

Understanding the Arch of Constantine in a Landscape of Memory²²⁶

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Abstract

This article puts forward a re-interpretation of the motivations behind the creation and design of the Arch of Constantine by the Senate. By taking the inscription and the monument into consideration, alongside the historical accounts of his victory at the Milvian Bridge, his subsequent conversion to Christianity, and the archaeological context of the Arch within Rome itself, it will argue that the Senate’s representation of Constantine’s victory was inspired not by pagan or Christian influences but by the metropolitan Roman monuments of his predecessors who had been deified. It concludes that the Arch of Constantine was designed by the Senate to situate his victory into firm historical and geographical contexts, whose frameworks were upheld by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of his deified predecessors.

1. Introduction

The Arch of Constantine is a triple-bayed arch dedicated by the Senate in A.D. 315 to celebrate Constantine’s victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge three years earlier. Situated between the Colosseum and the Palatine Hill, it stands 21 metres high, 25.9 metres wide and 7.4 metres deep and spans the *Via Triumphalis*. It is decorated with spolia from several Roman monuments and carries a dedicatory inscription on the north and south faces of its attic.²²⁷ The text attributes the victory both to Constantine’s leadership and to the inspiration of an unspecified divine force:

²²⁶ This article began life as a research project undertaken at the inaugural British School of Rome Postgraduate Epigraphy Course in July 2012. It lay dormant for many years before being revisited during a COVID-19 lockdown and presented at the Postgraduate and Early Career Late Antiquity Network Conference in September 2021. Many thanks must go to Abigail Graham for starting my epigraphic journey at the B.S.R., to Alberto Rigolio for reminding me how fascinating the fourth century A.D. is, and to Monica Hellström for reading and commenting upon an early draft. It is dedicated to Barbara Borg, for teaching me to read a building like a book, and for always being able to see what I myself could not. I owe her my eternal gratitude.

²²⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the history and form of the Arch of Constantine, see Ferris 2013.

IMP. CAES. FL. CONSTANTINO MAXIMO P. F. AUGUSTO. SPQR QUOD
INSTINCTU DIVINITATIS MENTIS MAGNITUDINE CUM EXERCITU
SUO TAM DE TYRANNO QUAM DE OMNI EIUS FACTIONE UNO
TEMPORE IUSTIS REM PUBLICUM ULTIS EST ARMIS ARCUM
TRIUMPHIS INSIGNEM DICAUIT

To the emperor Flavius Constantine, the Great, pious and fortunate, the Senate and the People of Rome, because by divine inspiration and his own great spirit with his army on both the tyrant and all his faction at once in rightful battle he avenged the State, dedicated this arch as a mark of triumph.²²⁸

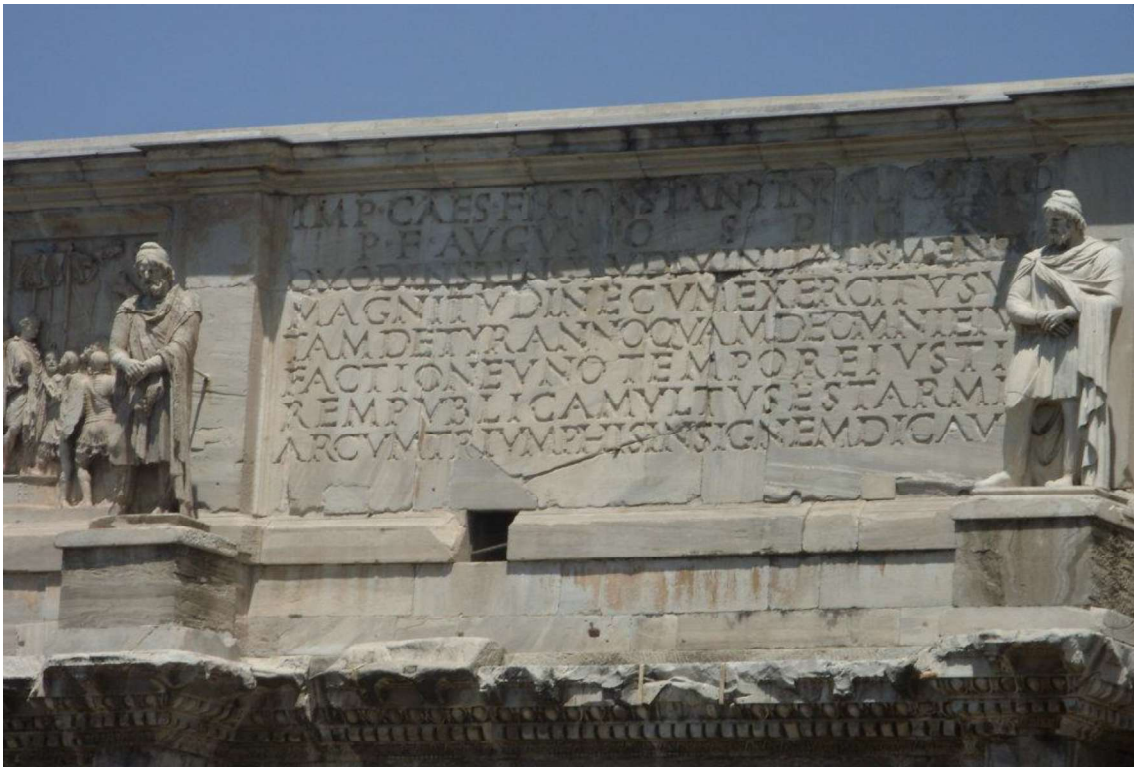


Figure 1: The dedicatory inscription from the Arch of Constantine (Author’s own: July 2012)

The religious connotations of the phrase where Constantine’s victory was said to be “inspired by the divine”, particularly in relation to the increased acceptance of Christianity at this time, have fostered much debate amongst scholars.²²⁹ In light of the surviving written accounts of the battle of

²²⁸ *CIL* 6.1139; Text and translation Ferris 2013, 41-42.

²²⁹ Select bibliography includes Barnes 1985; Elliott 1987; Van Dam 2003; Weiss 2003; Price 2005; Drake 2005; Van Dam 2007; Lenski 2008; Bardill 2012; Van Dam 2011.

the Milvian Bridge, preserved by Lactantius and Eusebius, attributing this divine inspiration to the Christian God is certainly a reasonable conclusion to make:

“Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round thus at the top, being the cipher of Christ. Having this sign, his troops stood to arms. The enemies advanced, but without their emperor, and they crossed the bridge. The armies met, and fought with the utmost exertions of valour, and firmly maintained their ground.”²³⁰

“As he made (these) prayers and earnest supplications there appeared to the Emperor a most remarkable divine sign...About the time of the midday sun, when day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, ‘By this conquer’. Amazement at the spectacle seized both him and the whole company of soldiers which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle...as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make a copy of the sign which appeared in the sky, and to use this as a protection against the attacks of the enemy.”²³¹

Lactantius and Eusebius, a zealous convert and the Bishop of Caesarea respectively, inevitably portray Constantine as the pious Christian emperor whose position had been divinely sanctioned by the Christian God. As convenient as this interpretation appears, and as much as it has been desired in scholarship,²³² Christianity, or indeed Roman religion in all its variations, cannot be used to explain the choices made by the Senate when using the Arch of Constantine to commemorate his victory at the Milvian Bridge.

Eusebius does not help matters by not mentioning Constantine’s vision when he wrote book nine of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* soon after A.D. 313.²³³ To complicate matters further, the Christian vision experienced by Constantine at the Milvian Bridge was not his first vision. The anonymous

²³⁰ Lact. *DMP*. 44. 4-6; (Trans. Vanderspoel).

