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Narrative Reliefs of the Arch of Constantine and the *Panegyrici Latini*

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Of the historical narrative friezes on the Arch of Constantine in Rome (*ca.* 312-316 AD), six are Constantinian in date. These six, forming a band of reliefs which runs around the middle level of the arch (Fig.1), are the only historical narrative panels which were purpose-built for Constantine's Arch (excluding the spandrels, socles and "Sol" and "Luna" tondi from this category).[1] The other historical reliefs include Aurelian panels depicting a range of standard imperial virtues in the attic; Hadrianic tondi showing hunts and sacrifices; and panels from the martial "Great Trajanic Frieze." These pre-Constantinian works, the spoliated elements of the Arch, were appropriated for Constantinian purposes.

Figure 1. Northern face of the Arch of Constantine, Rome.
Image credit: Alinari Archives–Anderson Archive, Florence.

[1] Kleiner 1992, 446.

But why were some components made specifically for the arch, while others could be recycled? How did the "new" Constantinian friezes work together with the *spolia* to communicate a coherent message (if there was one)? And how did the program of the arch—itself a stone panegyric of sorts, dedicated by the Senate and People to Constantine[2]—correlate with contemporary literary accounts of the achievements for which Constantine merited the honor of the arch, in particular the two *Panegyrici Latini* which commemorate the same events that the arch does?

Many have attempted to identify the original contexts of these *spolia*,[3] but fewer have sought to answer the question of why some elements were spoliated and others made new. Literary expression of contemporary Constantinian imperial ideology, stated most clearly in the *Panegyrici Latini* 12 (*ca.* 313 AD) and 4 (*ca.* 321 AD), provides an overlooked point of access for understanding this monument.[4] The earlier of these panegyrics was composed by an unknown orator shortly after Constantine's invasion of Italy, while the latter was delivered by Nazarius, a Roman rhetorician, in celebration of the *quinquennalia* of Caesars Crispus and Constantius.[5] They are not only significant for the historical details they provide on Constantine's campaigns, but they are also unambiguous expressions of the ideology and secular narratives which Constantine's promoters and court sought to publicize immediately after his march on Rome. Just as scholars are coming to realize that the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum is best understood in reference to the contemporary *Panegyricus* of Pliny,[6] a similar approach may illuminate Constantine's even more complex monument.

When the arch is considered in its context, both generally and in relation to the *Panegyrici*, several conventional interpretations and assumptions are also challenged. The arch, correctly understood, is evidence against the contention that Constantine was wholly "converted to Christianity" when he entered Rome in 312.[7] Moreover, an understanding which considers the content of the *spolia* to form an integral part of the monument's overarching priorities counters readings which find Licinius' portrait on the monument. Rigorous consideration of the panegyrics also accounts for the profusion of barbarian imagery on the monument: these images are best explained not as a haphazard assemblage of old sculpture, nor as parts of an inexplicable and mysterious "Maxentian arch."[8] Rather,

[2] Van Dam 2007, 46.

[3] See, e.g., Kleiner 1992, 445; Elsner 1998, 188-9; Holloway 2004a, 30-2.

[4] Marlowe 2006, 228, 234, in her article on the relationship between the arch and the colossus of Sol, actually refers to the Constantinian panegyrics briefly, but only where they relate to Constantine's identification with Sol Invictus.

[5] Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 288-93; 334-8.

[6] See, e.g., Fittschen 1972 and Torelli 1997.

[7] Barnes 1981, 43.

[8] Holloway (2004a, 50-1, and 2004b) proposes that the arch was built in two phases: a Maxentian phase and a Constantinian phase. He suggests that the arch was completed only up to the attic during Maxentius' rule, but that the Aurelian

the literary evidence suggests that Constantine's concern for the northern frontier and victories over countless foreign tribes were crucial elements of his resumé as emperor and of the contrast between Constantine and Maxentius. Finally, the Constantinian reliefs, when considered alongside both the wraparound friezes of earlier arches and the literary panegyrics, do not reflect a much-discussed "decline of form,"[9] but rather promote a specific set of messages in a style appropriate to medium and meaning.

