

# Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Roman Cityscape

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To illustrate some of the key paradigm shifts of their discipline, art historians often point to the fluctuating fortunes of the Arch of Constantine. Reviled by Raphael, revered by Alois Riegl, condemned anew by the reactionary Bernard Berenson and conscripted by the openly Marxist Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, the arch has served many agendas.<sup>1</sup> Despite their widely divergent conclusions, however, these scholars all share a focus on the internal logic of the arch's decorative program. Time and again, the naturalism of the monument's spoliated, second-century reliefs is compared to the less organic, hieratic style of the fourth-century carvings. Out of that contrast, sweeping theories of regrettable, passive decline or meaningful, active transformation are constructed. This methodology has persisted at the expense of any analysis of the structure in its urban context. None of these influential critics has considered the arch as part of a larger urban ensemble or tried to understand how it would have been seen in its particularly flashy setting in the area now known as the Colosseum Valley. Even the most recent and theoretically advanced work on the arch perpetuates the interpretative amputation of the structure from its environment in the densely built-up late antique cityscape of Rome.<sup>2</sup>

This characteristic of the literature on Constantine's Arch in many ways parallels aspects of the scholarship on Constantine himself (r. 306–37), which routinely assumes the emperor's "conversion" to Christianity to have been a personal, internally motivated, and unambiguous act.<sup>3</sup> Such an approach obscures the complex negotiations among competing religious ideologies, cultural traditions, and political interests actually inherent in the process.<sup>4</sup> Constantine's Christianity, like his arch, is all too often divorced from the specific, local contexts for which it was created and which in turn defined its meaning.

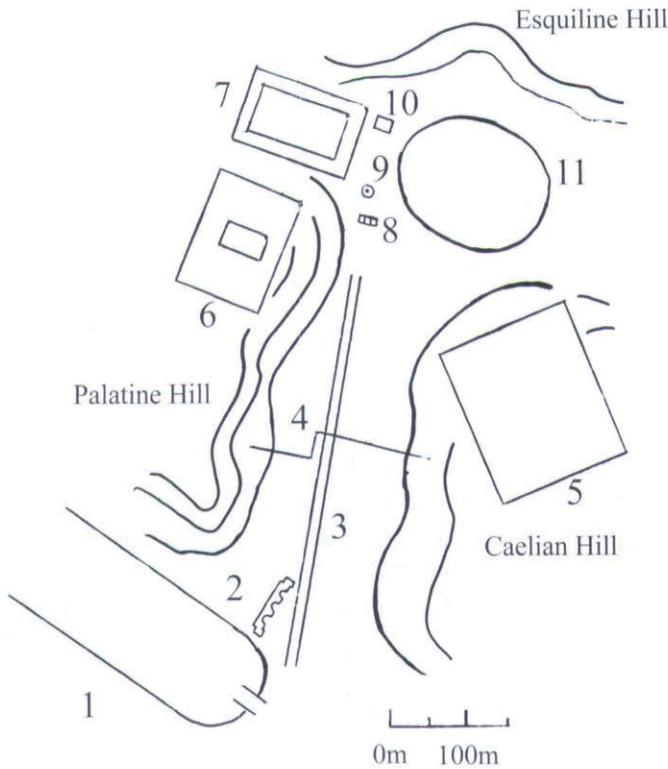
This article attempts to redress some of the imbalances in the literature on Constantine's Arch and, by extension, on his religious inclinations in the years immediately following his defeat of Maxentius in 312. To begin with, the siting of the arch at the southern edge of the monument-rich Colosseum Valley added multiple layers of signification to the work. The reconstruction of the visual experience of a spectator approaching and passing through the arch from the Via Triumphalis to the south reveals the dynamic spatial and visual relation between the arch and the ancient, colossal statue of the sun god Sol that stood 353 feet (108 meters) behind it. While a handful of scholars has noted Constantine's interest in the cult of Sol,<sup>5</sup> they have relied primarily on numismatic and epigraphic data, missing the important monumental evidence. Indeed, when religion has been brought into discussions of the arch, the focus has always been on the question of how much Christian content can be read into the monument (and, in particular, into its inscription). This study offers an alternative understanding of the Arch of

Constantine by considering the ways its topographical setting articulates a relation between the emperor's military victory and the favor of the sun god.<sup>6</sup>

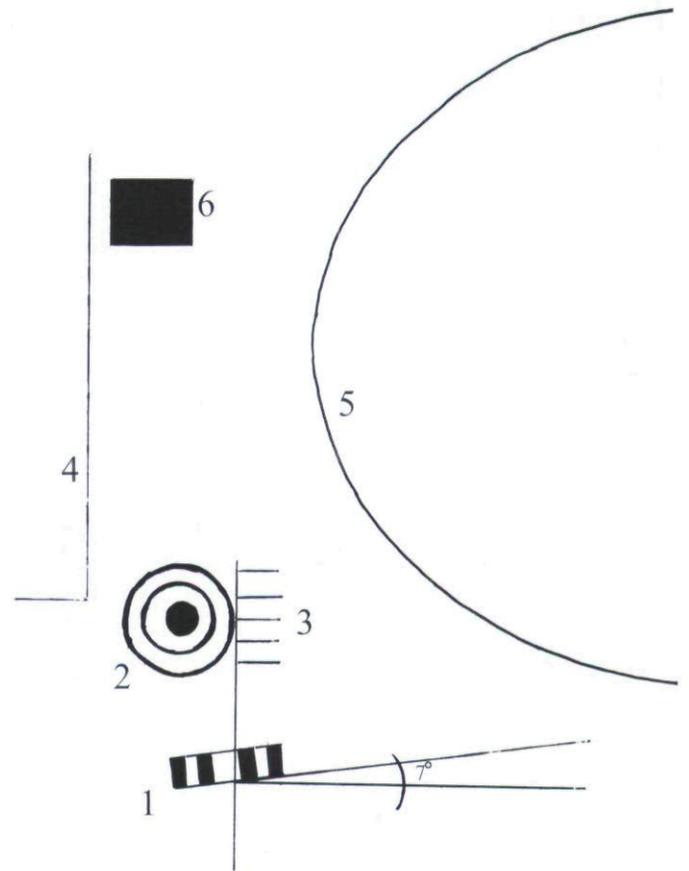
## **The Position of the Arch**

In Rome, triumphal arches usually straddled the (relatively fixed) route of the triumphal procession.<sup>7</sup> Constantine's Arch, built between 312 and 315 to celebrate his victory over the Rome-based usurper Maxentius (r. 306–12) in a bloody civil war, occupied prime real estate, for the options along the "Via Triumphalis" (a modern term but a handy one) must have been rather limited by Constantine's day. The monument was built at the end of one of the longest, straightest stretches along the route, running from the southern end of the Circus Maximus to the piazza by the Flavian Amphitheater (the Colosseum) (Fig. 1). At this point, the triumphal procession would turn left, pass over the edge of the Palatine Hill into the area of the Roman Forum, and from there wend its way up to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline. Given its centrality, its situation in an arterial valley between several hills, and its location on the piazza dominated by the main entrance to the amphitheater, the zone around the Constantinian Arch must have been one of the most heavily trafficked in the city.<sup>8</sup>

While its prominence no doubt enhanced its attractiveness, the space would nevertheless have posed considerable topographical challenges to the fourth-century designers. Most strikingly, the orientation of the ancient triumphal road and that of the comparatively newer structures in the Colosseum Valley did not match up, being off by about seven degrees (Fig. 2). The road dated back at least to the time of Augustus (late first century BCE to early first century CE).<sup>9</sup> Its course, determined by the contours of the Palatine and Caelian Hills, does not appear to have been altered during the rebuilding of the area by the emperor Nero (r. 54–68), who incorporated the road into the Domus Aurea, his lavish new palace, after the fire of 64 CE. Although Nero preserved the ancient road line, the new structures of the Domus Aurea in the valley just to the north were not aligned with it. Rather, they were angled seven degrees to the east, perhaps taking their orientation from the encircling Velian or Esquiline Hills. Given the vast scale of the Domus Aurea, which extended from the Palatine to the Esquiline Hills and incorporated many pre-existing structures into its fabric, it is not surprising to find divergent axes among its constituent parts. Nero's successors, the emperors of the Flavian dynasty, radically transformed or demolished many parts of the despised Domus Aurea and built the great amphitheater and piazza over its remains in the valley.<sup>10</sup> But the Neronian axis in this part of the city was nevertheless preserved. The Temple of Venus and Roma, commissioned half a century later by the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–38), was constructed directly atop the substructures



1 Plan of the monuments of early-4th-century Rome, from the Circus Maximus to the Flavian Amphitheater: 1) Circus Maximus, 2) Septizodium, 3) road ("Via Triumphalis"), 4) Temple of the Deified Claudius, 5) Temple of Sol Invictus/Jupiter Ultor, 6) Temple of Venus and Roma, 7) Temple of Venus and Roma, 8) Arch of Constantine, 9) Meta Sudans, 10) Colossus of Sol, 11) Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum) (plan by the author)



2 Plan of the monuments of the Colosseum Valley, showing the seven degrees by which the orientation of the Arch of Constantine differs from that of the Neronian grid: 1) Arch of Constantine, 2) Meta Sudans, 3) Neronian foundations (beneath the Flavian paving), 4) Temple of Venus and Roma, 5) Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum), 6) Colossus of Sol (plan by the author)

of the palace vestibule on the Velian, just to the west of the Flavian piazza, thus reestablishing the Neronian orientation. The enormous statue base that Hadrian installed between the temple and the amphitheater for the relocated Colossus of Sol (see below) was also positioned along the Neronian grid.

The misalignment between the Via Triumphalis and the valley monuments to which it led was thus preserved over the centuries. For the Constantinian designers, this meant that any monument marking the arrival of the road in the piazza would be off axis with one or the other (or both). This problem had already been addressed by the Flavians, who cleverly installed a round fountain, known as the Meta Sudans, at this juncture, thereby masking the divergence of axes (Figs. 3, 4).<sup>11</sup> The Meta Sudans itself, however, would have presented further complications for the fourth-century planners, since its direct alignment with the triumphal road meant that any arch in front of it, astride that same road, would perforce center on the fountain. While the Meta Sudans was an elegant and no doubt much appreciated urban amenity, it lacked military connotations and gravitas, making it inappropriate as the focal point of a triumphal monument.