²³¹ Euseb. *VC*. 1.28-29; (Trans. Cameron and Hall).

²³² Examples of this listed by Lenski 2008, 229 include: Alföldi (trans. Mattingly) 1948, 72, 132–133 n.25; Jones 1949, 91; Dörries (trans. Bainton) 1972, 31-32; Krautheimer 1983, 131 n.27; Holloway 2004, 19.

²³³ Bardill 2012, 168-169.

Latin Panegyrist, speaking in Trier sometime between A.D. 307 and 311, states that Constantine had seen a vision of Apollo and Victory, who offered him laurel wreaths, whilst at a temple in Gaul.²³⁴ Despite his Christian convictions, Constantine’s own religious beliefs remained ambiguous throughout his life; his vision of Apollo and his well-known affinity with Sol Invictus are just some examples of the fluidity of his beliefs.²³⁵ The concept of an unspecified divine source of inspiration appears in a number of contexts. In A.D. 313, another panegyrist referred to a divine will, *mens divina*, as the source of Constantine’s victory.²³⁶ David Potter notes that the, albeit scarce, representations of *mens divina* show her as a feminine deity, so neither Apollo or Sol Invictus could be the source of inspiration here; Potter offers Roma as an alternative.²³⁷ Ross Holloway touches on, but does not solve, the ambiguous nature of the issue by suggesting that *instinctu divinitatis* acknowledges Constantine’s Christian vision without compromising the pagan nature of the triumphal arch.²³⁸ Potter also questions the phrasing of the inscription, suggesting that *instinctu divinitatis* is a traditional, pre-Christian way of describing a moment of inspiration.²³⁹ Linda Jones Hall remarks that whilst earlier authors such as Cicero, Florus, and Pliny use the phrase, or derivations of it, to credit several, and often specifically named, gods with inspiring people to action, by the late antique period, those who speak of inspiration by divine forces do so in less specific terms.²⁴⁰

The complex nature of the religious life of fourth century Rome encourages one to look elsewhere when discussing how the Senate used the Arch of Constantine to celebrate and honour his victory at the Milvian Bridge. This article will argue that the Senate’s creation and siting of the Arch would have not only been a fitting acknowledgement of Constantine’s right to rule, but also would have associated him with emperors from more prosperous times and the peace and stability

²³⁴ *Pan. Lat.* 6. 89. 3-4; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994, 212.

²³⁵ Ferris 2013, 42.

²³⁶ Mitchell 2007, 260; *Pan. Lat.* 9. 12 2.4.

²³⁷ Potter 2013, 150-151.

²³⁸ Holloway 2004 19-20.

²³⁹ See for example: Flor. *Epit.* 1.3.9.1-2; Cic. *div.* 1.12.1-10; Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.24.4-5; Plin. *Ep.* 2.14.10; 6.6.3; *Pan. Lat.* 12(9).2.4-3.4. For a catalogue of known instances of the term *instinctu*, with and without reference to a named deity, and discussion of the phrase *instinctu divinitatis* and its implications for understanding the Arch of Constantine see Jones Hall 1998.

²⁴⁰ Jones Hall 1998, 662.

brought about through their victories. It will show that the emperors with whom the Senate associated Constantine shared one characteristic; they had all been deified upon their deaths. The divine inspiration referred to in the Arch’s dedicatory inscription cannot be attributed to the Christian God, nor any member of the Roman pantheon, but could be attributed to Constantine’s deified predecessors. The Senate used the Arch of Constantine to situate his victory into firm historical and geographical contexts, whose frameworks were upheld by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of his deified predecessors, rather than a religious context.

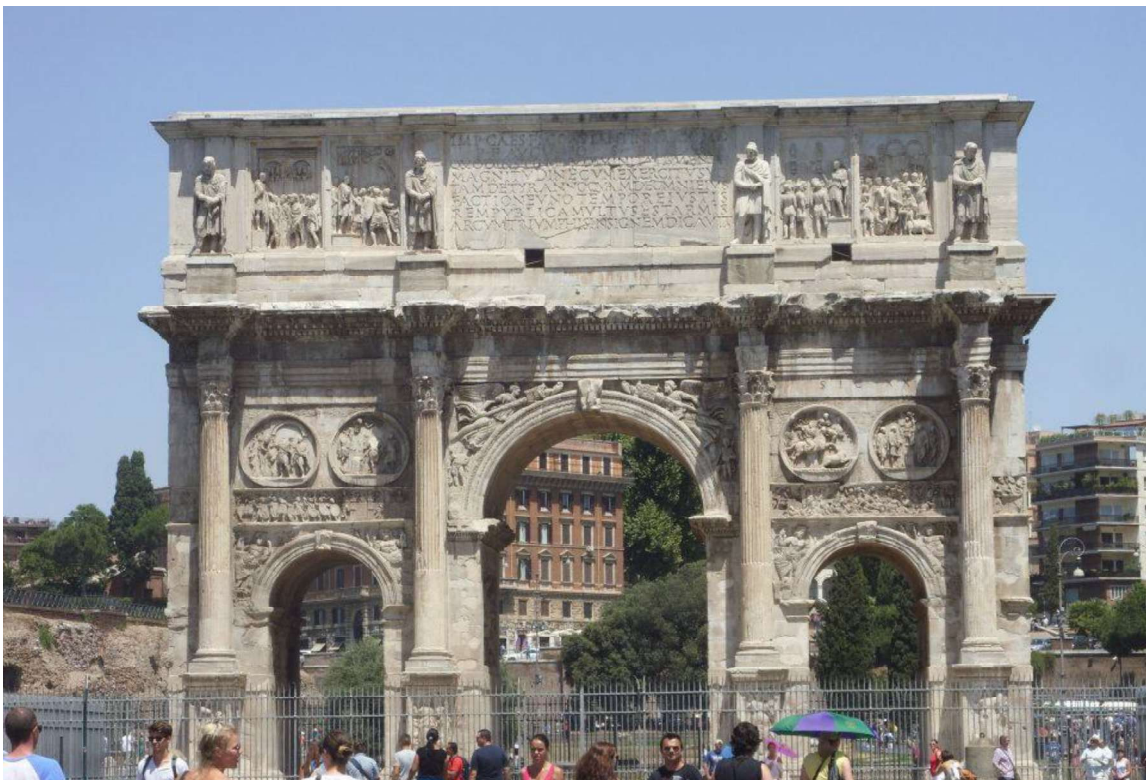


Figure 2: The Arch of Constantine (Author’s own: July 2012)

2. Recent Discussions of the Arch of Constantine

There have been recent discussions concerning whom the Arch was originally intended to honour, which require addressing prior to offering a new interpretation of what inspired the Senate’s use of the Arch of Constantine to celebrate him and his victory. Noel Lenski notes that excavations in the area around the Arch published by Maria Letizia Conforto and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro

and Patrizio Pensabene and Clementina Panella have indicated that the structure was at least begun, if not largely completed, under Maxentius.²⁴¹ Whilst Lenski suggests that this was a case of Constantine’s appropriation of Maxentius’ monuments to signify and celebrate his own glory,²⁴² it can equally be interpreted as the Senate reappropriating the Arch to remove traces of Maxentius from the cityscape of Rome. Unlike the other Tetrarchs, Maxentius worked hard to enlist the favour of the Roman establishment, constructing much of his imperial propaganda around the notion that he was the champion of the *Urbs Roma*.²⁴³ If Maxentius had chosen to situate an arch in a location surrounded by the monuments of admirable, but most significantly, deified Roman emperors, this would have ensured that his efforts to champion Rome and her people were noticed in a prominent place surrounded by others who had done the same. If this location for an arch for Maxentius was chosen by the Senate, rather than Maxentius himself, then it could be seen as the Senate actively encouraging Maxentius to continue to be a model of a good Roman leader and remain the champion of the *Urbs Roma* he was so keen to appear to be. After the defeat of Maxentius the Senate may have been left with a partially-built arch in a prime location within Rome. However, the Arch, its location, and its iconography, whether originally designed for Maxentius or not, would have been wholly appropriate for and easily adjustable to honour Constantine.