Fundamentally, as a reading of the monument in conjunction with the *Panegyrici* reveals, the Arch of Constantine had two goals. (1) The arch modifies standard imperial themes into formal compositions that emphasize a new conception of the imperial government which is both strictly hierarchical and literally monarchical and, more subliminally, Constantine's place among Rome's most recent "good emperors." (2) The arch works Constantine's civil war victory into a noble and legitimizing achievement for the Roman audience's consumption. As such the foci of this achievement are Constantine's tactical brilliance, his raw prowess in the field, and the divine support which his cause has merited. Moreover, the visual program straddles the line between that of formal triumph and a general celebration of victory, blurring together Constantine's success against the Franks and other "barbarians" and his victory in the civil war against Maxentius.

The designers of the arch would certainly have had a wide range of choices for the reliefs they selected to use on the arch; these imperial *spolia* were not randomly prescribed.[10] One simple reason for using *spolia* is the evident dearth of good craftsmen in this era. Constantinian edicts in the Theodosian Code attest to this phenomenon.[11] But because the wraparound

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panels in the attic were part of the Maxentian scheme while there is obvious Constantinian content below the attic. The contention is based on perceived differences in "tone" among the arch's reliefs. As the current paper argues, however, both *spolia* and newly-made reliefs worked together to convey clearly the same Constantinian ideology promulgated in the panegyrics. The evidence from recent archaeological projects by Alessandro Melucco Vaccaro, Patrizio Pensabene and Clementia Panella is, according to Holloway, inconclusive on the arch's date. Buttrey 1983 convincingly defended what remains the conventional date for the arch (*ca.* 315-316 AD).

[9] Berenson 1954.

[10] Elsner 1998, 188-9, has stated that "[i]n creating the arch, Constantine and his designers were actively dismantling a number of Rome's more distinguished imperial monuments for their *spolia*." The idea that these components were "deliberately despoiled" from urban Roman monuments is common in spite of problems with the hypothesis (see also Kleiner 1992, 445). There is, moreover, little to suggest that the monument's *spolia* had not simply been warehoused before their appropriation in Constantine's monument; indeed, it now seems that the "barbarian" statues which surmount the arch's columns at the attic, long thought to be taken from Trajan's Forum, had been warehoused in just this way (Holloway 2004a, 30). Other possible sources for these reliefs, including monuments destroyed by disaster (Kleiner 1992, 445) and monuments much farther afield (Holloway 2004a, 32), are also attractive possibilities.

[11] *Codex Theod*. 14.4.1-2; Hannestad 1988, 323.

friezes were not only made especially for the arch, but were given more attention and detail than one would normally anticipate on the encircling relief of such an arch,[12] this is not a sufficient explanation in itself. It seems possible that the arch had to be completed in a short timeframe, between Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 and his *decennalia* in 315;[13] haste, however, cannot account for the way in which materials from a range of origins, styles, periods and qualities were combined so effectively and so meticulously into a logical and specifically Constantinian whole.

Niels Hannestad contends that on the arch, "the decoration forms a single entity" out of the spoliated and Constantinian decoration.[14] Nearly precisely the same themes, however, receive remarkably different treatment in the Aurelian and Constantinian panels. But it is nevertheless true that each set of reliefs must be considered in its relationship with the others and with the Constantinian ideology expressed in the *Panegyrici*. The *spolia* are far from random, and serve as more than vague reminders of the past; the designers thought a lot about the overall composition and program.

It is clear how the Trajanic reliefs in the central archway were appropriated and reinterpreted for their Constantinian use because of the inscription which the arch's designers added to them. One scene depicts the emperor's *adventus*; he is accompanied by Virtus and crowned by Victoria. Above this Trajanic panel, the Constantinian designers added FVNDATORI QVIETIS. Above the opposite panel, which showed the emperor in battle on horseback, simultaneously trampling one of the enemy while spearing another, was the Constantinian inscription LIBERATORI VRBIS.