The solution to these topographical challenges achieved by the Constantinian designers is ingenious. First, they set the new monument not over the road but rather a bit further north, beyond the point where the road gave way to the piazza proper.<sup>12</sup> The location of the arch in this open space



3 Coin from the reign of Titus depicting the Meta Sudans fountain (object in the public domain; photograph in the public domain)



4 Arch of Constantine and the (heavily restored) remains of the brick core of the Meta Sudans, viewed from the north, early 20th century (photograph in the public domain)

and not atop the road meant that the designers had some flexibility in its positioning and orientation. Freed of the necessity to center the arch on the road, they shifted the monument about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet (2 meters; equal to about a tenth of its width) to the east, while still orienting it with the road.<sup>13</sup> Because the arch sits atop the Flavian paving rather than atop the road itself, this displacement would probably not have been very noticeable to the observer on the ground, but its effect on the spatial configuration of the valley was profound. It solved the problem of how to put an arch along this stretch of the triumphal route without having the Meta Sudans fill its central passageway: thanks to the two-meter shift, the tall cone of the fountain was almost completely hidden behind the arch's second pier. This is clear from photographs taken before the 1936 demolition of the remains of the Meta Sudans (Fig. 5).

The clever choice to orient the arch with the triumphal road but not to center it on it had an additional benefit, for the two-meter eastward shift meant that the arch's central passageway framed a different ancient monument in the Colosseum Valley: the (now-lost) colossal bronze statue of the sun god Sol.<sup>14</sup> Although the arch was off axis with the statue, which was oriented with the old Neronian grid of the Colosseum Valley, the long distance separating the two monuments (353 feet, or 108 meters) masked the oblique, seven-degree angle (Fig. 2). Indeed, in early photographs (Fig. 5), the base of the colossus (also subsequently bulldozed by Benito Mussolini) appears to be squarely framed through the arch's central passageway, presenting an illusion of axiality between these structures.

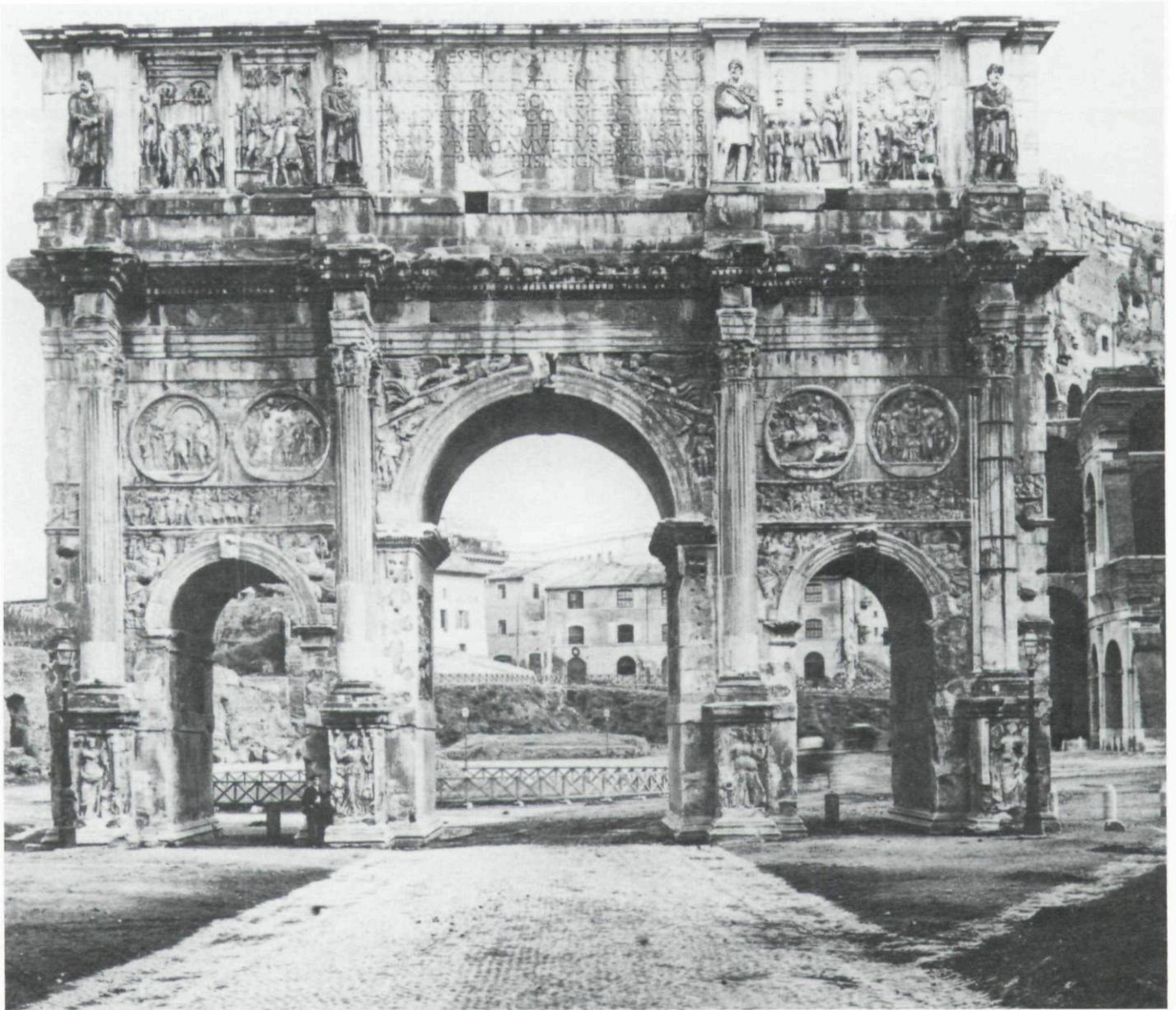
The position of the Arch of Constantine thus had a number of advantages. It created the appearance of design in the Colosseum Valley, whose disparate, misaligned monuments represented a number of key moments in Rome's architectural history. Furthermore, from the point of view of travelers following the triumphal route and approaching from the south, the apparent alignment of the road, the arch, and the

colossus would have suggested a natural relation between Sol and the triumphal ritual; the statue would even have appeared, at least temporarily, as the route's destination.

The notion of a close relation between Sol and imperial triumph would have underscored many key themes in Constantinian propaganda. Constantine's worship of the sun god belonged to an established imperial tradition going back to Augustus and Nero, who were often represented as being under the tutelage of Apollo.<sup>15</sup> In the third century, emperors were frequently associated with Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun.<sup>16</sup> With the empire racked by civil wars and threatened by powerful Eastern neighbors, the sun god's attributes of invincibility, eternity, and dominion over the East became irresistible as a model for the figure of the emperor.<sup>17</sup> Although Constantine's immediate imperial predecessors, the Tetrarchs, showed little interest in solar worship, favoring the more traditional state gods Jupiter and Hercules instead, Constantine seems to have been a particularly fervent adherent of the cult of the sun—at least to judge from the material evidence of his reign (as opposed to the overwhelmingly Christian written sources).<sup>18</sup> A number of his numismatic portraits depict him with Sol's rayed crown and raised right hand, while the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI (to the invincible sun, companion [of the emperor]) appears on fully three-quarters of Constantine's coinage between 313 and 317.<sup>19</sup> But the most important evidence for this emperor's special relationship with the sun god is his arch in the Colosseum Valley, in both its adornment and its location.

#### The Colossus from the First to the Fourth Centuries

Created by the sculptor Zenodorus for Nero's Domus Aurea, the Colossus of Sol originally stood in the palace vestibule on the Velian Hill.<sup>20</sup> The emperor Hadrian had the statue moved down the hill toward the Flavian Amphitheater and onto a new base, to make room for his Temple of Venus and Roma.<sup>21</sup> The site and dimensions of the Hadrianic statue base (whose rubble core is visible in Fig. 5) are today marked



5 Arch of Constantine, viewed from the south, showing the extant remains of the base of the Colossus of Sol framed in the central passageway, 19th century. The Meta Sudans is almost completely hidden behind the second pier (cf. Fig. 4, a view from the other side of the arch). Note that the roadway seen here, like the present-day road, is centered on the arch. The ancient road line, by contrast, ran roughly  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet (2 meters) to the west (artwork in the public domain; photograph in the public domain)

by an elevated, grassy island in the piazza (Fig. 6).<sup>22</sup> Ancient images of the statue on coins (Fig. 7) and a gem (Fig. 8) show a nude male figure in a *contrapposto* stance. He wears a radiate crown, leans on a pillar, and holds a ship's rudder in his right hand; the rudder rests on a sphere or globe. Marianne Bergmann combined these various representations to generate her excellent reconstruction drawing (Fig. 9).<sup>23</sup>

Although ancient reports of the statue's height are inconsistent, Fred Albertson has recently proposed that it was likely made to match the proportions of the Colossus of Rhodes (also dedicated to the sun god), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.<sup>24</sup> Combining the literary testimony with archaeological data about the Rhodian cubit (the standard unit of measurement for colossal statues, Zenodorus's specialty), Albertson calculates that the statue was 60 cubits tall,

or 103 feet (31.5 meters). With the long rays of the figure's crown, the total height is estimated at roughly 125 feet (38 meters), excluding the statue base. (By comparison, the adjacent Flavian Amphitheater is 159 feet, or 48.5 meters, tall.)

