τὴν διάνοιαν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρθιά τε καὶ ὑψηλὰ ἀναβιβάζειν, *Orat.* 14). If Constantine here tenders an intellectual rationale for approaching the iconography of his portraits, other contemporary writers went still further. Take the following passage from the *Divine Institutes* of Lactantius (1.25):¹²⁶

quanto satius est, spretis inanibus, as Deum te conuertere, tueri statum, quem a Deo acceperis, tueri nomen! idcirco enim ἄνθρωπος, quia sursum spectat, nominatur: sursum autem spectat, qui Deum uerum et uiuum, qui est in coelo, suspicit, qui artificem, qui parentem animae suae non modo sensu ac mente, uerum etiam uultu et oculis sublimibus quaerit. qui autem se terrenis humilibusque substernit, utique illud, quod est inferius, sibi praefert. nam, cum ipse opus Dei sit, simulacrum autem opus hominis, non potest humanum opus diuino anteponi. et sicut Deus hominis parens est, ita simulacri homo. stultus igitur et amens, qui adorat quod ipse fabricauit; cuius artificii detestabilis et inepti auctor fuit Prometheus, patruo Iouis Iapeto natus.

How much better, spurning things that are empty, to turn to the living God, to preserve that station assigned you by Him, and so uphold your name as 'man'! A man is called *anthrōpos* because his gaze is upward. He gazes upward who looks to the true and living God, who is in heaven; who seeks the maker and parent of his soul not merely by feeling and intellect but with uplifted countenance and eyes. He who submits himself to the base things of this world obviously chooses what is beneath him; for, since he is God's handiwork, whereas an image is man's handiwork, the human handiwork cannot be preferred to the divine. And as God is

¹²⁶ Translation adapted from Blakeney, 1950: 73–4.

the creator of man, so is man the creator of the image. He is foolish and insane who adores what he himself has made — a hateful and inept artifice invented by Prometheus, son of Jupiter's uncle Iapetus . . .

Although Lactantius is not discussing the emperor explicitly in this passage, his image of the person who 'gazes upwards' and 'looks to the true and living God . . . with uplifted countenance and eyes' (*sursum autem spectat, qui Deum uerum et uiuum . . . uultu et oculis sublimibus*) speaks directly to Constantinian portraiture: it offers one Christian interpretation of the imperial gaze configured in the portraits of the emperor. Still more significantly, perhaps, this discussion of 'looking upwards' comes in the context of an express repudiation of all manmade imagery. Couching his polemic in deeply Platonic terms, Lactantius advises us to look upward rather than to mortal artworks, since human handiwork can only lead us to things that are 'earthly and base' (*terrenis humilibusque*).¹²⁷

Such anti-materialist rhetoric provides a final lens for 'reading' the *uultus* of Optatian's poem. For perhaps the ultimate way in which the page 'will dare outdo Apellean waxes' lies in its apparent ascendance above material *mimēsis*. Where classical traditions of painting ground us in the material world (at least according to the polemic of Lactantius), Optatian invites us to direct our gaze upwards — and onto a higher intellectual plane. From an archaeologist's perspective, Optatian certainly figures a very different portrait of Constantine. In its games of sight and insight, however, our artefact might be seen to draw upon a sentiment at the crux of Constantinian portraiture itself.¹²⁸

Address for correspondence:

Dr Michael Squire

Department of Classics, King's College London, Strand, London, WC2R 2LS, United Kingdom

michael.squire@kcl.ac.uk

¹²⁷ It would be tempting, of course, to relate such neo-Platonic thinking to the stylistic shifts that came to a head in fourth-century visual culture: particularly influential is L'Orange, 1965, arguing that, above all under Constantine, 'figurative art moves from the animated forms of nature towards a firm and inflexible typology, from plastic articulation to conceptual image, from body to symbol' (p. 128); the masterly disentangling of this knotty nexus of issues remains Elsner, 1995.

¹²⁸ Research for this article was facilitated by a generous Philip Leverhulme Prize between 2013 and 2016. I am grateful to friends and colleagues for guiding me around numerous topics — especially Stephen Barton, Jaś Elsner, Jane Heath, John Henderson, Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe, Jeremy Tanner, Jennifer Trimble, Johannes Wienand and above all Christopher Whitton. I have also benefited from the critical feedback of numerous scholarly circles: at the Institute of Classical Studies in London (following a seminar on Optatian within a series on 'Texts, objects and ancient history'); at Stanford University (after a lecture hosted by the Department of Classics); at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität at Heidelberg (during a wonderful *Aufenthalt* sponsored by the university's 'Materiale Textkulturen' Sonderforschungsbereich, at the kind invitation of Jonas Grethlein); and at the Department of Art History at Emory University (part of a stimulating workshop hosted by Eric Varner). Finally, I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their careful comments on an earlier draft; Mark Bradley, editor of *PBSR*, for encouraging me to address readers of this journal; and, last but not least, Iveta Adams — copy-editor *sans pareil*. Several figures from this article are reproduced in the hard copy of this journal as Plates 4–13.