Because the "Great Trajanic Frieze" almost certainly was intended to show Trajan's victory over the Dacians (and indeed, the enemies are typically "barbarian," with "Dacian caps," baggy trousers and long beards), these panels demonstrate the program's blurring of borders between foreign conquests and civil war victory. While these northern campaigns in fact had little to do with his role as "Liberator of the City," the enemies may be read in their Constantinian context as Franks or as generalized barbarians; both panegyricists emphasize the ferocity and the wide range of "barbarians" Constantine defeated:

> Quid memorem Bructeros, quid Chamavos, quid Cheruscos Lancionas Halamannos Tubantes?
>
> Why should I mention the Bructeri, why the Chamavi, why the Cherusci, Lancione, Alamanni, Tubantes?[15]

[12] Smith 2009.

[13] Kleiner 1992, 444.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.18.1. See also *Pan. Lat.* 12.21.5, 12.22.4-6; Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.17.1. All translations are Nixon and Rodgers 1994 unless otherwise noted.

The *Panegyrici* engage in similar constructions, putting together these two aspects of Constantine's all-encompassing victory: victory over both the well-trained Roman soldier and "the grim Frank," in both Italy and in "barbarian lands":

> Romanum vero militem, quem qualemque ordinat disciplina et sacramenti religio confirmat, aut trucem Francum . . . quantae molis sit superare vel capere! Quod tu, imperator, et nuper in Italia et in ipso conspectu barbariae paulo ante fecisti.
>
> But a Roman soldier, whom training disposes and the sanctity of his oath confirms to be who and what he is, or the grim Frank . . . how much trouble it is to overcome or capture these! And you, Emperor have done this both lately in Italy and not long ago in the very sight of barbarian lands.[16]

These artful formulae not only help us understand the Trajanic scenes in their Constantinian context, but also give meaning to the "barbarian" statues in the attic and to the Aurelian panels which feature "barbarians."

Furthermore, the *Panegyrici* reveal an important role for these "barbarians" in the monument's ideology. Constantine's constant concern for protecting the northern border is emphasized in the literary descriptions:

> Rhenum tu quidem toto limite dispositis exercitibus tutum reliqueras . . . quod nobis quam tibi consulebas . . . Vix enim quarta parte exercitus . . . Alpes transgressus es.
>
> You did leave the Rhine secure with armies stationed along the whole border . . . because you took counsel for our interests rather than for your own . . . With scarcely a quarter of your army you traversed the Alps.[17]

Little attention has been given to understanding the way in which "barbarians," who appear prominently in the Great Trajanic Frieze, in three of the Aurelian panels, and, very visibly, as statues surmounting the arch's columns (Fig. 1), fit into the program of an arch erected ostensibly to celebrate a civil war victory, even one cast as the liberation of Rome from a "tyrant." Without taking together the *Panegyrici Latini* and this "panégyrique de sculpture,"[18] the importation of "Dacian" (actually simply generalized barbarian) images may seem misplaced in this monument, as if, in this age of the supposed "decline of form," the arch's designers really

[16] *Pan. Lat.* 12.24.1-2.
[17] Ibid., 12.2.6, 12.3.3. Translation adapted from Nixon and Rodgers 1994.
[18] Ruysschaert 1962-3, 92.

were just using whatever they could get. Other proposals for explaining the profusion of Trajanic-style "barbarian" images include that they showed that "Rome would not become a part of a 'Dacian empire.'"[19] The impulse to portray civil war victory as somehow foreign was nothing new in any case; but the panegyrics demonstrate the way in which Constantine's concern for the northern frontiers, his victory over innumerable foreign tribes, and his victorious southward march to Rome could be blended together into a unified narrative. Indeed, to judge from both the literary evidence and the program of the arch, it seems that it was by this convenient narrative that Constantine's regime wished to be understood in the years following 312.