Whom did the colossus represent? Both Pliny and Suetonius describe the image as a "likeness [*simulacro*]" or "effigy [*effigie*]" of the emperor Nero. Some recent scholars, however, dispute this identification, which they see as an expression of the hostility on the part of the Roman elite toward Nero and his distasteful megalomania; they identify the statue instead as the sun god Sol, Nero's protector.<sup>25</sup> It is true that the statue's nudity and extraordinary scale would have been unheard of in an image of a living emperor in Rome,<sup>26</sup> although Pliny mentions another colossal portrait of Nero, also allegedly 120 feet tall, painted on linen and on display in



6 The Piazza del Colosseo, 21st century. The base below the tree follows the contours of the ancient colossal statue base (photograph by the author)



7 Gold multiple of Gordian III, depicting the monuments of the Colosseum Valley, from left: the Colossus of Sol, the Meta Sudans, and the Flavian Amphitheater (object in the public domain; photograph from Bergmann, *Der Koloss Neros*, pl. 2.1)

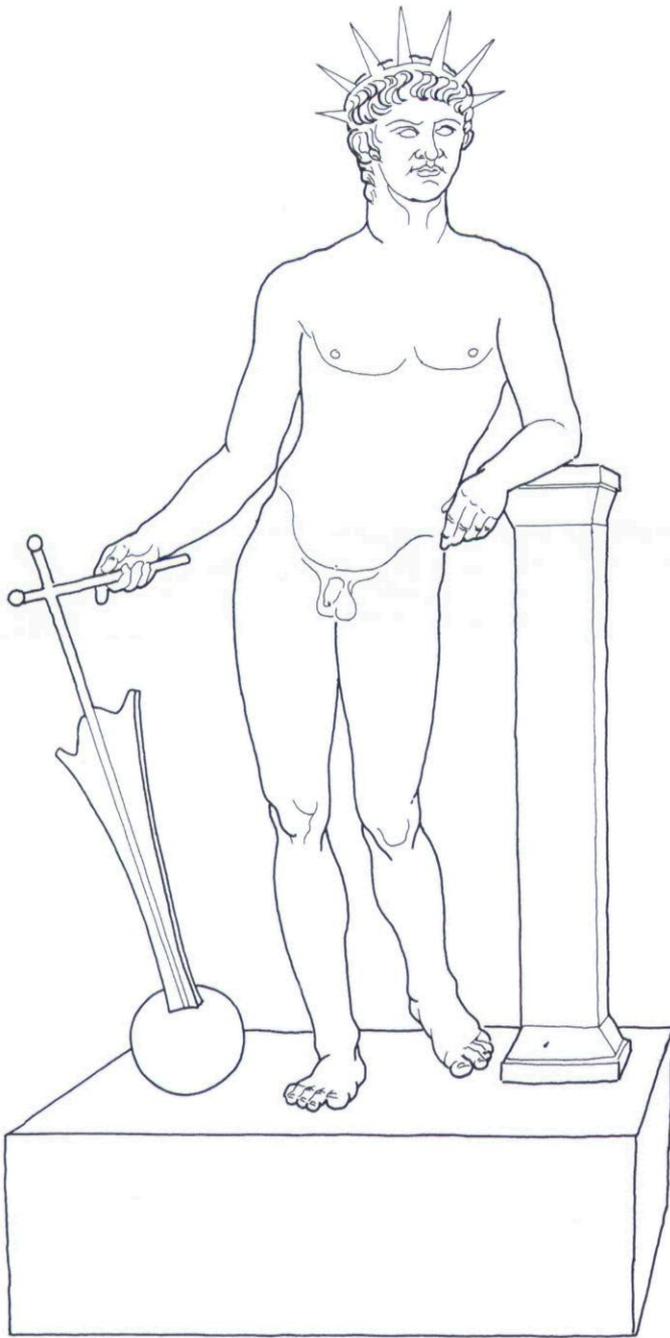


8 Gem possibly depicting the Colossus of Nero, late 1st century CE. Pergamon Museum, Berlin (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Ingo Pini)

a private garden complex on the Esquiline until it was struck by lightning and destroyed.<sup>27</sup> The question of whether the statue depicted Nero or Sol is, at any rate, largely misguided, for Roman emperors were frequently represented in the guise of their patron deity. Nero in fact did much to meld his own identity with that of the sun god, maintaining that he was touched miraculously by the sun's rays at birth, competing in lyre-playing contests like Apollo Citharoedus, and having himself shown with the deity's radiate crown in his numismatic portraits or, on embroidered curtains at the theater,

driving a chariot against a background of golden stars.<sup>28</sup> The statue could thus have been conceptualized as Nero-in-the-guise-of-Sol or Sol-with-the-portrait-features-of-Nero. Either way, Zenodorus's intentions are not particularly relevant for our concerns; what is certain is that the statue bore the attributes of Sol and was widely believed to represent Nero.

This belief seems to have been a disturbing one. Pliny informs us that the statue was rededicated to the sun god



9 Reconstruction of the Colossus of Nero (by Marianne Bergmann, from *Der Koloss Neros*, fig. 10, provided by Bergmann)

“after the condemnation of Nero’s crimes,” during the reign of his successor, Vespasian, and Suetonius echoes this report in his biography of Vespasian.<sup>29</sup> Cassius Dio notes that at the time of Vespasian’s rededication, some observers believed that the colossus resembled Titus, Vespasian’s son and heir.<sup>30</sup> This may indicate that the statue’s facial features were altered, to erase what was presumably a portrait of Nero. Dio also reports, though, that some continued to believe that the statue represented Nero, so the transformation under Vespasian may have been more symbolic than material. Indeed, just over fifty years later, Hadrian felt it necessary to consecrate the statue to Sol yet again. His biography in the fourth-century *Historia Augusta* states explicitly that he removed the features of Nero, “to whom it was previously dedicated.”<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps to pin down the statue’s solar identity once and for all, and to prevent any further slippage back to Nero, Hadrian also intended (according to this same source) to install a matching statue of the moon goddess Luna nearby, although the plan was never realized.

Despite Hadrian’s efforts to reinforce the statue’s association with Sol, the colossus seems to have been irresistible to the more self-aggrandizing of Rome’s later emperors. Commodus (r. 180–92) was said to have removed not just certain facial features but the entire head (again described as a portrait of Nero), replacing it with his own image. Commodus also allegedly added to the statue a club and a lion, the attributes of Hercules, his patron deity.<sup>32</sup> The report is probably apocryphal, although the reverse images on some of Commodus’s medallions show a statue of Hercules that closely matches the pose of the colossus, which thus may represent the altered statue.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps more plausibly, the biography also states that Commodus replaced the dedicatory inscription on the statue’s base with one honoring his own achievements as a champion gladiator. The text boasted that he had defeated one thousand men on twelve separate occasions, using only his left hand. These adaptations of the monument were presumably undone after Commodus’s violent end and the subsequent damnation of his memory.

Of greatest significance to Constantine was the most recent transformation of the colossus, which occurred under his predecessor and civil war rival, the emperor Maxentius. The alteration is attested by three fragments of an enormous marble inscription, discovered in the mid-1980s in the attic of Constantine’s Arch.<sup>34</sup> The text apparently mentions a *Col[ossum]* and its rededication to Divus Romulus, Maxentius’s deceased son, by Lucius Cornelius Fortunatianus, a governor of Sardinia at the time. The extraordinary scale of the letters is such that the panels could only have been located on a base proportionate to a colossal statue. Presumably, this new inscription was installed on the base of the Colossus of Sol in conjunction with its (otherwise unattested) rededication under Maxentius. Such a rededication makes sense in the context of Maxentius’s radical transformation, through a series of major architectural commissions, of the Velian Hill just to the west.<sup>35</sup> After Constantine’s defeat of Maxentius in 312, the dedicatory inscription was removed from the colossus (and no doubt replaced) and buried in the attic of the new emperor’s victory monument.

A passage in Nazarius’s Panegyric of 321, a speech in honor of Constantine, may provide another clue to the fortunes of the colossus in the early fourth century. Describing Maxentius’s many depredations of the city, the orator proclaims: “Behold, for sorrow! (words come with difficulty), the violent overthrow of venerable statues and the ugly erasure of the divine visage.”<sup>36</sup> The meaning of the passage is somewhat opaque, but it is possible that Maxentius showed aggression, late in his reign, toward statues of Constantine that he (Maxentius) would have set up previously in Rome during the period of their short-lived alliance (307–8).<sup>37</sup> This is the common interpretation of the passage, and the translation cited above is weighted toward this reading. The Latin phrase *litura deformis*, translated above as “ugly erasure,” however, should be understood as an alteration that changes the form of something for the worse. Thus, at least one scholar has

read the passage as a reference not to the destruction of images but to their recarving or adaptation, that is, from portraits of Constantine into portraits of Maxentius.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the singular forms of both *litura* and *divini vultus* (the divine visage) suggest that Nazarius had in mind not some widespread practice but rather a particular case, presumably one notorious enough that the oblique reference would have been comprehensible to his audience a decade after the fact. It is possible that the orator was thinking of the recarving of some single, distinguished, well-known portrait of Constantine. Yet it is unlikely that such a statue would have been erected in Maxentius's Rome in the first place, for the brief alliance between Maxentius and his brother-in-law Constantine was tense and fragile from the start. The statues the corulers erected in each other's honor in their respective territories would no doubt have been relatively understated monuments. For these reasons, one candidate for the special "divine visage" altered by Maxentius is that of the Solar Colossus. The colossus fits the bill as a very famous monument that would already have been standing in Maxentius's day and would have been associated with Constantine by the time Nazarius delivered his panegyric. This identification seems all the more plausible if there was indeed a long tradition of installing new imperial portraits on the statue. If this interpretation of the passage is correct, the alteration criticized by the orator was probably the rededication of the colossus to Maxentius's deceased son—the act otherwise known only from the fragmentary inscription. Nazarius would be putting a very tendentious spin on the facts when he implies that the colossus was already, at that early date, somehow associated with Constantine, and that the rededication was at Constantine's expense.

To summarize, we know that both Maxentius and Constantine altered the dedicatory inscription of the Colossus of Sol: the former installed panels rededicating the monument to his son, and the latter had them removed. These acts may have taken place in conjunction with the alteration of the statue's portrait features by one or both emperors.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Constantine behaved much like Vespasian and other earlier rulers who, after coming to power, signaled the change of regime by removing the personalizing stamp that their predecessors had made on the colossus and replacing it with imagery and/or an inscription that complemented their own imperial rhetoric. But Constantine's appropriation of the monument also took an additional and highly novel form. By installing his triumphal arch directly in front of it, he literally transformed the way spectators saw the statue.