REFERENCES

Abbreviations

- AE *Année épigraphique: revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine.* 1888–. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.* 1862–. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- DNO Kansteiner, S., Hallof, K., Lehmann, L., Seidensticker, B. and Stemmer, K. (eds) (2014) *Der Neue Overbeck: Die antiken Schriftquellen zu den bildenden Künsten der Griechen*, 5 vols. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- GL Keil, H. (ed.) (1855–80) *Grammatici Latini*, 8 vols. Leipzig, B.G. Teubner.
- OLD Glare, P.G.W. (ed.) (1968) *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (second edition). Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.* 1923–. Leiden, Brill.

Works cited

- Alföldi, M. (1999) *Bild und Bildsprache der römischen Kaiser: Beispiele und Analysen.* Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern.
- Bardill, J. (2012) *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bardon, H. (1975) [Review of Polara 1973.] *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 53: 453.
- Barkan, L. (2013) *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures.* Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Barnard, L.W. (1997) (ed. and trans.) *Saint Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies.* Mahwah (NJ), Paulist Press.
- Barnes, T.D. (1975) Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. *American Journal of Philology* 96: 173–86.
- Baroin, C. (2010) *Se souvenir à Rome: formes, représentations et pratiques de la mémoire.* Paris, Belin.
- Barton, S.C. (2015) The metaphor of the face in Paul. In G. McConville and L.K. Pietersen (eds), *Conception, Reception, and the Spirit*: 136–53. Eugene (OR), Wipf and Stock.
- Barwick, K. (1928) Die Gliederung der *narratio* in der rhetorischen Theorie und ihre Bedeutung für die Geschichte des antiken Roms. *Hermes* 63: 261–87.
- Bažant, J. (1995) *Roman Portraiture: A History of its History.* Prague, Koniasch Latin Press.
- Bažil, M. (2009) *Centones Christiani: métamorphoses d'une forme intertextuelle dans la poésie latine chrétienne de l'antiquité tardive.* Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes.
- Benediktson, D.T. (2000) *Literature and the Visual Arts in Ancient Greece and Rome.* Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.
- Bing, P. and Bruss, J. S. (2007) (eds) *Brill's Companion to Hellenistic Epigram.* Leiden, Brill.
- Birmelin, E. (1933) Die kunsttheoretischen Gedanken in Philostrats Apollonios. *Philologus* 88: 149–80, 392–414.
- Black, M. (1970) The chi-rho sign — christogram and/or stauogram. In W. Ward Gasque and R. P. Martin (eds), *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on his Sixtieth Birthday*: 319–27. Exeter, Paternoster.
- Blakeney, E.H. (1950) (trans. and ed.) *Firmiani Lactantii Epitome institutionum divinarum: Lactantius' Epitome of the Divine Institutes.* London, SPCK.
- Blanck, H. (1992) *Das Buch in der Antike.* Munich, C.H. Beck.
- Bleckmann, B. (2015) Constantine, Rome and the Christians. In J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*: 309–29. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Boeder, M. (1996) *Visa est vox: Sprache und Bild in der spätantiken Literatur.* Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang.