And Constantine's extensive experience in warfare at the extreme edges of the empire contrasted with Maxentius' situation in Rome: Maxentius was a veritable shut-in, *imbellem*, "unwarlike,"[20] and without the military resumé an emperor ought to have. While Constantine was fighting a host of foreign foes in the north, Maxentius made a trip to the gardens of Sallust look like a "foreign expedition."

> Stultum et nequam animal nusquam extra parietes egredi audebat . . . Non ille adspirare in campum, non exerceri armis . . . nam in Salustianos hortos ire peregrinatio et expeditio putabatur.
>
> The stupid, worthless creature never dared go outside his walls . . . He would not approach the Campus Martius and would not practice in arms . . . [For him], going to the estate of Sallust was considered a foreign expedition![21]

The panel which shows the emperor engaged in battle would have been gross hyperbole even by Trajanic standards. For Constantine, the emperor's fearsome personal military prowess and engagement in actual battle was an integral and specific component of the imperial ideology. Both panegyrics linger on this topic, often mock-chastising Constantine for putting himself at risk by engaging in so much of the fighting.

> [S]aevissimo hosti multus instares et libertate caedis exsultans donum noctis duceres quod pugnantem nemo servaret.
>
> You pursued the savage enemy everywhere and exulting in the freedom of slaughter you considered it a gift of night that no one observed you fighting.[22]

[19] Van Dam 2007, 47. According to Lactantius, *De mort. pers.* 27.8, Galerius wanted to rename the empire.

[20] *Pan. Lat.*, 12.14.5.

[21] *Pan. Lat.*, 12.14.3-4. Translation adapted from Nixon and Rodgers 1994.

[22] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.*, 4.26.1.

> [C]ur ipse pugnasti, cur te densissimis hostium globis miscuisti, cur salutem rei republicae in pericula tanta misisti?
>
> Why did you enter the fray yourself, why did you thrust yourself into the densest throng of the enemy, why did you send the State's salvation into such great danger?[23]

Especially given that the Constantinian Siege of Verona frieze depicts the emperor standing aloof from the iconographic battle scene (Fig. 2; see further discussion below), this emotional, Hellenistic battle image played an important role in bringing the ideology of the *Panegyrici* into the monument.

The Hadrianic tondi are at first the most puzzling element of the *spolia* as they do not fit as neatly into the narratives found in the panegyrics. They may also seem puzzling as they depict hunting scenes and sacrifices to sylvan deities, while conventional history relates that "[a]fter 28 October 312 the emperor consistently thought of himself as God's servant, entrusted with a divine mission to convert the Roman Empire to Christianity."[24] The hunt scenes can be explained as simple illustrations of imperial *virtus*. The sacrifice scenes need not confuse either; they are part of a pervasive ambiguity which is actually in harmony with the Constantinian panegyrics. While the arch's inscription refers to an INSTINCTV DIVINITATIS, it is not explicitly Christian; exactly the same sort of fence-riding is evident in the panegyrics, where, for example, the author of *Panegyric* 12 invokes rather embarrassedly *summe rerum sator*, "supreme creator of things,"[25] and asks ambiguously, *Quisnam . . . deus* "What God [or god]" counseled Constantine on the Italian campaigns?[26] Meanwhile the sun and moon tondi created in the Constantinian period, and the placement of the Apollo sacrifice above the Constantinian *oratio* frieze (the most "new regime" of these panels)[27] allude to Constantine's ongoing identification with Sol Invictus.

Licinius is often identified as the sacrificant in these tondi.[28] Not only do aspects of the portraiture suggest that Licinius is not shown, but programmatically this reading does not fit with the rest of the arch's reliefs.[29] The Constantinian reliefs, as we shall see, with their revolutionary compositional structure, assert unequivocally what is stated in the inscription anyway: this is a monument to Constantine as sole ruler. It is more likely that Constantine's father, Constantius, was shown in the

[23] *Pan. Lat.*, 12.9.3. See also 12.10.1-2.

[24] Barnes 1981, 43. Much has been written on Constantine and Christianity; this article simply notes where the Arch's narrative, considered as it must be alongside the ideology of the Panegyrics, fits into this broader question.