Brian Rose’s study on the “Constantinian reliefs” from the Arch also warrants discussion in this context. He argues that these reliefs, originally thought to have been carved specifically for the Arch of Constantine, were made for an honorific monument for Diocletian.²⁴⁴ Crucially, Diocletian, the staunch defender of traditional Roman religion and persecutor of Christians, was, like many of his “good” predecessors, also deified by the Senate upon his death in A.D. 311/2.²⁴⁵ There is also epigraphic evidence which suggests that Diocletian may have been considered a living god.²⁴⁶ If Rose is correct that these reliefs were originally intended for a Diocletianic monument, rather than the

²⁴¹ Pensabene and Panella, 1999; Conforto and Melucco Vaccaro 2001; Lenski 2008, 215-216.

²⁴² Lenski 2008, 216.

²⁴³ Lenski 2008, 208.

²⁴⁴ Rose 2021, 175-210.

²⁴⁵ Bonamente 1988, 135-136; Thrombley 2011, 24.

²⁴⁶ Thrombley 2011, 23 discusses *CIL* III 710, which dates to between A.D. 285 and 293: “To our lords Diocletian and Maximianus, the unconquered Augusti, who were begotten by gods and are the begetters of gods [---]”

Arch of Constantine, then this provides further evidence for the Senate taking their inspiration for their representation of Constantine and his victory from the deeds and monuments of his deified predecessors. Diocletian and his fellow Tetrarchs restored order in the empire after decades of upheaval and chaos and upheld traditional Roman values and practices. If Constantine was to be seen as an emperor worthy of being considered alongside his deified predecessors, the Senate would expect him to do the same.

3. The role of public architecture in the creation and retention of memories

This article argues that there was a programmatic engagement with past deified emperors on the part of the designers of the Arch of Constantine. Therefore the question of whether or not contemporary viewers would have been able to recognise the spolia as such and connect it with particular past emperors needs to be addressed. Constantine was a master of appropriating the past and reused earlier images to a greater extent than any previous emperors.²⁴⁷ Jessica Hughes and Mark Wilson Jones note that the juxtaposition of the new and the spoliated elements of the Arch of Constantine would have been more noticeable in the fourth century than they are now.²⁴⁸ The variety of colours, materials, and styles would have created a sense of heterogeneity within the monument, mixing old and new.²⁴⁹ Spoliation was common in the fourth century A.D.,²⁵⁰ so this in itself would not have marked the Arch of Constantine out as a distinctive monument. However, there was intentionality on the part of the designers of the Arch of Constantine, pairing him with Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius by adding portrait features and epithets to the spoliated reliefs, drawing parallels between Constantine’s deeds and theirs.²⁵¹

The perception of place in human memory was explored by Susan Alcock in her 2002 work *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscapes, Monuments and Memories*, in which she coined the phrase “landscapes of memory.”²⁵² The Romans were masters at using imagery and architecture as a

²⁴⁷ Hughes 2014, 111.

²⁴⁸ Wilson Jones 2000, 63; Hughes 2014, 105.

²⁴⁹ Hughes 2014, 105.

²⁵⁰ Dumser 2018, 147.

²⁵¹ Hughes 2014, 111.

²⁵² Alcock 2002; Cadogan 2004.

means of evoking, manipulating, and institutionalising memories. The Senate used shared memories of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, of their deeds and their virtues, to situate Constantine and his victory into a context that was shaped by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of his deified predecessors. With specific reference to Rome’s triumphal arches, Maggie Popkin has argued that these monuments helped to create an impression of events and characters, rather than being accurate representations of the military achievements of the emperor concerned.²⁵³ Rome’s triumphal arches were the main point of reference for military history for people living in the city, and when considered as a group caused people to remember military victories that may not have been glorious or, in the case of Augustus’ Parthian Arch, events that were not even strictly military.²⁵⁴ The appreciation of a monument should be a shared experience, as without some sense of communal understanding, a sense of shared memories could not have been created, even if, as Popkin argues, those memories are not entirely true to the historical narrative. With these considerations in mind, this article will show that the Arch of Constantine was not simply a commemoration of a single event and moment in time, but was designed to situate Constantine and his achievements within the city of Rome alongside his imperial predecessors whom the Senate had honoured with deification.

There are several reasons why the Senate chose to specifically associate Constantine with his deified predecessors in the context of celebrating both his victory at The Milvian Bridge and the tenth year of his reign. Maintaining a respect and fervour for traditional religious practices was a primary concern for the Senate during the early years of Constantine’s reign, which were characterised by religious change and upheaval.²⁵⁵ Lenski notes that the main emphasis of the spoliated reliefs, into which Constantine was placed, is traditional Roman piety. Unlike elsewhere, there is no evidence of his new-found interest in Christianity in the Arch’s sculptural decoration.²⁵⁶ Visually associating Constantine with traditional Roman values suggests that the Senate were trying to discourage

²⁵³ Popkin 2018, 284-286.

²⁵⁴ Popkin 2018, 287.

²⁵⁵ Popkin 2016, 69.

²⁵⁶ Lenski 2014, 179.

Constantine from adopting an overtly Christian agenda²⁵⁷ by encouraging him to adopt the virtues and values of those deemed worthy to have been deified.

Restoring peace and stability after the civil war, and ruling with *virtus* and *pietas*, were also expectations that the Senate would have had of Constantine. Paul Zanker claims that through the Arch of Constantine the Senate communicated their hope that he would be a pious emperor, respectful of traditional Roman religion, and that he conducted himself as first among equals in relation to the Senate.²⁵⁸ Diederik Burgersdijk adds that the imperial virtues displayed in the spolia were designed to be an incentive to Constantine to surpass the achievements of his predecessors.²⁵⁹ If Burgersdijk is correct in his assumption, then the Senate hoped that Constantine would be more than just a “good emperor” as Zanker suggests. Thus, we can consider that the Senate was not only focused on honouring Constantine as a good emperor, but also on establishing him as an emperor worthy to be honoured alongside those who had been deified in the past. As will be discussed throughout this article, both the emperors from whose monuments spolia was used to decorate the Arch of Constantine - Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius - and the monuments of other deified emperors including Augustus, Claudius, Titus, and Septimius Severus were sources of inspiration for the Senate’s representation of Constantine. Moreover, we will examine the efforts of the Senate to disassociate Constantine with less worthy emperors who had suffered *damnatio memoriae*, such as Nero and Domitian.

The Senate’s reuse and reappropriate of spoliated sculptures on the Arch of Constantine was a very deliberate choice of pieces as opposed to a random assortment. The use of these pieces to evoke memories of his deified predecessors allowed the Senate to historically and geographically contextualise Constantine, his victory at Milvian Bridge, and the divine force which inspired it. The extent to which Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius would have been recognisable once their portrait heads had been recarved has been addressed in recent studies of the Arch. Hughes argues that a viewer of the Arch would see multiple links between Constantine and his predecessors, each

²⁵⁷ Lenski 2014, 178-179; 188-189.

²⁵⁸ Zanker 2012a, 2012b.