- Borg, B. (1996) *Mumienporträts: Chronologie und kultureller Kontext*. Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern.
- Borg, B. (2005) Jenseits des *mos maiorum*: Eine Archäologie römischer Werte. In A. Haltenhoff, A. Heil and F.-H. Mutschler (eds), *Römischer Werte als Gegenstand der Altertumswissenschaft*: 47–75. Munich, K.G. Saur Verlag.
- Borg, B. (2012) Recent approaches to the study of Roman portraits. *Perspective*: 315–20.
- Bruhat, M.-O. (1999) *Les carmina figurata de Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius: la métamorphose d'un genre et l'invention d'une poésie liturgique impériale sous Constantin*. Université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV), Ph.D thesis.
- Bruhat, M.-O. (2008, publ. 2010) Une poétique du vœu: inspiration poétique et mystique impérial dans le poème XIX (et quelques autres) d'Optatianus Porfyrius. *Dictynna* 5 (<http://dictynna.revues.org/369>).
- Bruhat, M.-O. (2009) Les poèmes figurés d'Optatianus Porfyrius: une écriture à contraintes, une écriture de la contrainte. In F. Toulze-Morisset (ed.), *Formes de l'écriture, figures de la pensée dans la culture gréco-romaine*: 101–25. Lille, Villeneuve d'Ascq.
- Bruun, P. (1962) The Christian signs on the coins of Constantine. *Arctos* 3: 5–35.
- Bruun, P. (1963) Symboles, signes et monogrammes. In H. Zilliacus (ed.), *Sylloge inscriptionum Christianarum veterum Musei Vaticani* II: 73–166. Helsinki, Helsingfors.
- Bruun, P. (1966) *The Roman Imperial Coinage* VII: *Constantine and Licinius AD 313–37*. London, Spink.
- Bruun, P. (1997) The victorious signs of Constantine: a reappraisal. *Numismatic Chronicle* 157: 41–59.
- Buisset, D. (2006) Le poème inexistant, ou Dieu, que le grincement du calame est triste au fond du scriptorium! Essai de lecture du 'poème XXV' d'Optatianus Porfyrius, autrement appelé Porphyre Optatien ou simplement Optatien. *Formules: Revue des Littératures à Contraintes* 10: 173–212.
- Burzachechi, M. (1955–6) Sull'uso pre-Constantiniano del monogramma greco di Cristo. *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia (Rendiconti)* 28: 197–211.
- Butler, S. (2015) *The Ancient Phonograph*. New York, Zone Books.
- Cameron, Alan (1980) Poetae novella. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 84: 127–75.
- Cameron, Averil and Hall, S.G. (1999) (eds and trans.) *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Carson, A. (1992) Simonides painter. In R. Hexter and D. Seldon (eds), *Innovations of Antiquity*: 51–64. London, Routledge.
- Cecchelli, C. (1954) *Il trionfo della croce: la croce e i santi segni prima e dopo Constantino*. Rome, Edizione Paoline.
- Charlet, J.-L. (1997) Die Poesie. In Engels and Hofmann (1997a): 495–564.
- Chmiel, G. (1930) *Untersuchungen zu Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius*. Munich, Hermes.
- Christian, T. (2015) *Gebildete Steine: Zur Rezeption literarischer Techniken in den Versinschriften seit dem Hellenismus*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Christodoulou, D.N. (1998) *The Figures of Ancient Gods on the Coinage of Constantine the Great (306–26 AD)*. Athens, Hellenic Numismatic Society.
- Cistaro, M. (2009) *Sotto il velo di Pantea: Imagines e Pro Imaginibus di Luciano*. Messina, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità.
- Corbeill, A. (1996) *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Corbeill, A. (2004) *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Courtney, E. (1990) Greek and Latin acrostics. *Philologus* 134: 1–13.

- Cox Miller, P. (1998) 'Differential networks': relics and other fragments in late antiquity. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6: 113–38.
- Cox Miller, P. (2009) *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Daniélou, J. (1964) *Primitive Christian Symbols*, trans. D. Attwater. London, Burns and Oates.
- Dinkler, E. (1967) Kreuzzeichen und Kreuz — Tau, Chi und Stauros. In E. Dinkler (ed.), *Signum Crucis: Aufsätze zum neuen Testament und zur christlichen Archäologie*: 26–54. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.
- Dinkler-von Schubert, E. (1997) STAUROS: Von 'Wort vom Kreuz' (1 Kor. 1,18) zum Kreuz-Symbol. In D. Mouriki, C. Moss and K. Kiefer (eds), *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*: 29–39. Princeton, Department of Art and Archaeology.
- Dionigi, I. (1988) *Lucrezio: le parole e le cose*. Bologna, Pàtron Editore.
- Dölger, F.J. (1911) *Sphragis: Eine altchristliche Taufbezeichnung in ihren Beziehungen zur profanen und religiösen Kultur des Altertums*. Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Dölger, F.J. (1930) Die antiken Köpfe mit dem stehenden und liegenden Kreuz. *Antike und Christentum* 2: 281–96.
- Doria, C. (1979) Visual writing forms in antiquity: the *versus intexti*. In R. Kostelanez (ed.), *Visual Literature Criticism: A New Collection*: 63–92. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press.
- Doxiadis, E. (1995) *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Dyck, A.R. (2004) *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus*. Ann Arbor (MI), University of Michigan Press.
- Edwards, J.S. (2005) The *carmina* of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius and the creative process. In C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XII (Collections Latomus 287)*: 447–66. Brussels, Latomus.
- Elkins, J. (1995) Marks, traces, 'traits', contours, 'orli', and 'splendores': nonsemiotic elements in pictures. *Critical Inquiry* 21: 822–60.
- Elsner, J. (1995) *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Elsner, J. (2000) From the culture of *spolia* to the cult of relics: the arch of Constantine and the genesis of late antique forms. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68: 149–84.
- Elsner, J. (2004) Seeing and saying: a psychoanalytical account of ekphrasis. *Helios* 31: 157–86.
- Elsner, J. (2006) Perspectives in art. In N. Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*: 255–77. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Elsner, J. (forthcoming) Late Narcissus: classicism and culture in a late Roman *cento*. In Elsner and Hernández Lobato (forthcoming): 176–204.
- Elsner, J. and Hernández Lobato, J. (forthcoming) (eds) *Towards a Poetics of Late Latin Literature*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Engels, L.J. and Hofmann, H. (1997a) (eds) *Spätantike, mit einem Panorama der byzantinischen Literatur: Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft IV*: 29–99. Wiesbaden, Aula-Verlag.
- Engels, L.J. and Hofmann, H. (1997b) Literatur und Gesellschaft in der Spätantike: Texte, Kommunikation und Überlieferung. In Engels and Hofmann (1997a): 29–99.
- Ernst, U. (1991) *Carmen Figuratum: Geschichte des Figurengedichts von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*. Cologne, Böhlau.
- Ernst, U. (2012) *Visuelle Poesie: Historische Dokumentation theoretischer Zeugnisse I: Von der Antike bis zum Barock*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Fejfer, J. (2008) *Roman Portraits in Context*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Fergusson, E. (2009) *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans.