### Up the Via Triumphalis

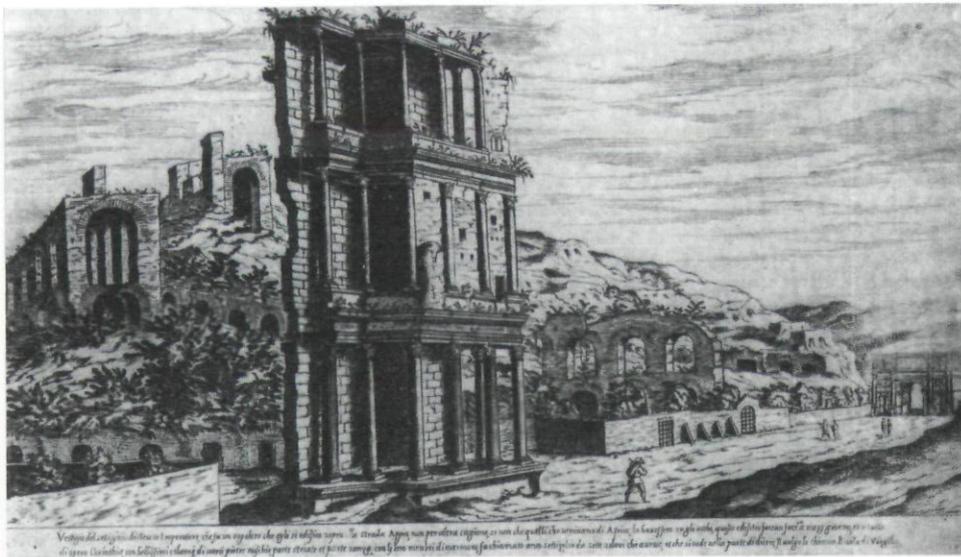
Constantine's reconfiguration of the space commanded by the Colossus of Sol began back at the Circus Maximus, the southernmost point of the long, straight stretch of the Via Triumphalis that ran between the Palatine and Caelian Hills.<sup>40</sup> Constantine's attention to the structure may have been motivated in part by its need for repairs: the Chronographer of 354 reports that during the reign of Diocletian (283–305), 13,000 spectators were killed in the Circus Maximus when part of it collapsed. Constantine's interventions, however, went well beyond simple repairs. They included an additional outer ring of seating, which greatly increased the

capacity, as well as lavish adornments. The fourth-century historian Aurelius Victor reported enthusiastically that Constantine "completed the decorations on the Circus Maximus in a marvelous fashion,"<sup>41</sup> while Nazarius's panegyric offers a rather more purple description: "Lofty porticoes and columns glowing red with gold have given such uncommon adornment to the Circus Maximus itself that people gather there no less eagerly for the sake of the place than for the pleasure of the spectacle."<sup>42</sup> This describes what was completed; even more impressive was Constantine's unrealized plan to install an ancient Egyptian obelisk on the spina (the central barrier of the racetrack) of the circus. To this end, he ordered the obelisk of Thutmose III, the largest in the world, to be transported to Rome from Heliopolis, where the pharaoh had dedicated it to the Sun in the fifteenth century BCE. Under Constantine, the obelisk made it as far as Thebes. The project was finally completed, by means of a specially built ship, under his son Constantius II.<sup>43</sup>

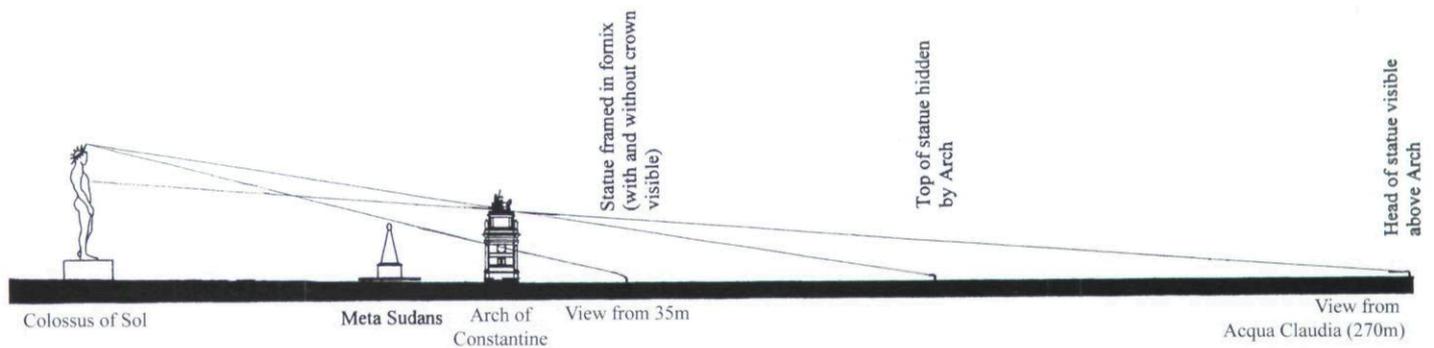
Constantine's spectacular renovations to the Circus Maximus would immediately have signaled to those approaching from the south that they were entering a sector of the city shaped by—and redounding to the glory of—the reigning emperor. Had all gone according to plan, Constantine's new obelisk, sacred to the sun god, would have soared overhead, towering above the circus structures, with the result that the entire space from the circus to the Colosseum Valley would have been framed on either end by a pair of extraordinarily tall solar monuments, whose presence or current form was due to the beneficence of Constantine.<sup>44</sup>

Continuing northward, viewers were treated to a highly scenographic spectacle as they approached the Colosseum Valley. The combination of the long, straight vista of this stretch of the triumphal way together with the astonishing height of the colossus drew spectators visually into the orbit of the distant monuments long before they actually reached the piazza. At this distance, the theatricality of the space was already established by the Septizodium, erected by the emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) along the Via Triumphalis at the southernmost corner of the Palatine Hill (Fig. 10).<sup>45</sup> The author of the *Historia Augusta* biography states explicitly that the primary purpose of this structure was to impress visitors arriving "from Africa," that is, from the south.<sup>46</sup> The undulating, 295-foot- (90-meter-) long, three-story columnar screen, which framed a statue of Septimius Severus, had some astrological significance relating to the seven planets (although how this was conveyed formally or iconographically is uncertain), making it an appropriate counterpart to the statue of the sun god at the end of the road up ahead.

The focalized character of the avenue leading up to the arch was reinforced by the once steeper inclines of the Palatine and Caelian Hills that flanked it, an effect heightened by the great temple complexes that dominated both hilltops.<sup>47</sup> On the Palatine stood a huge, porticated court surrounding a third-century temple dedicated by Elagabalus (r. 218–22) to Sol Invictus, but reconsecrated to Jupiter Ultor by the emperor's successor, Alexander Severus (r. 222–35).<sup>48</sup> On the Caelian loomed the great Temple of Divus Claudius, begun by the empress Agrippina and completed by Vespasian in the first century.<sup>49</sup> Towering over the road, these structures



10 S. du Pérac, engraving of the Septizodium, from du Pérac, *I vestigi dell'antichità di Roma*, Rome, 1575, pl. 13 (artwork in the public domain)



11 Study model of the Colosseum Valley monuments (model by the author)

would have filled the peripheral vision of spectators heading north, rendering the low-lying vista straight ahead toward the Colosseum Valley all the more dramatic. The resulting tunnel effect would not have been unlike that created today by the avenues of trees lining the Via S. Gregorio, the modern incarnation of the Via Triumphalis.<sup>50</sup> Savvy observers may also have recognized how harmoniously these two ancient temples resonated with the rhetoric of the emperor whose arch they were approaching: Sol Invictus was Constantine's personal patron deity, while Claudius was the namesake of Constantine's newly claimed ancestor, the emperor Claudius Gothicus (r. 268–70).<sup>51</sup> The Arch of Constantine, itself a frame for the Solar Colossus, was thus in turn framed by monuments to Sol and to Constantine's dynastic forebears.

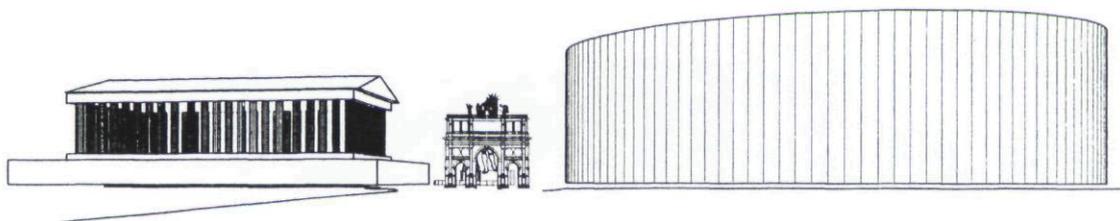
The visual relation between the Arch of Constantine and the colossus from the perspective of the traveler heading north up the triumphal road can be roughly reconstructed by combining the known data (the 67-foot, or 21-meter, height of the arch and the 353 feet, or 108 meters, between it and the colossus) and Albertson's proposed height of 125 feet (38 meters) for the statue. To complete the picture, however, several other pieces of missing information have to be estimated as well. Chief among these are the height of the

statue's base and the scale of the triumphal quadriga that originally stood atop the arch.<sup>52</sup> My reconstruction posits a height of 19 feet 5 inches (5.92 meters, or 20 Roman feet) for the statue base (derived from the known proportions of its length and width<sup>53</sup>) and 4 meters for the quadriga (also derived from a number of proportional relations<sup>54</sup>) (Fig. 11). The results suggest that the views afforded to those moving along the triumphal route presented an almost cinematic spectacle of the close relation between Constantine and the sun god (Figs. 12, 13, 15, 16).<sup>55</sup>

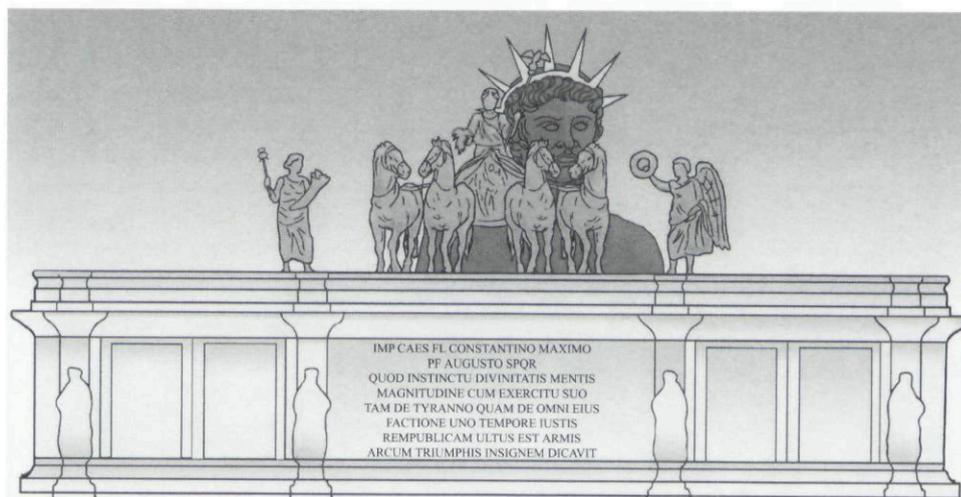
Spectators would probably have caught their first unencumbered sight of the Colosseum Valley monuments after passing through the archways of the Acqua Claudia that crossed over the Via Triumphalis, about 886 feet (270 meters) south of the arch (Fig. 12). From this distance, the upper portions of the colossus would have been visible above the roofline of the arch, framing the Constantinian quadriga (Fig. 13). The overlapping bronze statues, both probably gilded, one colored by the patina of centuries and the other gleamingly new, would have formed a striking tableau. The bronze Sol in the background would have enveloped the image of Constantine in the radiating luster of its divinity.<sup>56</sup>

There is precedent for superimposing the figure of the

12 Study model showing the view toward the Colosseum Valley from the Acqua Claudia, 886 feet (270 meters) from the Arch of Constantine (model by the author)



13 Study model close-up of the view from the Acqua Claudia (model by the author)



emperor over that of his patron deity. A very similar representation in profile appears on a gold medallion issued in 313 (Fig. 14). Here, too, Sol's silhouette frames the figure of the emperor: Constantine's god is literally behind him, backing him up, guaranteeing his victory. The legend of the medallion, INVICTUS CONSTANTINUS MAX AUG (invincible Constantine, greatest emperor), directly applies the sun god's epithet to the ruler,<sup>57</sup> while Constantine's shield is adorned with an image of Sol in his chariot. The profiles of the twinned figures on the medallion are so similar and are lined up in such close proximity that their facial features almost become abstract elements of a repeating pattern. Thus, in both the numismatic image and along the Via Triumphalis, the references to emperor and god flicker back and forth, one nested within the other, until the distinctions between the two begin to blur. It is worth recalling that the blurring of the personae of ruler and sun god was in a sense built into the long history of the colossal statue itself, with its alternating (and often simultaneous) identifications as emperor and god.