²⁵⁹ Burgersdijk 2021, 71.

of which would “consolidate and shorten the semantic pathways between these men in the viewer’s memory.”²⁶⁰ She draws on evidence from the psychologist Endel Tulving’s study of cued retrieval,²⁶¹ and suggests that one partner in the imperial pairings on the Arch of Constantine would “function as a retrieval cue for the other.”²⁶² So, if a viewer who examined the imagery on the Arch of Constantine then went on to encounter other images of Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius on display elsewhere in the city, they might be cued automatically to recall their own Emperor. The repetition of images across Rome and their potential to evoke, create, and manipulate memories, meant that the whole city, and not just the monuments in the vicinity of the Arch of Constantine, had the potential to act as a landscape of memory and served to represent him on a par with his deified predecessors.

Unlike Hughes and Wilson Jones,²⁶³ others are less convinced about the ability of a fourth century viewer of the Arch of Constantine to understand any ideological meaning behind its spoliated elements. Elisha Dumser states that discerning between the old and new sculptures would have been possible but it would have taken some effort on the part of the viewer,²⁶⁴ and Rose adds that a viewer would need to know where the sculptures came from originally to have any understanding of their meaning in a new context.²⁶⁵ Whilst Dumser questions why anyone would stop and look for any deeper meaning in the Arch’s sculptures,²⁶⁶ she also compares the use of spoliation here with its usage in the Audience Hall on the Via Sacra. Here, spoliated elements were used so discreetly that she claims that their patrons ensured that there was no intention to generate an ideological narrative through the reuse of spolia.²⁶⁷ If Dumser’s argument here is correct, and that fourth century architectural patrons were aware enough of the potential narrative that spoliated

²⁶⁰ Hughes 2014, 111.

²⁶¹ Tulving and Pearlstone 1966; Tulving and Osler 1968. “These involved presenting subjects with lists of words to be retained and then recalled (‘target’ words), some of which were accompanied by a partner (‘cue’ words). When subjects were asked to recall a target word – either unaided or prompted by the relevant cue word – Tulving found that the presence of the appropriate cue significantly increased the chance of subjects recalling the target.” Hughes 2014, 110.

²⁶² Hughes 2014, 111.

²⁶³ Wilson Jones 2000, 63; Hughes 2014, 105.

²⁶⁴ Dumser 2018, 153-154.

²⁶⁵ Rose 2021, 202

²⁶⁶ Dumser 2018, 154

²⁶⁷ Dumser 2018, 147.

elements could have created, this only adds weight to the argument that the Senate used, and manipulated, the spolia on the Arch of Constantine with this in mind. Despite Dumser and Rose’s reservations, the narrative potential of spoliated images and the awareness of this by the creators and many viewers of the Arch of Constantine, suggests that those on the Arch were designed with a specific use in mind. Hughes’s research on the ability of images to act as stimuli for cued retrieval in the same way that words can is particularly illuminating in the context of a society which relied so much on visual culture to convey meanings. However, the Senate could not rely upon just the Arch and its spolia to convey their desire to celebrate Constantine and his victory at Milvian Bridge alongside the achievements of his deified predecessors.

4. The Representation of Constantine in a Landscape of Memory

The Arch of Constantine was designed to represent Constantine as a victorious leader in the heart of the city of Rome. The following sections will show that visual clues from the immediate vicinity of the Arch, and elsewhere in the city of Rome, were used to emphasise and consolidate the Senate’s efforts to situate Constantine, his victory at Milvian Bridge, and the divine force which inspired it, culturally and geographically into the succession of worthy emperors who they had honoured with deification.

4.1 Constantine and the Nerva-Antonines

The study of the archaeological evidence begins not with the earliest source of inspiration for the representation of Constantine’s victory by the Senate, but those that are most well-known and most-often acknowledged. As a result of laudations, first by Niccolò Machiavelli²⁶⁸ and then by Edward Gibbon,²⁶⁹ the five emperors from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius have become known as “the good emperors.” Whilst Gibbon’s assessment that there was no time before or since A.D. 98-180 where the people of the world were happier must be taken with a significant pinch of salt, one cannot ignore the fact that this period was one of the most politically stable and prosperous in the Roman Empire’s

²⁶⁸ Machiavelli 1531.

²⁶⁹ Gibbon 1776.

history. The reuse of architectural elements from monuments of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius to decorate the Arch of Constantine, and the recarving of these emperors' portraits into ones of Constantine, are well documented and a repetition of them is not required here.²⁷⁰ Analyses of the spolia have largely suggested that they were chosen, and Constantine inserted into the scenes occupied by his predecessors, to directly link him to these three “good emperors.”²⁷¹ However, as shall be discussed below, this view is too simplistic and does not take the wider context, physically or chronologically, of these images and their full impact on the way that they represented Constantine and his victory into account. The Arch of Constantine, in form, location, epigraphic details, and representation of Constantine's victory, can be linked to the works and deeds not only of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius but also a number of his other predecessors, all of whom were deified by the Senate. The following sections will demonstrate that the Senate's representation of Constantine's victory and the divine inspiration behind it, have precedents far earlier than the emperors from whose monuments the Arch's spolia were acquired. It will show that it is not enough simply to state that the representation of Constantine and his victory by the Senate was inspired by the so-called “good emperors,” but that it came from a far wider range of deified imperial precedents which came together to form a network of triggers for cued retrieval within both the physical landscape and shared memoryscape of late antique Rome.

4.2 Constantine and the Julio-Claudians

The inspiration for the Senate's representation of Constantine's victory on the Arch of Constantine can be traced to Augustus, the first deified emperor. Barbara Saylor Rogers and Catherine Ware state that the Latin Panegyrics written throughout Constantine's reign show how his representation changed from Tetrarch to an Augustus-like monarchical ruler.²⁷² Whilst no Augustan spolia was used to create the Arch of Constantine, links between Constantine and the first

²⁷⁰ Ferris 2013 provides an excellent and detailed discussion of the Arch and its sculptural decoration.

²⁷¹ Wilson Jones 2000, 58; Hannestad 2007, 98; Brilliant 2012b, 44-45; Zanker 2012a, 99-100; Ferris 2013, 50.

²⁷² Saylor Rodgers 1989; Ware 2018.

emperor of Rome can be detected there. Potter and Popkin²⁷³ note the similarity between the phrasing of the dedicatory inscription and the opening passage of the *Res Gestae*:

...cum exercitu sup tam de tyranno quam de omni eius factione uno tempore iustis rem publicum ultis est armis.

“...with his army on both the tyrant and all his faction at once in rightful battle he avenged the State.”²⁷⁴

Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi.

“At the age of nineteen I assembled an army on my own responsibility and at my own expense, through which I successfully championed the liberty of the republic oppressed by the tyranny of a faction.”²⁷⁵

Potter suggests that anyone who grew up in Rome at this time would have been aware of the bronze tablets at the entrance to Augustus’ Mausoleum onto which the *Res Gestae* was inscribed.²⁷⁶ Whilst it must be noted that knowledge of the bronze tablets and the ability to read what was inscribed upon them cannot be equated, Potter’s assumption that some would have been able to see the similarities and make the connections between the two texts is plausible,²⁷⁷ especially when the role of words in the cued retrieval of memories is taken into account.²⁷⁸

The first similarity between these texts is the way that they describe the nature of the conflicts, and subsequent victories, that Augustus and Constantine were involved in. Both victories are depicted as ones that saved the Roman state from an unnamed, but dissident enemy, skirting the fact that both Actium and the Milvian Bridge were battles against fellow Roman citizens, as opposed to foreign enemies.²⁷⁹ This theme is continued elsewhere. Plutarch describes Mark Antony as a mere appendage of Cleopatra at Actium, implying that he was a pawn in the Egyptian Queen’s game as opposed to the instigating aggressor,²⁸⁰ and Horace mentions neither Antony nor Cleopatra by

²⁷³ Potter 2013, 168-169; Popkin 2016, 65.