[25] *Pan. Lat.* 12.26.1. See Nixon and Rodgers 332 *n.*158.

[26] *Pan. Lat.* 12.2.4

[27] Smith 2009.

[28] Giuliano 1955, 52-3; Kleiner 1992, 444; Jones 2000, 69-70.

[29] Smith 1997, 185 *n.*76.

tondi.[30] The Constantinian *oratio* frieze (Fig. 4), which shows the Decennalia monument behind the Rostra, may also suggest Constantine's emergence from his father's tetrarchic regime. Nothing about the contemporary panegyric (12) or about the rest of the arch seems to honor the dyarchy of Constantine and Licinius.[31]

The Constantinian friezes were even more important for promulgating the themes, virtues and episodes of the panegyrics than the spoliated reliefs. But their specificity and detail, both in themselves and in their correlation to the written panegyrics, are surprising given historical conventions for such wraparound friezes. Encircling reliefs on arches usually depicted a standardized scene of triumphal procession. While a triumph would be admittedly inappropriate here (given that none was celebrated), the designers of the Arch of Constantine took this component of arch monuments to new levels of ambition. In fact, it is in comparison to the wraparound reliefs on this arch that the processional friezes of earlier arch monuments look generic, their figures stubby.[32] This is a rather different understanding of the Constantinian friezes from the conventional one, which finds in them a "decline of form."[33] In fact the wraparound friezes of the Arch of Constantine were placed lower to the ground where they would be more viewable—than was customary (though in the same place as on the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome), and were larger than their predecessors so that their ambitious new specificity and detail, which finds narrative correlation with the program of the *Panegyrici*, would be clearly legible.

The "new" friezes were ambitious and innovative.[34] The distinctive features of the first four reliefs relate primarily to content. The first frieze, on the west face of the arch, shows Constantine's army leaving a city (as the gate on the far left indicates); the city is probably Milan,[35] but Trier[36] and Turin are also possibilities. But what is unique in content are details of Constantine's army, on this and on subsequent panels. While Constantine's soldiers on the arch have been described as "cookie cutter" figures,[37] there are actually many specific features to identify this army as Constantine's: these elements include the dromedary, the figures of Victoria and Sol

[30] Jones 2000, 69-70.

[31] For the dyarchy see Kleiner 1992, 444.

[32] Smith 2009.

[33] Berenson 1954; Jones 2000, 52.

[34] It was not because the artists of the period were unable to produce sculptural relief that *spolia* were used; nor was it because (or only because) the Constantinian friezes depicted images which could not be taken from another monument that a combination of new and old reliefs were used. The relationship between new and old was an important aspect of the arch's program, and, at the same time, the Constantinian reliefs do much more than echo themes used by past emperors.

[35] Hannestad 1988, 324; Kleiner 1992, 447; 324; Holloway 2004a, 36.

[36] Hannestad 1988, 324.

[37] Kleiner 1992, 447, 452.

Invictus and the range of headgear which the soldiers wear, on this and on the next frieze (Fig. 2), indicating the diversity of Constantine's forces. In fact, the attire and equipment of the soldiers in each of the scenes shed light on the ambition and specificity with which the images were conceived. In the departure scene, the "pillbox" hats indicate either veterans[38] or regional auxiliaries. In both the siege panel (Fig. 2) and the depiction of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (Fig. 3), Constantine's well-known Gallic auxiliaries and Mauretanian soldiers are carefully distinguished by horned helmets and by blade-laden headbands respectively.[39] In the Milvian Bridge scene, both are differentiated from the scaled armor of Maxentius' "cataphract" troops,[40] whom the frieze has cunningly managed to depict as foreign, even in comparison with Constantine's provincial auxiliaries. The soldiers on each of these reliefs also carry the "clubs equipped with heavy iron knobs," *clavis . . . gravibus ferratisque nodis*, which Nazarius discusses in his panegyric.[41]

Figure 2. The Siege of Verona.
Constantinian relief, southern face of the Arch of Constantine, Rome.
Image credit: Alinari Archives–Anderson Archive, Florence.