It was the spectator moving up the road who actualized, or brought to life, the topographical expression of the dynamic relation between Constantine and Sol. As one headed north, Sol would appear to drop down gradually behind the arch, allowing the figure of Constantine in his quadriga to dominate the skyline ever more insistently (Fig. 15). At the same time, more and more of the figure of the sun god would have been visible through the arch's central fornix. At some point, the full height of the colossus would have been perfectly framed through the 38-foot- (11.5-meter-) tall passageway and would have lined up directly with the figure of Constantine in his quadriga on the arch's roof (Fig. 16). The inscription panel, recounting the emperor's achievements carried out with divine assistance (see below), formed a bridge be-

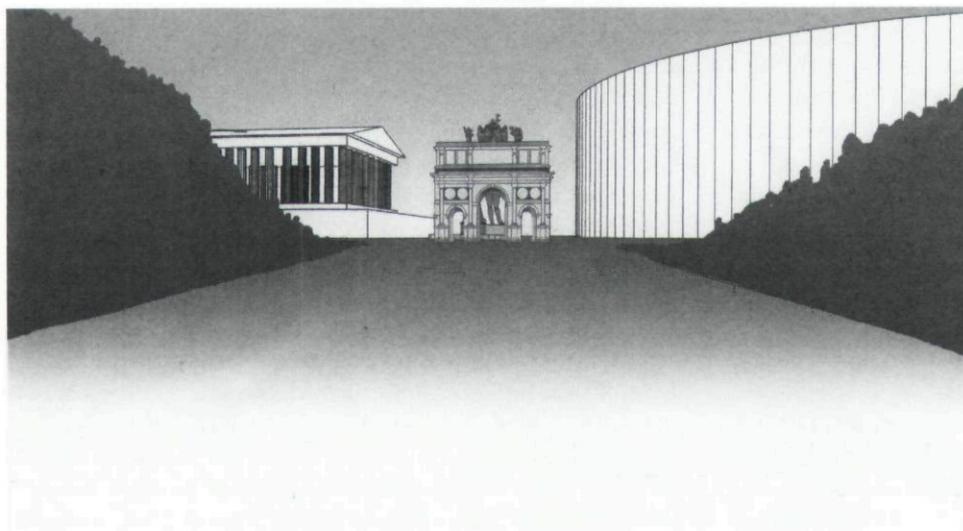
tween the two statues. By my calculations, this alignment would have occurred at a distance of about 115 feet (35 meters) from the arch. Perhaps not coincidentally, this is also the point at which the Palatine Hill turns westward toward the Roman Forum, producing a natural widening of the road. This may also have been where the road gave way to the piazza, offering an ideal position from which to pause and admire the tableau of monuments ahead.<sup>58</sup>

If the distant vista of the overlapping quadriga and colossal statue resembled the overlapping figures on a Constantinian medallion, the closer view can likewise be compared to other Constantinian monuments. In particular, the spectacle of the ancient colossus framed by the new arch recalls the emperor's various acts of architectural appropriation elsewhere in the city. Aurelius Victor informs us that "all the works that he [Maxentius] had built with such magnificence, the sanctuary of the City [the Temple of Venus and Roma] and the Basilica, were dedicated by the Senate to the merits of Flavius," that is, to Constantine.<sup>59</sup> These reattributions by senatorial decree were reinforced through strategic architectural interventions, which changed the appearance of the buildings enough for them to be plausibly credited to Constantine.<sup>60</sup> At the magnificent new basilica on the Velian Hill, a monumental entrance, comprising a wide flight of steps and a pronaos with four porphyry columns, was opened up along the Via Sacra, changing the orientation of the building from east-west to south-north (Fig. 17).<sup>61</sup> Also added was an enormous second apse, pierced by numerous aediculae, directly across from the Via Sacra entrance on the north wall, still standing today.<sup>62</sup> Constantine further advertised his appropriation of the building by the installation in the west apse of a colossal, seated statue of himself.<sup>63</sup>

It is easy today to dismiss these alterations as merely cos-



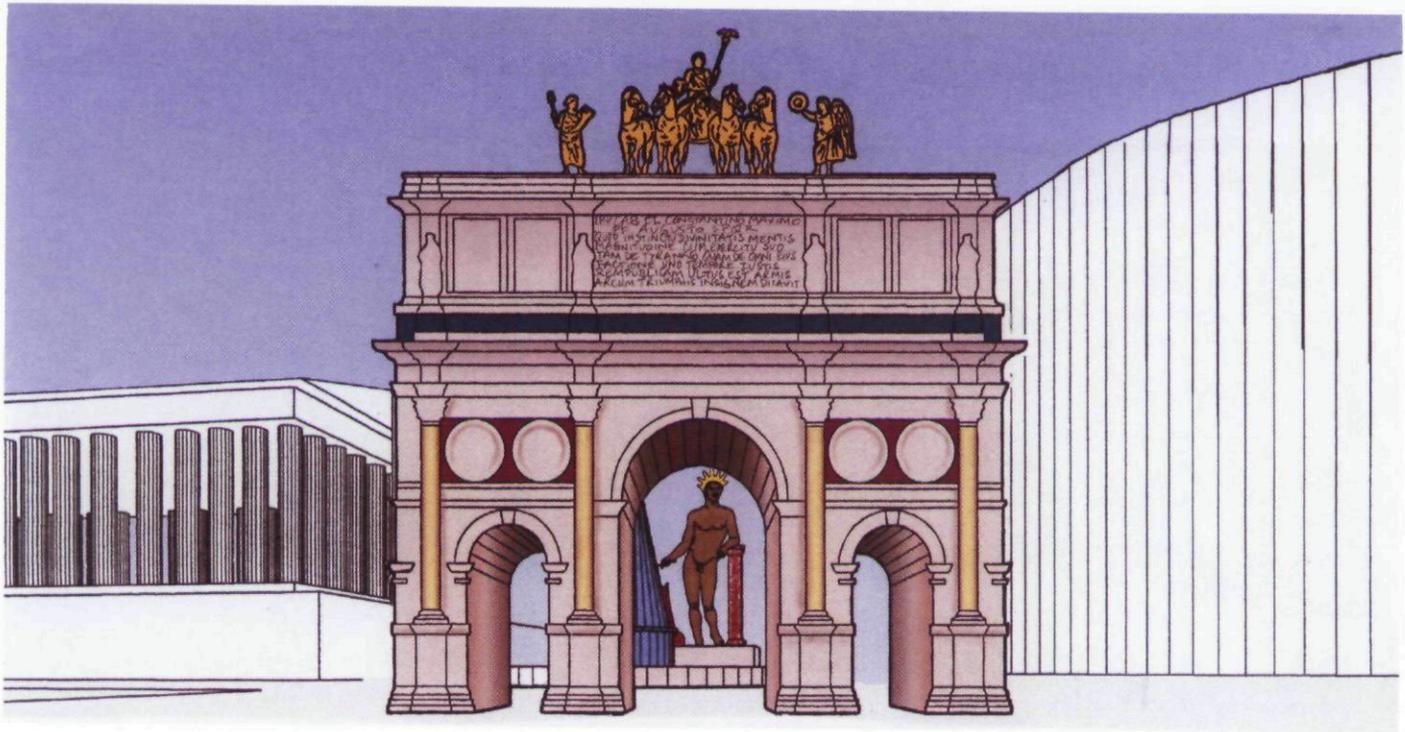
14 Medallion of Constantine, showing Sol and Constantine, Ticinum, 313. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (object in the public domain)



15 Study model showing the view toward the Colosseum Valley, from about 427 feet (130 meters) south of the Arch of Constantine (model by the author)

metic,<sup>64</sup> but they would have made the emperor's act of appropriation much more tangible to the citizens of Rome than a mere senatorial fiat. Under Maxentius, Romans had approached the basilica through the narrow, nonrectilinear interstice between it and the Temple of Venus and Roma, crossed a short, wide vestibule, and entered directly into the soaring space of the central nave. After the alterations, this route now presented the spectator with an eyeful of Constantine, framed in the western apse. After Constantine's interventions, the visitor could also approach the structure from

the bustling Via Sacra, ascend a monumental staircase, and pass through a grand propylon into a long, apsidal space. From here, the soaring height of the building—as well as the colossal statue—would have been revealed only gradually, when the spectator reached the center of the interior (that is, the former central nave).<sup>65</sup> The renovations thus amounted to more than the sum of their parts.<sup>66</sup> In combination, they offered the spectator a totally new, Constantinian experience of this building. Constantine thus harnessed one of Maxentius's central architectural contributions to the city to his own



16 Study model showing the view at about 115 feet (35 meters) from the Arch of Constantine (model by the author)

ideological program. Whereas the building had previously spoken to Maxentius's beneficence and legitimacy, it now made those claims for Constantine. At the same time, it testified to Constantine's victory over Maxentius and his power to appropriate whatever he liked of Maxentius's Rome.