²⁷⁴ *CIL* 6.1139; Text and translation Ferris 2013, 41-42.

²⁷⁵ *RG*. 1.1. (Trans. Brunt and Moore).

²⁷⁶ Potter 2013, 168.

²⁷⁷ Potter 2013, 169.

²⁷⁸ Tulving and Pearlstone 1966; Tulving and Osler 1968.

²⁷⁹ Popkin 2016, 65 notes that there is no mention of any foreign enemy that the “triumphal” nature of the Arch might allude to.

²⁸⁰ Plut. *Antony*. 62.1.

name, but refers to them as “our enemy” and “a woman” respectively.²⁸¹ Drawing on examples from both the panegyrists and Eusebius, Lenski notes that after the battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine was heralded as a slayer of tyrants and monsters who threatened Rome, its citizens and, by extension, the state.²⁸² Despite the Senate’s attempt at disguising the precise nature of the battle of the Milvian Bridge, Popkin asserts that the reference to the tyrant and his faction would have been interpreted by any contemporary viewer as Maxentius and his followers.²⁸³ The *Res Gestae* inscription and the Arch of Constantine are the only two monuments in Rome which explicitly reference civil war,²⁸⁴ and whilst the former is a private, imperial monument, the mirroring of it in the latter, public, senatorial, monument, is a clear indication that the Senate chose to represent Constantine in a manner which echoed Augustus’ achievement in saving Rome from a tyrannical enemy.

The second similarity between the two texts is that they both mention their honorand’s role in preserving the Roman state. They emphasise how Augustus and Constantine worked for the good of the Roman state and by linking the two, the Senate is emphasising how Constantine carried on Augustus’ work. Popkin suggests that by calling Maxentius a tyrant - a ruler who did not maintain good relations with the Senate - in the Arch’s dedication, the Senate presented Constantine as one who sought to re-establish the Senate’s importance.²⁸⁵ This is particularly pertinent if the Arch was originally designed for Maxentius and later reappropriated to honour Constantine. By situating the *Res Gestae*’s references to civil war and preserving the Roman state into a triumphal context,²⁸⁶ the Senate equated saving the Roman state from Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge with saving it from Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. In doing so, Constantine was linked directly back to Augustus - the deified “restorer” of the Republic - evoking memories of him, and establishing Constantine as a worthy successor to him.

²⁸¹ Horace. *Epode*. 9. 12; 19.

²⁸² *Pan. Lat.* 12[9]; *Pan. Lat* 4 [10]; *Eus. V. Const.* 1.49.1; *Eus. HE.* 10.4.14; Lenski 2016, 36-37.

²⁸³ Popkin 2016, 65.

²⁸⁴ Popkin 2016, 65.

²⁸⁵ Popkin 2016, 75.

²⁸⁶ Popkin 2016, 65-66.

The Senate were not the only ones to use the deified Augustus as a source of inspiration for representation for Constantine. He himself set a precedent for the Senate to follow with regards to using Augustus as a source of inspiration, so much so that Saylor Rodgers wondered whether he had made a study of Augustus.²⁸⁷ Augustus did not modify his portrait style from approximately 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 14, forever retaining a stylised image that suggested what Zanker describes as a “timeless and ageless dignity.”²⁸⁸ Such a representation befitted a man declared to be the son of the divine Julius Caesar. Another culprit guilty of manipulating the age of his portraits was Trajan.²⁸⁹ Constantine also chose to manipulate the age of his portraits: the vast majority of the surviving sculptural portraits of Constantine depict him as “a mature but youthful civilian emperor with idealised features.”²⁹⁰ There was a greater degree of variation in the portrait images on Constantinian coinage,²⁹¹ but it was not until after A.D. 333, when Constantine was over sixty, that his coinage portraits began to show evidence of passing time. These later portraits, characterised by a heavier jaw, fleshier features, and pronounced jowls, whilst not youthful in appearance, certainly did not depict Constantine’s true age.²⁹² Like Augustus and Trajan, Constantine was a master of manipulating time and memory in order to create the image of himself as the ideal ruler of Rome. Jas Elsner states the formation and use of rhetorical images during the reign of Constantine were as masterful and as creative as during the reign of Augustus.²⁹³ Constantine’s use of his deified predecessors as a source of inspiration for his own representation would have provided even more examples which would have triggered a cued retrieval of memories associating him and his predecessors. This, alongside the Senate’s efforts to do the same, would have firmly cemented him, his victory at Milvian Bridge, and the divine force which inspired it, culturally and geographically into the succession of worthy emperors who they had honoured with deification.

²⁸⁷ Saylor Rodgers 1989, 234.

²⁸⁸ Zanker 1990, 98.

²⁸⁹ Ferris 2013, 23.

²⁹⁰ Ferris 2013, 25.

²⁹¹ Bruun 1954; 19-31; Gilles 2007; 197-199; Engemann 2007, 200-207; Ferris 2013, 25.

²⁹² Ferris 2013, 25.

²⁹³ Elsner 2000, 177-178.

The Senate and Constantine’s combined efforts to associate him with Augustus was not a unique occurrence. In order to strengthen his legitimacy, Constantine fashioned dynastic links with the deified third-century emperor Claudius II whose namesake Claudius I was also deified.²⁹⁴ Elizabeth Marlowe has suggested that Constantine’s attempts to link himself with Claudius II would also have resulted in links being made between him and Claudius I,²⁹⁵ enabled by the shared memories of the population of Rome. This link becomes more apparent when the location of the Arch of Constantine is taken into account. Above the Arch, on the Caelian Hill, stood the Temple of the Divine Claudius, begun by Agrippina and completed by Vespasian, another deified Roman emperor.²⁹⁶ If Marlowe’s assessment that Constantine’s attempts to affiliate himself with Claudius II would have also linked him to Claudius I in the minds and memories of the people of Rome is correct, then the Senate’s siting of the Arch of Constantine below the Caelian Hill, in sight of the Temple of the Divine Claudius, had the potential to act as a cued retrieval for a viewer between Constantine and the deified Claudius I. In doing so, the Senate placed Constantine and his victory into both a geographical and historical context that was shaped by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of his deified Claudian predecessors.

When locating and constructing the Arch of Constantine, the Senate also took measures to remove associations with or even erase the memory of Constantine’s predecessors who they did not consider worthy of remembrance from the immediate vicinity. This is most apparent in the reappropriation of another Julio-Claudian monument, the Colossus. This statue of Sol Invictus was originally commissioned by Nero and moved to its eventual location to the north of the Arch during the reign of Hadrian.²⁹⁷ The Colossus had been reappropriated by many different emperors between the reigns of Nero and Constantine,²⁹⁸ and as it no longer survives, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which it resembled Nero, Constantine, or any other emperor in between. Even those who had

²⁹⁴ Cameron 1993, 49; Van Dam 2007, 84. Saylor Rodgers 1989, 237-238 makes it very clear that Constantine was not related to Claudius II.

²⁹⁵ Marlowe 2006, 230.

²⁹⁶ Marlowe 2006, 229; Sande 2012, 73.

²⁹⁷ HA, *Had.* 19.12-13; Albertson 2001, 100.