- Ferrua, A. (2001) *Tavole lusorie epigrafiche*. Vatican, Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.
- Fittschen, K. (2010) The portrait of Roman emperors and their families: controversial positions and unsolved problems. In B.C. Ewald and C.F. Noreña (eds), *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual*: 221–46. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Foss, C. (1979) *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Friedrich, A. (2001) *Das Symposium der 'XII sapientes': Kommentar und Verfasserfrage*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Gage, J. (1981) A *locus classicus* of colour theory: the fortunes of Apelles. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44: 1–26.
- Galán Vioque, G. (2002) (ed.) *Martial, Book VII: A Commentary*, trans. J.J. Zoltowski. Leiden, Brill.
- Ganz, D. (2013) Individual and universal salvation in the *In honorem sanctae crucis*. *Florilegium* 30: 167–89.
- Girardet, K.M. (2010) *Der Kaiser und sein Gott: Das Christentum im Denken und in der Religionspolitik Konstantins des Grossen*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Giuliani, L. (1986) *Bildnis und Botschaft: Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Bildniskunst der römischen Republik*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp.
- Goldhill, S. (2001) The erotic eye: visual stimulation and cultural conflict. In S. Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome*: 154–94. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- González Iglesias, J.A. (2000) El intertexto absoluto: Optaciano Porfirio, entre Virgilio y Mallarmé. In V. Bécares, F. Pordomingo, M. Cortés Tovar and J.C. Fernández Corte (eds), *Intertextualidad en las literaturas griega y latina*, 337–66. Madrid, Ediciones Clásicas.
- Green, R.P.H. (1991) (ed.) *The Works of Ausonius*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Green, R.P.H. (2010) Constantine as patron of Christian Latin poetry. *Studia Patristica* 46: 65–76.
- Gruen, E.S. (1992) *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press.
- Gualandri, I. (1977) [Review of Polara 1971, 1973 and 1976.] *Studi Medievali* 18: 178–88.
- Gualandri, I. (forthcoming) Words pregnant with meaning: the power of single words in late Latin literature. In Elsner and Hernández Lobato (forthcoming): 125–46.
- Gutzwiller, K.J. (2002) Art's echo: the tradition of Hellenistic epigram. In M.A. Harder, R. Regtuit and G.W. Wakker (eds), *Hellenistic Epigrams*: 85–112. Leuven, Peeters.
- Habinek, T. (2009) Situating literacy in Rome. In W.A. Johnson and H.N. Parker (eds), *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*: 114–41. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Hallett, C. (2005) *The Roman Nude: Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 BC–AD 300*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Halliwell, S. (2015) Fiction. In P. Destrée and P. Murray (eds), *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 341–53. Malden (MA), Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hannestad, N. (2001) The ruler image of the fourth century: innovation or tradition. In J.R. Brandt and O. Steen (eds), *Imperial Art as Christian Art — Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian*, 93–107. Rome, Bardi Editore.
- Hannestad, N. (2007) Die Porträtskulptur zur Zeit Konstantins der Grossen. In A. Demandt and J. Engemann (eds), *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus: Konstantin der Grosse*: 96–116. Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern.
- Hardie, P. (1993) *Ut pictura poesis?* Horace and the visual arts. In N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace 2000: A Celebration. Essays for the Bimillennium*: 120–39. Ann Arbor (MI), University of Michigan Press.
- Harrison, E. (1967) The Constantinian portrait. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21: 81–96.