Constantine's alterations to the basilica furnish a useful analogy for his arch's reframing of the ancient Solar Colossus. In both cases, the aim was not to erase the old and replace it with the new but to create a phenomenological experience that showcased both components. The interventions were loud and ostentatious, but they left the forms of the original monument essentially intact. The spectator could easily see the difference between the two and could, thereby, appreciate Constantine's construction of new meanings out of ancient, imperial materials. Nowhere was this appropriative process clearer than the point along the Via Triumphalis at which the two-hundred-and-fifty-year-old Colossus of Sol was neatly framed in the central passageway of the Arch of Constantine.

As one approached the arch, the monument would eventually have become too tall and too wide for the eye to take in at once, and as the arch came to exceed the moving spectator's field of vision, the figure of the colossus would have grown increasingly dominant in the central passageway. The view of the colossus presented to the spectator who had at last come through the Arch of Constantine would have been breathtaking. While the cityscape of the Esquiline Hill would have risen up behind it in the background, the upper reaches of the statue would have been silhouetted against nothing but the open sky, fully and unobstructedly visible in all its majesty. The spectacle was framed on the left by the bulk of the Temple of Venus and Roma and, on the right, by the Flavian Amphitheater, together functioning like a stage proscenium.<sup>67</sup> This view can be understood as the climax of the

shifting tableau produced by the juxtaposition of the new triumphal arch and the ancient colossus.

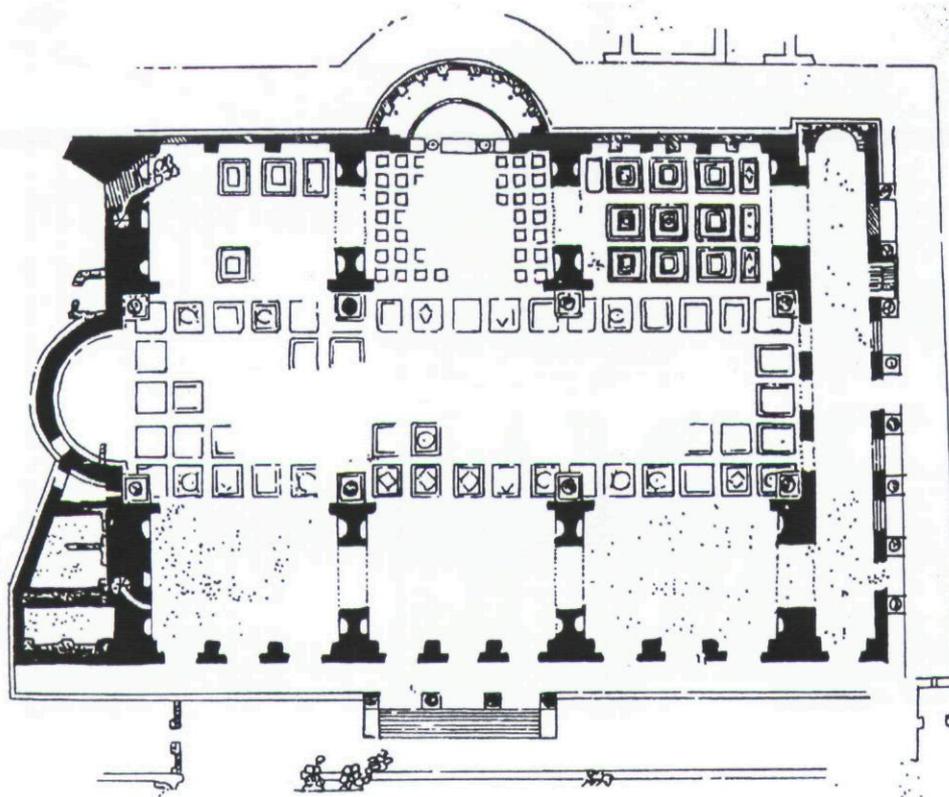
The reframing, partial obscuring, and sudden revealing of the colossus behind, through, and beyond the triumphal arch must have made for a dramatic spectacle. It recalls a passage from the panegyric delivered in 310 describing Constantine's vision of the sun god at a temple of Apollo in Gaul. The orator claims:

You saw, I believe, O Constantine, your Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering you laurel wreaths, each one of which carries a portent of thirty years. . . . And—now why do I say "I believe"?—you saw, and recognized yourself in the likeness of him to whom the divine songs of the bards had prophesied that rule over the whole world was due. And this I think has now happened, since you are, O Emperor, like he, youthful, joyful, a bringer of health and very handsome.<sup>68</sup>

This passage is helpful in thinking about the tableau at Constantine's Colosseum Valley in a number of ways. It emphasizes the importance of sight ("you saw . . . you saw") and the epiphanic qualities of the sudden manifestation of the dazzling sun god.<sup>69</sup> Second, it very deliberately equates Constantine with Sol; the emperor "recognized" himself "in the likeness" of the god, and is "like" him in a variety of ways. Finally, it stresses the political implications of Constantine's special relationship with the sun god, as Apollo promises the emperor "rule over the whole world [*totius mundi regna*]" for thirty years.

#### Old and New in the Constantinian Valley

My model gives the view of the arch and the Colossus of Sol from one direction only, but the Colosseum Valley was, of



17 Plan of the Basilica of Maxentius, Rome; Constantine's additions include the monumental pronaos along the southern facade and the apse facing it (from Minoprio, "A Restoration of the Basilica of Constantine, Rome," pl. 4)

course, a fluid space, situated in a heavily trafficked zone of the ancient capital, accessible from any number of directions. Constantine's interventions here were, in fact, broad in scope, extending well beyond the erection of the arch and the alterations to the Colossus of Sol. Together, they guaranteed the spectator, regardless of the direction of approach, a dazzling panorama of new and appropriated imperial edifices.

Constantine's interventions in the valley included a monumentalizing new parapet installed around the Meta Sudans contemporaneously with the construction of the arch. This addition widened the fountain's diameter from 53 feet (16 meters) to 83 feet (25 meters); it has been suggested that the parapet could have been topped with something like a colonnade, but there is no evidence for (or against) this.<sup>70</sup> The enlargement of the fountain's footprint would have had a marked effect on the flow of traffic through the valley, for the new parapet lay directly in the path of the spectator coming through the arch. Unfortunately, there is no way to know what effect it had on the sight lines facing the colossus; that would depend on the height of both the parapet and the statue base. (For my reconstruction, I have assumed a parapet 5 Roman feet [4 feet 7 inches or 1.4 meters] tall with no colonnade.) Regardless, the choice to widen the fountain is somewhat puzzling, given its partial obstruction of the central pathway through the arch. Perhaps by monumentalizing the space just beyond the arch, the fourth-century designers sought to encourage the spectator to pause, perhaps even to sit down, and admire the view of the colossus ahead. Aside from its awkward spatial implications, the ideological impetus for the aggrandizement of the Meta Sudans is clear. The embellishment would have furthered Constantine's appropri-

ation of the Colosseum Valley and bolstered his identity as urban benefactor. It would also have underscored his dynastic association with the imperial Flavians, under whom the monument had been built in the first century CE.

Constantine made his mark on at least one other structure in the Colosseum Valley: the Temple of Venus and Roma. This temple, which had been rebuilt from the ground up by Maxentius after the Hadrianic version was destroyed by fire, was one of two buildings that Aurelius Victor says was rededicated to Constantine by the Senate.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, unlike at the other rededicated structure, the basilica on the Velian Hill, the archaeological evidence for contemporaneous physical interventions at the rededicated temple is scanty.<sup>72</sup> At the very least, a prominent new inscription honoring Constantine must have been installed on the building. Constantine also underscored his appropriation of the temple through a series of numismatic issues in honor of Roma,<sup>73</sup> as well as by his choice of an image of this deity for the central keystone on the northern facade of the arch.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, though the visual relation between the arch and the colossus would have been far less dynamic from perspectives other than the northward-facing one described above, the basic message of Constantinian legitimacy and authority was plain no matter how one approached the Colosseum Valley. From the gentle rise of the Via Sacra to the west or the upper galleries of the Flavian Amphitheater to the east, spectators would have been able to survey the ensemble of new, old, and renovated monuments. From either of these vantage points, a spine of freestanding structures (colossus-fountain-arch or arch-fountain-colossus) would have defined the middle ground and would have been framed by the enormous mass of the amphitheater (built by Constantine's Flavian "ances-

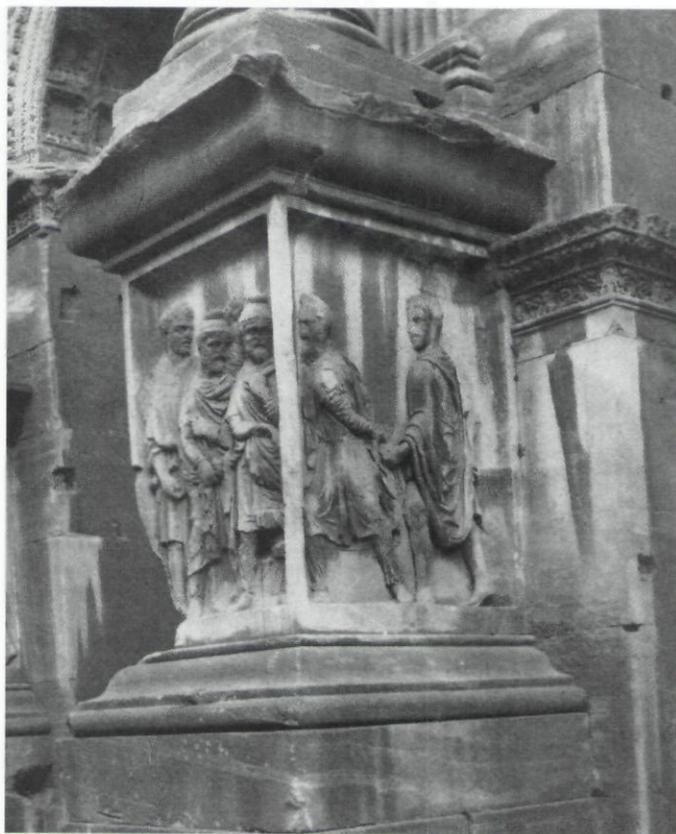
tors”) or the rededicated temple in the background. Either end of this middle-ground axis (whose imperfect alignment would hardly have been noticeable from either of these lateral views) was marked by bronze statuary, Sol at one end and Constantine’s quadriga atop the arch at the other. From the Esquiline Hill to the north, while the spectator’s line of vision would have been blocked by the back of the colossus, the elevation of the hill may have permitted a view over the statue to the arch beyond it. Constantine’s multiple and multifarious appropriations of preexisting structures in the Colosseum Valley ensured that from any vantage point, one was confronted with evidence of the emperor’s urban benefactions—as well as his close relationship with the sun god, his ancestral ties to the first-century Flavians, and his absolute victory over Maxentius.<sup>75</sup>