²⁹⁸ Marlowe 2006, 228.

seen the statue were unsure of exactly who it was designed to represent. Both Pliny the Elder²⁹⁹ and Suetonius³⁰⁰ claim that the Colossus was fashioned to look like Nero, yet Cassius Dio³⁰¹ records an incident in A.D. 75 where the citizens of Rome cannot decide whether the Colossus looks like Nero or Titus.

In more recent studies, it has been maintained that the Colossus would not have looked like Nero after the emperor's death, if indeed it ever did.³⁰² It seems most likely that the Colossus, like the imperial images on the Arch, was remodelled to look like Constantine, and this remodelling must be taken into account when discussing their contributions to the Senate's representation of Constantine. Whoever the Colossus looked like by the time of the Arch's construction, it could not look like Nero, or any other Emperor who had been subjected to *damnatio memoriae* by the Senate. Remodelling the Colossus to look like Constantine ensured that he was the one who was being celebrated in that space. The Senate's decision to situate the Arch of Constantine in such close proximity to the Colossus, must be taken into account when discussing the two monuments' contributions to the Senate's representation of Constantine and his victory. Ferris suggests that the spatial relationship between the Arch and the Colossus was deliberately created to emphasise the link between Constantine and Sol Invictus.³⁰³ Marlowe's study has shown that although it was far taller than the Arch,³⁰⁴ when viewed from under the Aqua Claudia, 270 metres to the south, the Colossus' head would have been visible over the top of the Arch but would have become gradually more obscured until the viewer was around 35 metres south of the Arch, at which point the Colossus would have appeared in the middle opening of the Arch.³⁰⁵ However, observed from other directions, a viewer would not have been able to see the Arch for the Colossus, and any visual metaphors would

²⁹⁹ Plin. *NH.* 34. 45-47.

³⁰⁰ Suet. *Nero.* 31.1.

³⁰¹ Cass.Dio. 65.15.

³⁰² Smith 2000, 536-538; Albertson 2001, 103.

³⁰³ Ferris 2013, 46-47.

³⁰⁴ Suetonius (*Nero.* 31.1) records that it was 120 Roman feet tall whilst Cassius Dio (66.15.1) states it was 100 feet high. Albertson has suggested that the Colossus may have been of a similar height to the Colossus of Rhodes, and estimates the statue to be 103 feet high, 125 feet including the crown (2001, 103-6.). The Arch of Constantine measures 69 feet high (Ferris 2013, 37).

³⁰⁵ Marlowe 2006, 230. Fig 11.

have been more obscure.³⁰⁶ Ferris’ concerns about the obscurity of visual metaphors can be mitigated if we consider that the Arch, and the emperor whom it honoured, were inserted into a busy scene by the Senate which reflected the Roman cultural, religious, and architectural diversity of the time. The Senate’s positioning and shaping of the Arch to create a diversity of spatial relationships between it and the reappropriated Colossus, not only associated Constantine with Sol but, more significantly, also mitigated against any cued memories which may have resulted in him being associated with emperors such as Nero who also had affiliations with Sol but did not fit the Senate’s model of a worthy emperor. Constantine was presented by the Senate here in this busy part of Rome’s physical and cultural landscape, not only as an individual, victorious leader, but also as part of a collection of Roman emperors worthy to be preserved in the memory of the Roman people.

4.3 Constantine and the Flavians

Alongside the Arch of Constantine there are two monuments that have become synonymous with emperors of the Flavian dynasty: the Flavian Amphitheatre, which dominates the scene and would have dwarfed the Arch of Constantine in antiquity as much as it does today, and the Arch of Titus. Constantine’s patronymic was Flavius³⁰⁷ and Wilson Jones suggests that the Arch of Constantine was placed into this crowded, but celebratory, space that linked the Circus Maximus, which Constantine had previously restored, the Temple of Roma and Venus, which had been restored by Maxentius and now appropriated by Constantine as a shrine for his family, and the reappropriated Colossus.³⁰⁸ Raymond van Dam adds that the siting of the Arch of Constantine within a part of the city already dominated by monuments of the first Flavian dynasty was designed to commemorate both Flavian dynasties.³⁰⁹ This was a clear attempt by the Senate to associate Constantine and his family with a previous imperial dynasty, establishing him as part of an imperial tradition which involved military victories, the construction of monuments, and the bringing of stability after turmoil.

³⁰⁶ Ferris 2013, 47.

³⁰⁷ Brilliant 2012a, 26.

³⁰⁸ Wilson Jones 2000, 69.

³⁰⁹ Van Dam 2007, 96.

The Arch of Titus warrants discussion in the context of the Senate’s representation of Constantine and his victory. Ferris is dismissive of the Arch of Titus remarking that, aside from their close proximity and the fact that both architects decorated the inside of the arches’ walkways with dramatic scenes designed to be viewed as one traverses them, there is little to discuss as to a formal relationship between them.³¹⁰ However, not only should the two monuments be discussed together, the Arch of Titus should also be considered alongside the other monuments which stood near the Arch of Constantine. Visually, the two arches are quite different, the earlier arch is only single bayed, much smaller, and its sculptural decoration is sparser than that of the Arch of Constantine. There are however more subtle considerations. The notable differences between the forms of the two arches could be explained by the Senate wishing to put some distance between Constantine and the creator of the Arch of Titus, the non-deified Domitian. The funerary nature of the Arch of Titus, and the fact it was designed not to honour Domitian but his brother, mitigates against both the problematic nature of Domitian’s presence in the area and any links between him and Constantine being made, in the same way that the reappropriation of the Colossus was designed to remove Neronian associations.

³¹⁰ Ferris 2013, 40; 45.

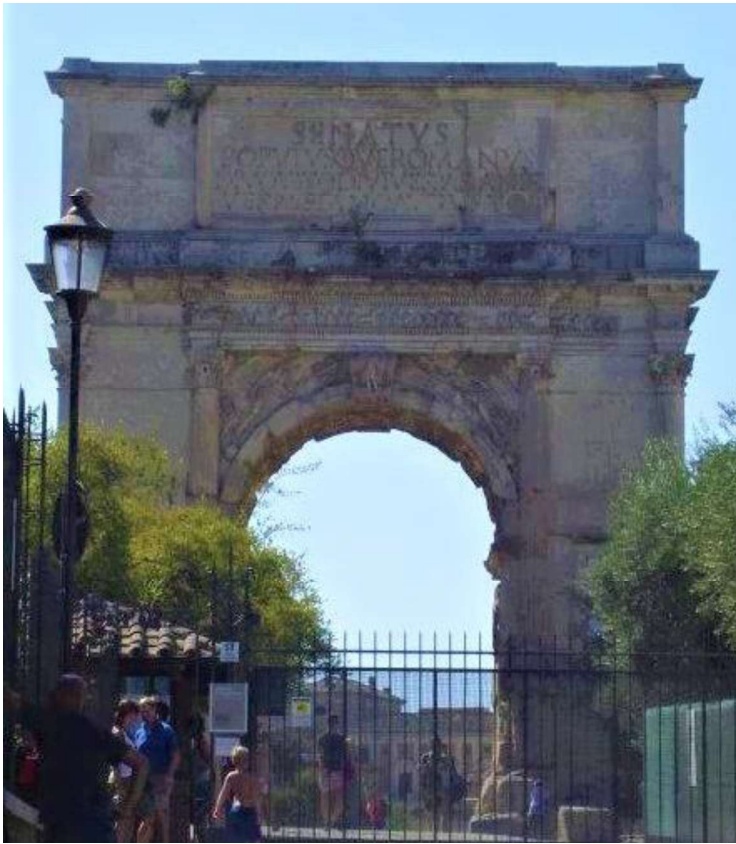


Figure 6: The Arch of Titus (Author's own: July 2012)

The role and function of the two monuments as celebrating military victories is obvious but, as Richard Brilliant notes, these two arches are victory monuments for two men who shared a common, but unrelated, patronymic.³¹¹ Van Dam takes this theme a step further, by suggesting that the siting of the Arch of Constantine so close to the Arch of Titus and the Flavian Amphitheatre, and the inscribing of Flavius Constantinus on both sides, was designed to emphasise that this entire area commemorated the Flavians, both the first and the second dynasty.³¹² In the same way that Constantine's link to the deified Claudius I was emphasised both by the Senate building the Arch in the vicinity of the temple dedicated to him, and Constantine's own efforts to stress his descendancy from Claudius II, so here, by building the Arch in the shadow of the Flavian Amphitheatre and near the Arch of Titus, the Senate once again placed Constantine alongside his deified predecessors, both

³¹¹ Brilliant 2012a, 26.