- Helm, R. (1956) (ed.) *Eusebius Werke VII: Die Chronik des Hieronymus (Hieronymi Chronicon)*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag.
- Helm, R. (1959) Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. In *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* XXIII.2: 1928–36. Stuttgart, Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag.
- Hernández Lobato, J. (2012) *Vel Apolline muto: estética y poética de la Antigüedad tardía*. Bern, Peter Lang.
- Higgins, D. (1987) *Pattern Poetry: Guide to an Unknown Literature*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Hjort, Ø. (1993) Augustus Christianus — Livia Christiana: *sphragis* and Roman portrait sculpture. In R. Rydén and J.O. Rosenqvist (eds), *Aspects of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium*: 99–112. Stockholm, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.
- Hölscher, T. (1987) *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System*. Heidelberg, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Hölscher, T. (2004) *The Language of Images in Roman Art: Art as a Semantic System in the Roman World*, trans. A. Snodgrass and A.M. Künzl-Snodgrass. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hose, M. (1996) Fiktionalität und Lüge: Über einen Unterschied zwischen römischer und griechischer Terminologie. *Poetica* 28: 257–74.
- Hose, M. (2007) Konstantin und die Literatur — oder: Gibt es eine Konstantinische Literatur? *Gymnasium* 114: 535–58.
- Jaeggi, O. (2008) *Die griechischen Porträts: Antike Repräsentation — Moderne Projektion*. Berlin, Reimer.
- Jensen, R.M. (2000) *Understanding Early Christian Art*. London, Routledge.
- Kenter, L.P. (1972) (ed.) *M. Tullius Cicero De Legibus: A Commentary on Book I*. Amsterdam, Adolf M. Hakkert.
- Kleiner, D. (1992) *Roman Sculpture*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Kluge, E. (1924) Studien zu Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. *Münchener Museum für Philologie des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* 4: 323–48.
- Kluge, E. (1926) *Publilius Optatiani Porfyrii Carmina*. Leipzig, B.G. Teubner.
- Koortbojian, M. (2005) Mimesis or phantasia? Two representational modes in Roman commemorative art. *Classical Antiquity* 24: 285–306.
- Körper, A.-L. (forthcoming) *Lector ludens*: Spiel und Rätsel in Optatians Panegyrik. In Squire and Wienand (forthcoming).
- Kristensen, T.M. (2013) *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity*. Aarhus, Aarhus University Press.
- Lahusen, G. (1997) Zur Konzeption römischer Bildnisse. In W. Schlink (ed.), *Bildnisse: Die europäische Tradition der Porträtkunst*: 57–101. Freiburg, Rombach.
- Lahusen, G. (2010) *Römische Bildnisse: Auftraggeber, Anlässe, Standorte*. Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern.
- La Rocca, E. and Parisi Presicce, C. (2011) (eds) *Ritratti: le tante face del potere*. Rome, MondoMostre.
- Letrouit, J. (2007) Pour une approche du *Carmen XXV* de P. Optatianus Porfyrius en terme de dénombrement. *Maia* 49: 73–6.
- Levitan, W. (1985) Dancing at the end of the rope: Optatian Porfyry and the field of Roman verse. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 245–69.
- Lissarrague, F. (1992) *Graphéin*: écrire et dessiner. In C. Bron and E. Kassapoglou (eds), *L'image en jeu: de l'antiquité à Paul Klee*: 189–203. Yens-sur-Morges, Cabédita.
- L'Orange, H.P. (1947) *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture*. Oslo, H. Aschehoug and Co.
- L'Orange, H.P. (1965) *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

- L'Orange, H.P., Unger, R. and Wegner, M. (1984) *Das spätantike Herrscherbild von Diokletian bis zu den Konstantin-Söhnen, 284–361 n. Chr.* Berlin, Gebrüder Mann.
- Maffei, S. (1986) Le *Imagines* di Luciano: un 'patchwork' capolavori antichi. Il problema di un metodo combinatorio. *Studi Classici e Orientali* 36: 147–64.
- Mango, C. (1959) *The Brazen House: A Study of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople.* Copenhagen, I Kommission hos Ejnar Munksgaard.
- Männlein-Robert, I. (2007a) *Stimme, Schrift und Bild: Zum Verhältnis der Künste in der hellenistischen Dichtung.* Heidelberg, Winter.
- Männlein-Robert, I. (2007b) Epigrams on art: voice and voicelessness in Hellenistic epigram. In Bing and Bruss (2007): 251–71.
- Männlein-Robert, I. (forthcoming) *Morphogrammata — Klangbilder? Überlegungen zu Poetik und Medialität bei Optatian.* In Squire and Wienand (forthcoming).
- Mathew, G. (1943) The character of the Gallienic Renaissance. *Journal of Roman Studies* 33: 65–70.
- Mazal, O. (1999) *Geschichte der Buchkultur I: Griechisch-römische Antike.* Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt.
- McGill, S. (2005) *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Meister, J. (2012) *Der Körper des Princeps: Zur Problematik eines monarchischen Körpers ohne Monarchie.* Stuttgart, Steiner.
- Meyer, D. (2005) *Inszeniertes Lesevergnügen: Das inschriftliche Epigramm und seine Rezeption bei Kallimachos.* Stuttgart, Steiner.
- Meyer, D. (2007) The act of reading and the act of writing in Hellenistic epigram. In Bing and Bruss (2007): 187–210.
- Miles, G. (2009) Reforming the eyes: interpreters and interpretation in the *Vita Apollonii*. In K. Demoen and D. Praet (eds), *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus' Vita Apollonii*: 129–60. Leiden, Brill.
- Mommsen, T. (1892) (ed.) *Chronica minora: saec. IV. V. VI. VII (Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores antiquissimi IX)* I. Berlin, Weidmann.
- Moreschini, C. (2013) *Storia del pensiero cristiano tardo-antico.* Milan, Bompiani.
- Mostecky, H. (1991) Weder Lagerplan noch Treppenbasis: Der 'VIRT EXERC' Reverstyp auf Folles aus Thessalonica. *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft* 31: 82–7.
- Mratschek, S. (2000) *Codices vestri nos sumus: Bücherkult und Bücherpreise in der christlichen Spätantike.* In A. Haltenhoff and F.-H. Mutschler (eds), *Hortus litterarum antiquarum: Festschrift für Hans Armin Gärtner zum 70. Geburtstag*: 369–80. Heidelberg, Winter.
- Müller, L. (1877) *Publilii Optatiani Porfyrii Carmina.* Leipzig, B.G. Teubner.
- Nodelman, S. (1975) How to read a Roman portrait. *Art in America* January/February 1975: 26–33.
- Nodelman, S. (1993) How to read a Roman portrait. In E. D'Ambra (ed.), *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*: 10–26. Englewood Cliffs (NJ), Prentice Hall.
- Nowicka, M. (1993) *La portrait dans la peinture antique.* Warsaw, Academia Scientiarum Polona (Institut d'Archéologie et d'Ethnologie).
- O'Gorman, E. (2000) *Irony and Misreading in the Annals of Tacitus.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Okáčová, M. (2006) The aural-visual 'symbiosis' in the poetry of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius (Towards the disentanglement of the mystery of late-ancient expansive grid-verse). In J. Nechutová and I. Radova (eds), *Laetae segestes. Griechische und lateinische Studien an der Masaryk Universität und Universität Wien*: 41–50. Brno, Masaryk University.
- Okáčová, M. (2007) Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius: Characteristic features of late ancient figurative poetics. *Sborník Prací Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské Univerzity* 12: 57–71.