The siege panel on the arch may be clearly understood as the Siege of Verona based on the episodic nature of the *Panegyrici* themselves (Fig. 2); Constantine's promoters (and possibly the Constantinian court itself) sought to ascribe pivotal importance to this event. In each panegyric, an episodic account of the siege and Constantine's subsequent victory is central to the narrative.[42] After an extended description, *Panegyric* 12 proclaims the victory at Verona to be *pulcherrimum et qui omnium oculis subici debuisset triumphum!* "the most beautiful triumph which ought to have been exposed to the eyes of the world."[43] Moreover, when Constantine enters Rome and the people crowd around him, the panegyricist states *viderentur eum a quo obsidione liberati fuerant obsidere* "they seemed to besiege the man by whose siege they had been liberated."[44] In the relief, Constantine is

[38] Giuliano 1955, 36; Holloway 2004a, 66.
[39] Giuliano 1995, 37-8.
[40] Ibid., 38; Hannestad 1988, 324.
[41] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.24.3.
[42] *Pan. Lat.* 12.8-12; Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.25.3.
[43] *Pan. Lat.* 12.12.1. Translation adapted from Nixon and Rogers 1994.
[44] Ibid. 12.19.4.

present at the battle himself (if not as actively engaged as the emperor is in the "Great Trajanic Frieze"), just as the panegyrics state. The Mauretanian and Gallic auxiliaries are again present; and further details, including the falling defender and the lone Constantinian soldier running around the city wall, enhance the scene's specificity. The episodes shown on the Constantinian reliefs are as exact in the literary accounts as they are on the monument, likely boiled down and made into a good story for the public's consumption.

Figure 3. The Battle of the Milvian Bridge.
Constantinian relief, southern face of the Arch of Constantine, Rome.
Image credit: Alinari Archives–Alinari Archive, Florence.

The Constantinian panels indicate the particular moments for which Constantine sought to be famous. The Battle of the Milvian Bridge is the most important of these (Fig. 3). Constantine, flanked by Victory and Virtus,[45] recalls the spoliated friezes with similar constructions (including the "Great Trajanic Frieze"), yet this is the most Constantinian, the most specific, of all the episodes. While the frieze lacks the emotion and dynamism which a Hellenistic style would have brought to the scene, the very detailed, iconographic representation (particularly precise in details and distinctions in military costumes) nonetheless captures the high drama which the *Panegyrici* put into the event:

> . . . tectas continuis stragibus ripas . . . , oppletum acervis corporum Tiberim et inter congestas alte cadaverum moles aegro nisu . . . exeuntem. . .
>
> . . . the banks covered with an unbroken line of carnage . . ., the Tiber filled with heaps of bodies, moving along with weakened effort among high-piled masses of cadavers. . . [46]

While the arrival in Rome may seem simply a stock scene, it too is specific and in harmony with the Constantinian ideology of the *Panegyrici*. For one, this is true in regard to the soldiers' attire and weaponry.[47]

[45] Holloway 2004a, 36-7.
[46] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.30.1; see also *Pan. Lat.* 12.17.1-2.
[47] Giuliano 1955, 39.

But it is also true in that here again the monument straddles a fine line between triumphal imagery and a more generalized celebration of victory (which was more appropriate for a civil war commemoration). As the *Panegyrici* relate, Constantine entered the city to great celebration. But *[n]on agebantur quidem ante currum vincti duces . . . Nil ex hostico accepit sed se ipsam recuperavit,* "leaders in chains were not driven before the chariot . . . Rome received nothing of an enemy's but recovered her own self."[48] This type of frieze, which encircles the whole of the arch, would normally show a triumphal procession. Just as the arch and panegyrics blur together victory over "barbarians" and victory over Maxentius, the frieze bears a nuanced message. To portray a triumph, however, would be too obviously inappropriate for any monument related to a civil war. This *adventus* is as close as Constantine's arch goes; but it is categorically—just as in the literary accounts— not the procession of a formal triumph.