³¹² Van Dam 2007, 96.

physically within the landscape of Rome and within the memories of her residents. The facts that both Vespasian and Titus were deified by the Senate and that the Arch of Titus was dedicated by Domitian to celebrate his brother's deification, add further credence to the theory that Constantine's deified predecessors were the inspiration for the way that he was represented by the Senate within the physical and cultural landscape of Rome. The siting of the Arch of Constantine was a conscious decision and it should be seen as being designed to celebrate not only Constantine's achievements in the city of Rome but also his achievements to the city of Rome, its history, and its people. In its form, decoration, and function, the Arch of Constantine not only cemented his place in a long line of Roman emperors who had been considered worthy of deification by the Senate but also played a role in disassociating him with the member of the Flavian dynasty seen as undesirable and unworthy of remembrance by the Senate; Domitian.

Further evidence of the Senate's attempts to disassociate Constantine with his imperial predecessors who were not deemed worthy of being deified comes in the form of the Meta Sudans, a monumental fountain dated to the reign of Domitian which stood between the Arch of Constantine and the Colossus. Its original form was a tall cone on a cylinder surrounded by a walled pool. Water would flow down the cylinder giving the impression that the fountain was sweating.³¹³ The Meta Sudans was enlarged during Constantine's reign, with a new parapet constructed around it. Increasing the fountain's diameter from 16 metres to 25 metres, and the effect this would have had on the flow of traffic through the Colosseum valley, has led Marlowe to suggest that the fourth century designers wanted to encourage passers-by to stop and admire the Colossus. The enlargement of the Meta Sudans resulted in it encroaching upon the path of anyone walking through the Arch, so having to navigate it may well have forced a viewer to be more aware of the Colossus behind it. She also suggests that monumentalising the Meta Sudans further emphasised Constantine's dynastic links with the monuments' original benefactors, the Flavians.³¹⁴

³¹³ Ferris 2013, 45; *sudans* being the Latin for sweat.

³¹⁴ Marlowe 2006, 234.



Figure 7. View of the Meta Sudans in front of the Colosseum.³¹⁵

Another interpretation of the monumentalising of the Meta Sudans is that it was designed to remove, or at least disguise, its association with its original creator, Domitian. Unlike Titus and Vespasian, Domitian was not deified by the Senate but instead suffered *damnatio memoriae*. Popkin argues that by portraying Maxentius as a tyrant in the Arch’s dedication, the Senate represented Constantine as a “good” ruler who had succeeded a “bad” one.³¹⁶ However, by reappropriating both the Meta Sudans and the Colossus, the Senate removed evidence of emperors who were not deemed worthy of being deified from the space where Constantine was now being represented and celebrated as a worthy emperor. Surrounding Constantine with only deified emperors strengthens the case that the Senate were both using these emperors as inspiration for how they were representing Constantine and that they were situating his victory into firm historical and geographical contexts, whose

³¹⁵ Photo: Tommaso Cuccioni, 1858 (Public Domain)

³¹⁶ Popkin 2016, 75.

frameworks were upheld by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of only his deified predecessors.

4.4 Constantine and the Severans

The Severans were the final dynasty from which the Senate drew inspiration for their representation of Constantine and his victory. In form, the Arch of Constantine most closely resembles its chronologically nearest neighbour, the Arch of Septimius Severus, dedicated by the Senate in A.D. 203 to celebrate the emperor and his sons' victories over the Parthians.³¹⁷ There are many the similarities between the two arches: they were both tripled-bayed; on both arches the impostos of the central vault are aligned with the keystone of the side aisles; they share sculptural details including the pedestals and the torch-bearing winged Victories in the spandrels; and the decorative columns, the width of the central arch, and the structures themselves are all of the same size.³¹⁸ The differences include the attic of the Arch of Constantine was slightly taller than that of the Arch of Septimius Severus to accommodate the longer inscription, and it was slimmer in shape.³¹⁹ Both Wilson Jones and Ferris agree that the Arch of Constantine was directly modelled on the Arch of Septimius Severus.³²⁰ In their analyses of the two arches, Ferris describes the Arch of Constantine as “a historic reference back to the Roman past,” and that its purpose “was very much concerned with the manipulation of memory,”³²¹ whilst Wilson Jones describes it as “not slavish copying, but emulation.”³²² By building a very similar arch relatively close by, the Senate were not attempting to overshadow the memory of the Severans' achievements in order to celebrate Constantine's. Instead, the form and decoration of the Arch of Constantine was designed to place him and his achievements alongside those of his deified Severan predecessor, drawing links between them physically within the cityscape and metaphorically within the memories of the people of Rome.

³¹⁷ *CIL* VI. 1033.

³¹⁸ Wilson Jones 2000, 58; 65.

³¹⁹ Ferris 2013, 37; 40.

³²⁰ Wilson Jones 2000, 65; Ferris 2013, 37.

³²¹ Ferris 2013, 40; 50.

³²² Wilson Jones 2000, 66.

The dedicatory inscription from the Arch of Septimius Severus is also noteworthy when demonstrating how the Senate’s representation of Constantine and his victory was influenced by his deified imperial predecessors:

IMP CAES LUCIO SEPTIMIO M FIL SEVERO PIO PERTINACI AUG
PATRI PATRIAE PARTHICO ARABICO ET PARTHICO ADIABENICO
PONTIFIC MAXIMO TRIBUNIC POTES XI IMP XI COS III PROCOS ET
IMP CAES M AURELIO L FIL ANTONINO AUG PIO FELICI TRIBUNIC
POTES VI COS PROCOS P P OPTIMIS FORTISSIMISQUE PRINICIPIBUS
OB REM PUBLICAM RESTITUTAM IMPERIUMQUE POPULI ROMANI
PROPOGATUM INSIGNIBUS VIRTUTIBUS EORUM DOMI FORISQUE
SPQR

“To the Emperor Caesar Lucius Septimius, son of Marcus, Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus, father of the fatherland, conqueror of the Parthians in Arabia and Assyria, Pontifex Maximus, with Tribunician powers 11 times, triumphing general 11 times, consul 3 times, and proconsul; and to the Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius, son of Lucius, Antoninus Augustus Pius Felix with tribunician powers 6 times, consul, proconsul, father of the fatherland, best and braves of princes, on account of the republic restored and the empire of the Roman people increased by their outstanding virtues at home and abroad, the Senate and the Roman people dedicate this arch.”³²³

³²³ *CIL* 6. 1033. (Trans. Aicher).