- Onians, J. (1980) Abstraction and imagination in late antiquity. *Art History* 3: 1–24.
- Overbeck, B. (2005) Das Münchner Medaillon Constantins des Großen. *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft* 45: 1–15.
- Pastorino, A. (1971) (ed.) *Opere di Decimo Magno Ausonio*. Turin, Unione Tipografico/Editrice Torinese.
- Patillon, M. and Bolognesi, G. (1997) (eds) *Aelius Théon, Progyrnasmata*. Paris, Belles Lettres.
- Pékary, T. (1985) *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft, dargestellt anhand der Schriftquellen*. Berlin, Mann Verlag.
- Pelttari, A.D. (2014) *The Space That Remains: Reading Latin Poetry in Late Antiquity*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press.
- Perono Cacciafoco, F. (2011) *Studi su Publio Optaziano Porfirio*. Università di Pisa, Ph.D thesis.
- Perrin, M. J.-L. (1997) *Rabani Mauri In Honorem Sanctae Crucis (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis C)*. Turnhout, Brepols.
- Petrovic, A. (2005) Kunstvolle Stimme der Steine, sprich! Zur Intermedialität der griechischen epideiktischen Epigramme. *Antike und Abendland* 51: 30–42.
- Pipitone, G. (2012a) *Dalla figura all'interpretazione. Scoli a Optaziano Porfirio: testo italiano e latino*. Naples, Loffredo Editore.
- Pipitone, G. (2012b) Le epistole in prosa premesse al corpus poetico di Optaziano Porfirio. *Revue des Études Tardo-Antiques* 2: 1–12.
- Polara, G. (1971) *Ricerche sulla tradizione manoscritta di Publio Optaziano Porfirio*. Salerno, Libreria Internazionale Editrice.
- Polara, G. (1973) (ed.) *Publilii Optatiani Porfyrii Carmina*, 2 vols. Turin, Paraviae.
- Polara, G. (1976) (ed. and trans.) *Publilii Optaziano Porfirio: Carmi*. Naples, Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi.
- Polara, G. (1978) Optaziana II. *Vichiana* 7: 334–65.
- Polara, G. (2004) (ed. and trans.) *Optaziano Porfirio: Carmi*. Turin, Unione Tipografico-editrice Torinese.
- Pozzi, G. (2002) *La parola dipinta* (third edition). Milan, Adelphi.
- Prusac, M. (2011) *From Face to Face: Recarving of Roman Portraits and the Late-Antique Portrait Arts*. Leiden, Brill.
- Prusac, M. (2012) The arch of Constantine: continuity and commemoration through reuse. *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 25: 127–58.
- Purcell, N. (1995) Literate games: Roman urban society and the game of *alea*. *Past and Present* 147: 3–37.
- Raby, F.J.E. (1957) *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (second edition). Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Rees, R. (2012) The modern history of Latin panegyric. In R. Rees (ed.), *Latin Panegyric: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*: 3–48. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Rees, R. (2013) The look of the late antique emperor and the art of praise. In H. Lovatt and C. Vout (eds), *Epic Visions: Visuality in Greek and Latin Epic and its Reception*: 99–121. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Reydellet, M. (1994) (ed. and trans.) *Venance Fortunat, Poèmes I: Livres I–IV*. Paris, Belles Lettres.
- Roberts, C.H. and Skeat, T.C. (1983) *The Birth of the Codex*. London, British Academy/Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, M. (1989) *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press.
- Romm, J. (1990) Wax, stone and Promethian clay: Lucian as a plastic artist. *Classical Antiquity* 9: 74–98.
- Rouveret, A. (1989) *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne (Ve siècle av. J.-C. — Ier siècle ap. J.-C.)*. Rome, École Française de Rome.