While the basic messages of Constantine’s program in the Colosseum Valley would have been discernible from any angle, the view I have been emphasizing, from the Via Triumphalis facing north, was not only the most visually spectacular but also the most ideologically laden. It was the perspective that Constantine himself would have surveyed during his triumphal entry into the city in 315 (when he returned to Rome to celebrate the tenth anniversary of his reign), as would any traveler whose route followed that of the triumphal procession from the Circus Maximus to the Roman Forum. This itinerary could never be an ideologically neutral one in ancient Rome, for the road was lined with triumphal arches, collectively representing the sum of Roman imperialism and military might. Spanning everyday thoroughfares that on special occasions did double duty as the route of the triumphal parade, these monuments transformed the simple act of walking through the city center into a reenactment of the triumphal procession. The imagery on the arches contributed to this effect. The tall column pedestals of both the Arch of Constantine and the Arch of Septimius Severus presented, directly at eye level, images of Roman soldiers parading captive enemies through these very streets and passing through these very arches (Fig. 18). Everyday pedestrians could not but have identified, on some level, with these figures of triumphal marchers, whose movements they replicated with their own bodies. Triumphal arches thus gave the streets an ideological charge, reaffirming the nexus of conquest, imperial benefaction, and urban form, and made ordinary citizens complicit in their message.

The positioning of Constantine’s triumphal arch at a location where it framed the Solar Colossus added another dimension to this phenomenon. The arch, of course, does not *actually* reframe the colossus at all; this reframing happens only at a third point, through the eyes of the viewer. The tableau I have been describing does not exist independently of the spectator; it is the spectator’s gaze that constitutes it, the way a piece of music does not exist independently of its performance by a musician. Constantine’s urban composition thus generates mutual acts of constitution: the spectator’s of the tableau, and the tableau’s of the spectator as the subject of its ideology.

#### Constantine, Sol, and Christ

The colossal statue of Sol that spectators approaching the Colosseum Valley saw looming above and then through the



18 Arch of Septimius Severus, Rome, 203, reliefs on the pedestals depicting Roman soldiers and captive Parthians in procession (artwork in the public domain; photograph from Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome*, pl. 56)

Arch of Constantine would have prepared them to understand particular aspects of the imagery adorning the arch itself once they were close enough to read it. They would hardly be surprised to discover that Sol appears several times in the monument’s sculptures and reliefs in ways that reinforce the assimilation of emperor and sun god. Sol is represented opposite Constantine in at least one of the four pairs of busts that adorn the niches in the lateral passageways.<sup>76</sup> Sol also features prominently on the monument’s eastern facade, where the image in the roundel of the sun god rising in his quadriga is paired with one of Constantine in his chariot setting out on campaign in the frieze below (Fig. 19). Sol’s quadriga here would have echoed the form of the statue group on top of the arch, further evidence of the essential likeness of emperor and god. Hans Peter L’Orange has noted that even in the more strictly historical narrative of the long frieze, Constantine is again likened to Sol: in the scene of the Siege of Verona, the emperor (the third standing figure from the left) is shown with the sun god’s pronounced gesture of raising his right hand (Fig. 20).<sup>77</sup> This gesture, along with the globe and rayed crown, had been standard attributes of Sol Invictus since he first began to appear regularly on Roman coinage, under the Severans.<sup>78</sup> L’Orange suggests that the gesture had magical properties; of this scene, he claims:

In over life-size scale, the Emperor-god towers above his attacking army, his right hand outstretched against the besieged enemy with compelling magic—like the hand of



19 Arch of Constantine, east facade (artwork in the public domain; photograph by the author)



20 Arch of Constantine, south facade, detail of the frieze depicting the Siege of Verona (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Michael Herrman)

Sol Invictus driving his chariot through the universe [in numismatic images]. It is as if irresistible, divine power flows from the outstretched hand, destroying the enemy opposing him, bringing mercy, beneficence and victory in its wake. The whole meaning of the gesture can be understood in this image: it expresses the divine power of the Sun-emperor. It reveals the unity of the Autocrator and the Cosmocrator. It symbolizes the divine identity of Constantine-Sol.<sup>79</sup>

It is remarkable that in neither his lengthy monograph on the Arch of Constantine (which pays close attention to the monument's solar imagery) nor in any of his other studies of the sun god did L'Orange ever point out the topographical relation between the arch and the Solar Colossus across the piazza. Equally remarkable is how little impact his analysis of the arch's solar imagery has made on the literature on Constantine's religious policies. Most historians, intently focused on the matter of Constantine's Christianity, simply ignore the monument. Those who do consider it tend to limit their attention to the inscription, with its famous reference to the *instinctu divinitatis*, the heavenly force that granted the em-

peror his victory. The text states that the monument was dedicated to Constantine "because, by the inspiration of the divinity and by the greatness of his mind, he and his army avenged the republic with just weapons at once from the tyrant and from all his party."<sup>80</sup> The "inspiration of the divinity" has long been interpreted as a shrewdly elliptical reference to Christ, calculated both to honor Constantine's new patron deity and to avoid giving offense to the overwhelmingly non-Christian Senate and people of Rome.<sup>81</sup>

This interpretation rests on the assumption that Constantine was already a full-fledged Christian by the time of the arch's dedication in 315. The key piece of evidence for this view (aside from the highly tendentious story of his conversion at the Milvian Bridge in 312 told by Eusebius and Lactantius<sup>82</sup>) is the Edict of Milan, issued in 313. This decree, which allowed all inhabitants of the empire to worship whatever god they chose, thus ending the persecution of the Christians, represents Constantine's earliest public declaration of support for the religion.<sup>83</sup> What it does not show, however, is that Constantine actually was at this date (or, indeed, at any point in his reign) a Christian in our sense of

the word: a merely mortal, actively monotheistic servant of Christ.<sup>84</sup> Like all Roman emperors before him, Constantine represented himself as the divinely chosen, godlike agent of heavenly will on earth;<sup>85</sup> he saw no contradiction between his worship of Christ and the worship of himself and his family in the traditional rites and practices of the Roman imperial cult.<sup>86</sup> Both the logic and language of the Edict of Milan are likewise highly traditional: the safety and prosperity of the Roman Empire depended on the proper worship of all the gods. There is, in other words, no shortage of reminders that Constantine was first and foremost a Roman emperor, and a Christian only secondarily—despite the shrill protestations to the contrary from the ancient theologians.

As I hope to have shown, the question of how fully committed a Christian Constantine was by the time of the arch's dedication in 315 is, at any rate, beside the point. It is hard to believe that contemporaries in Rome would have understood the inscription as a reference to the emperor's new god, given its context on a monument adorned with multiple references to Sol. Spectators, furthermore, could hardly have overlooked the 120-foot bronze statue of the sun god looming over the arch, directly aligned with the figure of Constantine on top, with the inscription itself, and with the central passageway. For these reasons, it seems likely that most observers would have understood the phrase "instinctu divinitatis" as a reference not to Christ but to Sol, although the small population of Christians in the ancient capital could, of course, have interpreted it as they saw fit. Whoever chose the language of the inscription may have striven for ambiguity in the description of Constantine's divine support, but in every other aspect of the monument, from its sculptural imagery to its setting, the favored deity is unambiguously Sol.

In sum, the projects in the Colosseum Valley undertaken in Constantine's name were characterized by a programmatic scope that extends well beyond the mere erection of a triumphal arch. The ideological and rhetorical coherence of the space was not unlike that of the imperial fora built by Trajan and Augustus several centuries earlier. The area and the spectator's experience of the preexisting monuments were reshaped by the positioning of the new structure. The complex visual interplay between the Arch of Constantine and the Colossus of Sol, as well as between the parallel, vertical forms of the Circus Maximus obelisk and the colossus, effectively transformed the entire stretch of road leading up to the arch into a Constantinian arena of sorts, doubling the programmatic content of the new additions to the valley itself. It advertised the emperor's urban benefactions, his connection to the first-century Flavians, his triumph over Maxentius, and his close relationship with the sun god Sol.

The transition from the narrow space of the road running between the Palatine and Caelian Hills, through the arch, and into the suddenly wide open piazza filled with famous, architectural riches would have created a dazzling effect. Visitors would have been encouraged to stop and enjoy the spectacle by the inviting presence of the fountain parapet immediately before them. To the left rose the great Temple of Venus and Roma, freshly rededicated in Constantine's name, to the right the majestic Flavian Amphitheater, built by the emperor's Flavian ancestors, and up ahead towered the sun god, Constantine's personal protector. These centuries-

old monuments, drafted into service for the new emperor, were in effect made new again through careful adaptations, rededications, and reframings. Their already complicated stratigraphy of meanings was thus overlaid with a Constantinian layer—an important one, but hardly, of course, the last.<sup>87</sup>

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## Notes

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Unless otherwise specified, translations are mine.