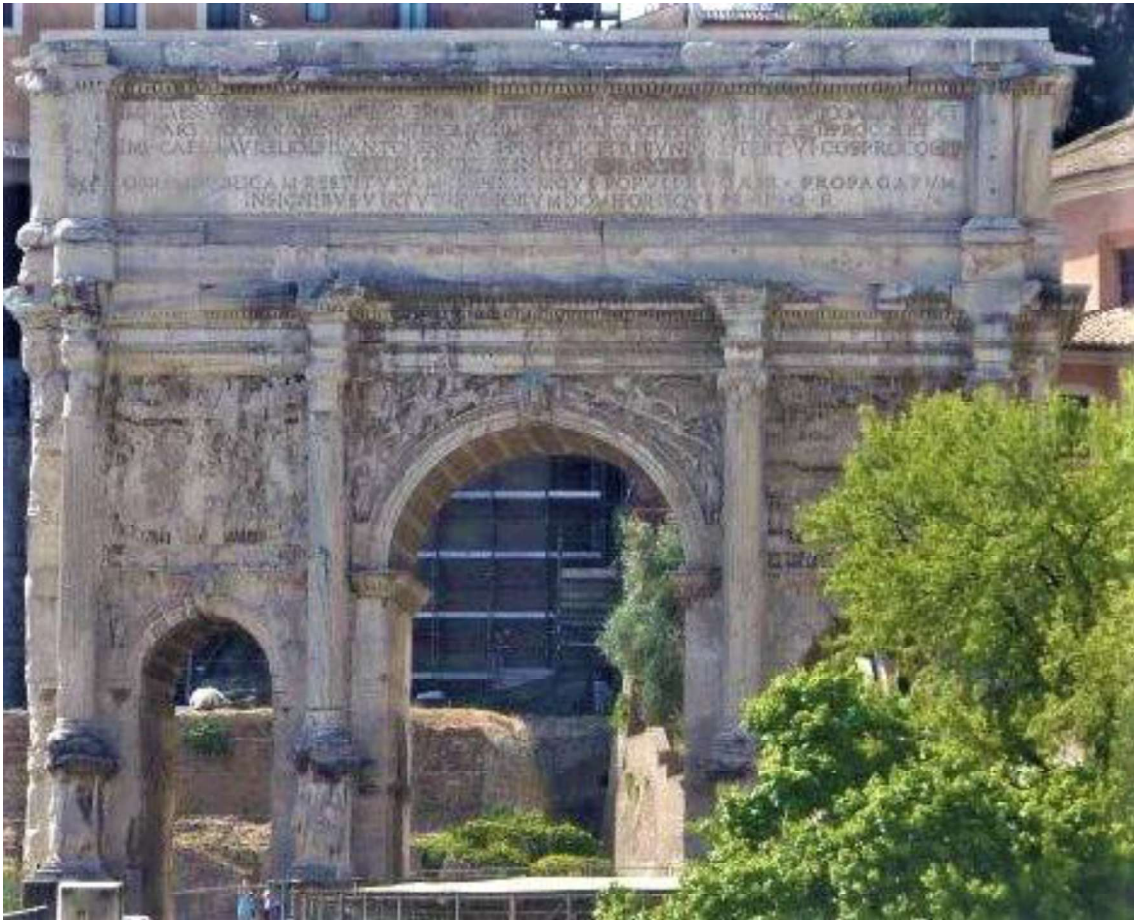


Figure 8: The Arch of Septimius Severus (Author’s own: July 2012)

Septimius Severus is known to have presented himself as a new Augustus, even going as far as composing an autobiography to justify gaining supreme power through civil war.³²⁴ After victory in the civil war and the assassination of Pertinax in April A.D. 193, he was proclaimed emperor and the Senate decreed a triumph for him and the title *Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus*.³²⁵ He rejected the triumph so that he would not be seen to be celebrating a victory in a civil war, and he declined the title *Parthicus* to avoid provoking the Parthians.³²⁶ T. D. Barnes notes that Septimius Severus’ rejection of the triumph recalls Augustus’ decision to decline a triumph for securing the return of the Parthian Standards in 20 B.C., and that his imitation of Augustus did not go unnoticed.³²⁷ Whilst

³²⁴ Dio 76.7.3; HA, *Sev.* 18.6; Barnes 2008, 257.

³²⁵ HA. *Sev.* 9.10-11; Barnes 2008, 253- 255.

³²⁶ Barnes 2008, 255.

³²⁷ Barnes 2008, 255.

there is no indication of divine inspiration here, the way that the Severan’s victories over the Parthians are described is reminiscent of the description of both Augustus’ and Constantine’s respective victories over Antony and Maxentius. All three victories are described with reference to defending Rome or restoring the Republic, though of course the Severans’ victories were against a foreign enemy rather than, albeit veiled, civil wars fought by Augustus and Constantine. The three men achieved much the same in the eyes of the Senate.³²⁸ Representing Constantine in a manner that triggered memories of Augustus and Septimius Severus, who had both been deified by the Senate, suggests that this was their hope for the latest of their successors. These three emperors were linked together in the Roman cityscape in a manner which cemented their places both into the list of deified rulers who defended Rome and upheld the Roman state, and into the memories of the people of Rome.

5. Conclusion

This article has shown that by considering the Arch of Constantine in a wider context within the physical landscape of Rome and the memories of its people, another interpretation of what inspired the Senate’s representation of him can be suggested. Rather than portraying Constantine as a man whose victories were inspired by religious forces and situating them within the complex and ambiguous religious context of fourth century Rome, the Senate used the Arch of Constantine to situate his victory at Milvian Bridge into firm historical and geographical contexts. These contextual frameworks were upheld by the monuments, memories, deeds, and honours of his deified predecessors, and the comprehension of them by the Roman people, aided by the wider cityscape in which they were located. The architectural and epigraphic material from the Arch have pre-Constantinian origins and precedents, and the Senate deliberately reused and reappropriated these features not only to represent the new, victorious, emperor in the manner that they saw fit, but also to associate Constantine with his deified predecessors. The evidence for the Arch of Constantine being originally designed for Maxentius has been taken into account and if the traditional religious inspirations behind the representation of Constantine and his victory are removed from the

³²⁸ Barnes 2008, 256-257.

equation, any issues relating to Maxentius being the original honorand have been removed. The location and iconography of the Arch would have been equally appropriate for Maxentius and fits in with his broader representation as a champion of Rome and her people.

It is not sufficient to focus solely on the Arch when attributing Constantine’s deified predecessors for the inspiration for his representation. The Senate placed the Arch, and by obvious association, the emperor himself, into a space filled with monuments built by, and for, many of his deified predecessors. They also consciously removed associations with, and links to, previous emperors who were not considered worthy of deification from the immediate monumental landscape by reappropriating Nero’s Colossus of Sol and Domitian’s Meta Sudans. The Senate wanted Constantine and his victory over Maxentius to be celebrated physically alongside and socio-historically as part of a long line of worthy emperors who had been honoured with deification, whilst removing any associations with those who were punished with *damnatio memoriae*. Linking the Arch of Constantine with the monuments and memories of the deified emperors gives us an alternative source of inspiration for how his victory at the Milvian Bridge was commemorated by the Senate. Evidence for the measures taken by emperors to associate themselves with their predecessors is well-known, but this article has shown that the Senate chose deified emperors as a source of inspiration for the celebration and representation of a living emperor. Finally, this article, having taken the epigraphic, architectural, topographical, and cultural evidence into account, has shown that the Senate used Constantine’s deified predecessors, their monuments, their deeds and their memories, as a source of inspiration for the representation of his victory at the Milvian Bridge physically within the cityscape and culturally within Rome’s traditions and the memories of its people.

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