- Rühl, M. (2006) Panegyrik im Quadrat: Optatian und die intermedialen Tendenzen des spätantiken Herrscherbildes. *Millennium* 3: 75–102.
- Scanzo, R. (2006) Leggere l'immagine, vedere la poesia: *carmina figurata* dall'antichità a Optaziano e Rabano Mauro, al 'New Dada' e oltre. *Maia* 58: 249–94.
- Schäfer, T. (1999) *Felicio Augusto, melior Traiano!* Das Bildnis des Konstantin in New York. In H. von Steuben (ed.), *Antike Porträts zum Gedächtnis von Helga von Heintze*: 295–302. Mohnesee, Bibliopolis.
- Scheid, J. and Svenbro, J. (1996) *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, trans. C. Volk. Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press.
- Scheidegger Lämmle, C. (2015) Einige Pendenzen: Weben und Text in der antiken Literatur. In H. Harich-Schwarzbauer (ed.), *Weben und Gewebe in der Antike: Materialität — Repräsentation — Episteme*: 167–208. Oxford, Oxbow.
- Schierl, P. and Scheidegger Lämmle, C. (forthcoming) Herrscherbild und Deutungsmuster: Optatian und die Strukturen des Panegyrischen. In Squire and Wienand (forthcoming).
- Schipke, R. (2013) *Das Buch in der Spätantik: Herstellung, Form, Ausstattung und Verbreitung in der westlichen Reichshälfte des Imperium Romanum*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Schollmeyer, P. (2005) *Römische Plastik: Eine Einführung*. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Seeck, O. (1908) Das Leben des Dichters Porphyrius. *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 63: 267–82.
- Sheppard, A. (2014) *The Poetics of Phantasia: Imagination in Ancient Aesthetics*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Skinner, M.B. (2001) Ladies' day at the art institute: Theocritus, Herodas and the gendered gaze. In A. Lardinois and L. McClure (eds), *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*: 201–21. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Smith, Rowland (2007) The Imperial court of the Late Roman Empire. In A. Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*: 157–232. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, R.R.R. (1988) *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Smolak, K. (1989) Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. In R. Reinhardt (ed.), *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike V: Restauration und Erneuerung — Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374*: 237–43, no. 544. Munich: C.H. Beck.
- Sprigath, G. K. (2004) Das Dictum des Simonides: Der Vergleich von Dichtung und Malerei. *Poetica* 36: 243–80.
- Squire, M.J. (2009) *Image and Text in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Squire, M.J. (2010a) Making Myron's cow moo? Ecphrastic epigram and the poetics of simulation. *American Journal of Philology* 131: 589–634.
- Squire, M.J. (2010b) Reading a view: poem and picture in the *Greek Anthology*. *Ramus* 39: 73–103.
- Squire, M.J. (2011) *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Squire, M.J. (2013a) Ekphrasis at the forge and the forging of ekphrasis: the 'shield of Achilles' in Graeco-Roman word and image. *Word and Image* 29: 157–91.
- Squire, M.J. (2013b) Apparitions apparent: the parameters of vision in Philostratus the Elder's *Imagines*. *Helios* 39: 97–140.
- Squire, M.J. (2014a) La ritrattistica romana e la semantica dell'asportazione. In M.G. di Monte, M. Di Monte and H. De Riedmatten (eds), *Immagini che siamo: ritratto e soggettività nell'estetica contemporanea*: 57–78. Rome, Carocci Editore. (Republished in English: (2015) Roman portraiture and the semantics of extraction. In G. Boehm, O. Budelacci, M.G. Di Monte and M. Renner (eds), *Gesicht und Identität/Face and Identity*: 79–106. Paderborn, W. Fink.)