Figure 4. *Oratio* in the Forum Romanum.
Constantinian relief, northern face of the Arch of Constantine, Rome.
Image credit: Alinari Archives–Anderson Archive, Florence.

The final two reliefs portray themes that had become standardized in the visual vocabulary of Roman imperial art: an *oratio* (Fig. 4) and a *congiarium* (Fig. 5). Indeed, similar events are depicted on the Aurelian panels in the arch's attic, as well as on, for instance, the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum. But the formal and compositional aspects of the scene diverge significantly from typologized *oratio* and *donatio* scenes of previous emperors and look forward to Late Antique modes.[49] For both are clearly hierarchical and focused intensely on the frontal representation of the emperor.[50] Constantine is centered in the symmetrical arrangement in both instances; and in both instances the Senate, and then the common people (distinguished by togas and tunics respectively, in a convention for *honestiores* and *humiliores*), fan outward and downward from his person. As the panegyrics describe, *te, Constantine, senatus populusque Romanus . . . quacumque progressus es, et oculis ferre gestivit,* "The Senate and people of Rome were in a passion to carry you even with their eyes, Constantine,

[48] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.31.1.
[49] Holloway 2004a, 37.
[50] Ibid., 48.

wherever you made your way." [51] In the reliefs, the size of each individual, as well as his (for all are men) location in the scheme, is of paramount importance.[52] The radical organization of these scenes is neither coincidental nor unsophisticated.

The scheme is, in fact, one which befits the ideology of the new monarchy. This new *maximus imperator*,[53] the written panegyrics state, *tantum ultra omnium saeclorum principes eminet quantum a privatis ceteri principes recesserunt* "towers as far above the leaders of all ages as other leaders are distant from private men."[54] The sense of distance and order is reflected in the hierarchical scheme of the relief. We might note that Constantine even "towers over" the images of two previous good emperors in the panel. Like the panegyrics, the frieze "ignores Licinius" completely.[55] None of this suggests that the frieze's designers or artists held a copy of the panegyrics in hand while they worked. But the arch and the panegyrics reflect the same ideology, and considering the two together makes their meaning clear: a monarchy reconstituted out of chaos and tetrarchy.

Figure 5. *Congiarium*.
Constantinian relief, northern face of the Arch of Constantine, Rome.
Image credit: Alinari Archives–Anderson Archive, Florence.

While certain details of the much earlier standard types on which these reliefs are based are maintained (for example, the children riding the shoulders of their parents in both this *congiarium* scene and the one on Trajan's Beneventum arch[56]), these panels inaugurate a new era in imperial art. The Rostra scene, in terms of event and action depicted, is virtually the same as the *adlocutio* scene of the Anaglypha Traiani. While in the Anaglpyha image, however, the emperor is put to one side and stands in a three-quarter view,[57] the Constantinian narrative demanded a new formalism.

[51] *Pan. Lat.* 12.19.5. Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.5.3-4 repeats that Constantine attracted the fixation of people's gazes.
[52] Kleiner 1992, 447.
[53] *Pan. Lat.* 12.26.5.
[54] Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4.1.1.
[55] Nixon and Rodgers 333 *n.*163: "Note…that the orator ignores Licinius."
[56] Kleiner 1992, 452.
[57] Ibid., 249.

The designers of Constantine's Arch could hardly have predicted the future: Late Antique artistic conventions, Byzantine icons. The centrality and symmetry of the "new" Constantinian reliefs have an internal logic that is consistent with the themes and ideology Constantine sought to promulgate. In these panels, the designers have arrived at a mode of imperial representation at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Ara Pacis Augustae (where the emperor had been relatively indistinct from the crowd), not because they were consciously working towards a denouement of the imperial image, but because the entire wraparound frieze, and the entire arch, followed a carefully planned program of ideology manifest here and in the Constantinian *Panegyrici*. This stone panegyric achieves its goals—an unambiguous declaration of the new monarchy and a blurring together of civil and foreign victories—with ambition and originality.[58]

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