- Squire, M.J. (2014b) The *ordo* of rhetoric and the rhetoric of order. In J. Elsner and M. Meyer (eds), *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*: 353–417. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Squire, M.J. (2015a) Sémantique de l'échelle dans l'art et la poésie hellénistiques. In É. Prioux, P. Linant de Bellefonds and A. Rouveret (eds), *D'Alexandre à Auguste: dynamiques de la création dans les arts visuels et la poésie*: 183–200. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Squire, M.J. (2015b) Patterns of significance: Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius and the figurations of meaning. In R. Green and M. Edwards (eds), *Images and Texts: Papers in Honour of Professor E.W. Handley, CBE, FBA*: 87–120. London, Institute of Classical Studies.
- Squire, M.J. (2015c) Ecphrasis: visual and verbal interactions in ancient Greek and Latin literature. *Oxford Handbooks Online* (DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935390.013.58).
- Squire, M.J. (forthcoming a) POP art: the optical poetics of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. In Elsner and Hernández Lobato (forthcoming): 25–99.
- Squire, M.J. (forthcoming b) Optatian and his lettered art: a kaleidoscopic lens on late antiquity. In Squire and Wienand (forthcoming).
- Squire, M.J. and Grethlein, J. (2014) 'Counterfeit in character but persuasive in appearance': reviewing the *aingima* of the *Tabula Ceбетis*. *Classical Philology* 109: 285–324.
- Squire, M.J. and Whitton, C. (forthcoming) *Machina sacra*: Optatian and the lettered art of the christogram. In I. Garipzanov, C. Goodson and H. Maguire (eds), *Graphic Signs of Identity, Faith, and Power in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Turnhout, Brepols.
- Squire, M.J. and Wienand, J. (forthcoming) (eds) *Morphogrammata/The Lettered Art of Optatian: Figuring Cultural Change in the Age of Constantine*. Paderborn, W. Fink.
- Stanton, G. (2004) The early Christian preference for the codex. In C. Horton (ed.), *The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels. The Contribution of the Chester Beatty Gospel Codex P45*: 40–9. London, T. and T. Clark.
- Steiner, D.T. (2001) *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Stewart, A. (1993) *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Stewart, P. (2003) *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Stewart, P. (2008) *The Social History of Roman Art*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Sulzberger, M. (1925) Le symbole de la croix et les monogrammes de Jésus chez les premiers chrétiens. *Byzantion* 2: 337–448.
- Tanner, J. (2000) Portraits, power and patronage in the late Roman Republic. *Journal of Roman Studies* 90: 18–50.
- Tanner, J. (2016) Sight and painting: optical theory and pictorial poetics in Classical Greek art. In M.J. Squire (ed.), *Sight and the Ancient Senses*: 107–22. London, Routledge.
- Thompson, D.L. (1982) *Mummy Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Malibu (CA), J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Tueller, M.A. (2008) *Look Who's Talking: Innovations in Voice and Identity in Hellenistic Poetry*. Leuven, Peeters.
- Van de Waal, H. (1967) The *linea summae tenuitatis* of Apelles: Pliny's phrase and its interpreters. *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 12: 5–32.
- Varner, E. (2014) Maxentius, Constantine, and Hadrian: images and the expropriation of imperial identity. In S. Birk, T.M. Kristensen and P. Poulsen (eds), *Using Images in Late Antiquity*: 48–77. Oxford, Oxbow.
- Varner, E. (2015) Fluidity and fluctuation: the shifting dynamics of condemnation in Roman imperial portraits. In D. Boschung, A. Shapiro and F. Waschek (eds), *Bodies in Transition: Dissolving the Boundaries of Embodied Knowledge*: 33–88. Paderborn, W. Fink.
- Vogt, E. (1966) Das Akrostichon in der griechischen Literatur. *Antike und Abendland* 13: 80–95.

- von Hartel, Ritter W. and Wickhoff, F. (1895) *Die Wiener Genesis (Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen der allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses 15–16)*. Vienna, F. Tempsky.
- Vout, C. (2007) *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wagner, P. (1995) *Reading Iconotexts: From Swift to the French Revolution*. London, Reaktion Books.
- Wagner, P. (1996) Introduction. In P. Wagner (ed.), *Icons — Texts — Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*: 1–40. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Walker, S. and Bierbrier, M. (1997) *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Ancient Egypt*. London, British Museum Press.
- Walter, C. (2006) *The Iconography of Constantine the Great, Emperor and Saint; With Associated Studies*. Leiden, Alexandros Press.
- Webb, R. (2009) *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*. Farnham, Ashgate.
- Wienand, J. (2012a) *Der Kaiser als Sieger: Metamorphosen triumphaler Herrschaft unter Constantin I*. Berlin, Akademie Verlag.
- Wienand, J. (2012b) Die Poesie des Bürgerkriegs: Das constantinische *aureum saeculum* in den *carmina* Optatians. In G. Bonamente, N. Lenski and R.L. Testa (eds), *Costantino prima e dopo Costantino*: 419–44. Bari, Edipuglia.
- Wienand, J. (2012c) The making of an Imperial dynasty: Optatian's *carmina figurata* and the development of the Constantinian *domus divina* (317–26 AD). *Giornale Italiano di Filologia* 3: 225–65.
- Wienand, J. (forthcoming) Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius: the man and his book. In Squire and Wienand (forthcoming).
- Wienand, J. and Squire, M.J. (2015) *Morphogrammata*/The lettered art of Optatian: figuring cultural change in the age of Constantine [Tagungsbericht]. *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 45: 708–13.
- Wollheim, R. (1980) *Art and its Objects* (second edition). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, S. (1986) *Roman Portrait Sculpture 217–260 AD: The Transformation of an Artistic Tradition*. Leiden, Brill.
- Wright, D. (1987) The true face of Constantine the Great. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41: 493–507.
- Zimmermann, B. (2001) 'Illustrierte Prachtcodices': Bücherluxus in der Spätantike. In F. Alto Bauer and N. Zimmermann (eds), *Epochenwandel? Kunst und Kultur zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*: 45–56. Mainz, Philipp von Zabern.