1. Raphael Sanzio, "Lettera a Leone X," in *Scritti Rinascimentali di architettura*, ed. A. Bruschi (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1978), 474–75; Alois Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunstindustrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Kaiserlich-königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901); Bernard Berenson, *The Arch of Constantine, or the Decline of Form* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1952); and Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, *Roma: La fine dell'arte antica* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1970), 73–83.
2. The exception to this rule is the archaeological work undertaken by a handful of Italian teams in the past two decades. See especially Clementina Panella, "La valle del Colosseo nell'antichità," *Bollettino di Archeologia* 1–2 (1990): 35–88; as well as Patrizio Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino: Tra archeologia e archeometria* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1999). While these studies have greatly advanced our understanding of how and when the monument and its surroundings were built and restored, they have not attempted to analyze them in their broader historical or political context. Conversely, for recent, theoretically astute work on the monument that nevertheless ignores its topographical setting, see Jas Elsner, "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 (2000): 149–84. The groundbreaking monograph by Hans Peter L'Orange and Armin von Gerkan, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1939), now almost seventy years old, also deserves to be listed among the most sophisticated works on the monument, although it focused exclusively on the ideological content of the reliefs and, like its predecessors, neglected the arch's particular urban setting.
3. For example, Norman H. Baynes, "Constantine the Great and the Christian Church," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 15 (1929): 341–442; Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and see the review by Averil Cameron, "Constantinus Christianus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983): 184–90; and Augusto Fraschetti, *La conversione: Da Roma pagana a Roma cristiana* (Rome: Laterza, 1999). Scholars who adopt this view are generally following that of Constantine's contemporary Eusebius of Caesarea, the biographer and church historian, for example, his *Vita Constantini*, written shortly after the emperor's death. This was recently published as *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, ed. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

4. This more nuanced—or skeptical—view also has a long pedigree; elements of it can be found already in the anticlerical historiography of Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88; New York: Modern Library, 1946); and Jakob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, trans. M. Hadas (1853; New York: Pantheon Books, 1949). More recently, it has been developed in highly productive ways by scholars such as Harold A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Judith Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Thomas Grünewald, *Constantinus Maximus Augustus: Herrschaftspropaganda in der Zeitgenössischen Überlieferung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990).
5. Theodor Preger, "Konstantinos-Helios," *Hermes* 36 (1901): 457–69; Hans Peter L'Orange, "Sol Invictus Imperator: Ein Beitrag zur Apotheose," *Symbolae Osloenses* 14 (1935): 86–114, reprinted in L'Orange, *Likeness and Icon: Selected Studies in Classical and Early Mediaeval Art* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1973), 325–44; Franz Altheim, *Der unbesiegt Gott: Heidentum und Christentum* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1957); Rudolf Leeb, *Konstantin und Christus: Die Verchristlichung der imperialen Repräsentation unter Konstantin dem Grossen als Spiegel seiner Kirchenpolitik und seines Selbstverständnisses als christlicher Kaiser* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992); Steven E. Hijmans, "The Sun Which Did Not Rise in the East: The Cult of Sol Invictus in the Light of Non-Literary Evidence," *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 71 (1996): 115–50; Martin Wallraff, *Christus versus Sol: Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum: Ergänzungsband 32 (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 2001). Some scholars who have underemphasized or downplayed Constantine's interest in Sol (in addition to those cited in n. 3 above) are Andrew Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948); Ramsay MacMullen, *Constantine* (New York: Dial Press, 1969); and Richard Krautheimer, "The Ecclesiastical Building Policy of Constantine," in *Costantino il Grande dall'antichità all'umanesimo: Colloquio sul cristianesimo nel mondo antico*, ed. Giorgio Bonamente and Franca Fusco (Macerata: Università degli Studi di Macerata; distributed by E.G.L.E., 1992), 509–52.
6. For a larger study of Constantine's building practices and self-representation in Rome, see Elizabeth Marlowe, "That Customary Magnificence Which Is Your Due": Constantine and the Symbolic Capitol of Rome" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2004).
7. Twenty-four of the fifty-one arches in Rome cataloged by Heinz Kähler were on the triumphal route; Kähler, "Triumphbogen (Ehrenbogen)," in *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A. F. von Pauly, vol. 13 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1939), 472–73. Other arches in Rome, situated either along the major north or south roads into the city (especially the Vias Appia and Flaminia) or else in locations "where the emperor passed" (at bridges, temples, and in the fora) are, strictly speaking, merely honorific, but cf. Sandro de Maria, *Gli archi onorari di Roma e dell'Italia romana* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1988), 25, who criticizes Kähler for his "excessive typological and schematic rigor." Also on the relation between the siting of arches and the route of the triumphal parade, see Ernst Künzl, *Der römische Triumph: Siegesfeiern im antiken Rom* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988); and Russell T. Scott, "The Triple Arch of Augustus and the Roman Triumph," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 13 (2000): 184.
8. Some scholars, at various moments, have questioned whether Constantine could have been the first emperor to commission an arch at this prime location along the triumphal route; see A. L. Frothingham, "Who Built the Arch of Constantine?" pt. 1, "Its History from Domitian to Constantine," *American Journal of Archaeology* 16 (1912): 368–86 (and follow-up articles in the next three issues of the same journal). Most recently, archaeologists from Rome's Istituto Centrale di Restauro have argued that Constantine's Arch in fact dates to the Hadrianic era (117–38 CE), and that its foundations sit atop those of a demolished arch built by the emperor Domitian (r. 81–96 CE); see Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro and Angela Maria Ferroni, "Chi costruì l'arco di Costantino? Un interrogativo ancora attuale," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 66 (1993–94): 1–60; and Maria Letizia Conforto et al., *Adriano e Costantino: Le due fasi dell'Arco nella valle del Colosseo* (Milan: Electa, 2001). This team maintains that the Constantinian craftsmen made a number of major alterations to the preexisting arch: they added the attic story and the projecting columns and disassembled or chiseled away the second-century monument's surface in order to forcibly insert the Trajanic and Constantinian friezes, the Constantinian tondi, the slabs of colored marble, and the imperial busts in the lateral passageways. This hypothesis has, however, been vigorously challenged by scholars from the Università di Roma at La Sapienza and has not found many followers; see Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, as well as Patrizio Pensabene and Clementina Panella, "Reimpiego e progettazione architettonica nei monumenti tardo-antichi di Roma," pt. 2, "Arco Quadrifronte ('Giano') del Foro Boario," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 67 (1994–95): 25–67. For a cogent summary of the key details of the debate, see Mark Wilson Jones, "Genesis and Mimesis: The Design of the Arch of Constantine in Rome," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (2000): 50–77, at 51–57; and Fred Kleiner, "Who Really Built the Arch of Constantine?" *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001): 661–63.
9. The line of the road is known both from nineteenth-century excavations (whose results are incorporated into Rodolfo Lanciani's plan of this area; Lanciani, *Forma urbis Romae* [1893; Rome: Quasar, 1990], pl. 29) and from more recent ones; Pensabene and Panella, "Reimpiego e progettazione architettonica," 45.
10. Scholars have recently begun to look critically at the anti-Neronian bias in the (invariably elite) ancient literary sources; some have even championed Nero as a great populist. Jas Elsner, "Constructing Decadence: The Representation of Nero as Imperial Builder," in *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History and Representation*, ed. Elsner and Jamie Masters (London: Duckworth, 1994), 112–17; Penelope J. E. Davies, "What Worse than Nero, What Better than His Baths?: 'Damnatio Memoriae' and Roman Architecture," in *From Caligula to Constantine: Tyranny and Transformation in Roman Portraiture*, ed. Eric R. Varner (Atlanta: Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2000), 27–44; and Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 2003). Regardless of the reality, it is the Flavian rhetoric that is of relevance here; a key example is the court poet Martial's poem *Liber Spectaculorum* 2, which catalogs a number of the changes in the Colosseum Valley, including the building of the "conspicuous and revered Amphitheater," where "the pools of Nero once stood," and which concludes, "Rome is restored to herself, and under your direction, O Caesar, those delights now belong to the people which once belonged to the master"; quoted in Jerome J. Pollitt, *The Art of Rome, c. 753 B.C.–A.D. 337*, *Sources and Documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 158.
11. On the Meta Sudans, see Clementina Panella, "Meta Sudans," in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (hereafter *LTUR*), ed. Eva Margareta Steinby, 6 vols. (Rome: Quasar, 1993–2000), vol. 3 (1996), 247–49; Panella, ed., *Meta Sudans*, vol. 1, *Un'area sacra in Palatio e la valle del Colosseo prima e dopo Nerone* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1996); and Elizabeth Marlowe, "The Mutability of All Things": The Rise, Fall and Rise of the Meta Sudans Fountain in Rome," in *Architecture as Experience: Radical Change in Spatial Practice*, ed. Dana Arnold and Andrew Ballantyne (London: Routledge, 2004), 36–56. For the coin depicting the Meta Sudans (Fig. 3), see Harold Mattingly, ed., *British Museum Coins of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (London: British Museum, 1966), 262 n. 190.
12. This is known from excavations that revealed the continuation of the Flavian paving level of the piazza south of the arch. Unfortunately, the exact point of juncture between the piazza paving and the triumphal road has never been located in excavations.
13. Marianne Bergmann, "Der römische Sonnenkoloss, der Konstantinsbogen und die Küstestatue von Konstantinopel," *Jahrbuch Braunschweigische Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft*, 1997: 120, was, to my knowledge, the first to draw attention to this shift. This displacement is not visible today; the modern road, following the arch, runs about 6½ feet (2 meters) east of its ancient predecessor.
14. Also noted by Panella, "La valle del Colosseo," 87; Bergmann, "Der römische Sonnenkoloss," 118–20; and Angela Maria Ferroni, "L'Arco di Adriano nel contesto urbano," in Conforto et al., *Adriano e Costantino*, 120.
15. Marianne Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998).
16. It was long thought that Sol Invictus was a Syrian deity whose cult was imported into Rome by the Severan emperors in the late second or early third centuries CE. This view has recently been strongly criticized by Hijmans, "The Sun Which Did Not Rise," who argues persuasively that Sol Invictus is merely a later version of Sol Indiges, a sun god who was worshipped in Rome from the early Republican period on.
17. Arthur Darby Nock, "The Emperor's Divine Comes," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947): 102–16; Ernst Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti—Lever du Roi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 117–78; Sabine MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: The Ceremony of the Adventus," *Historia* 21 (1972): 721–52, at 727–33; Robert Turcan, "Le culte impériale au IIIe siècle," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.16.2 (1978), 946–1084, at 1071–73; Bergmann, "Die Strahlen der Herrscher," 278; and R. R. R. Smith, "Nero and the Sun-God: Divine Accessories and Political Symbols in Roman Imperial Images," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 13 (2000): 538.
18. On the discrepancies between the literary and material evidence from Constantine's reign, see Martin Wallraff, "Constantine's Devotion to the Sun after 324," *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001): 256–68, at 268.
19. Raissa Calza, *Iconografia romana imperiale, da Carausio a Giuliano (287–363 d. C.)* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1972), figs. 238, 241; and

- Lucio de Giovanni, *Costantino e il mondo pagano: Studi di politica e legislazione* (Naples: M. D'Auria, 1982), 107. This program articulated Constantine's break with the Tetrarchs, whose coinage had been dominated by the "genio populi romani" motif and reflected their devotion to Jupiter and Hercules. Patrick Bruun, "Portrait of a Conspirator: Constantine's Break with the Tetrarchy," *Arctos, Acta Philologica Fennica* 10 (1976): 1–23; and C. H. V. Sutherland, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 6, *From Diocletian's Reform (AD 294) to the Death of Maximinus (AD 313)* (London: Spink and Son, 1967), 111.
20. Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1; Pliny, *Natural History* 34.45. See most recently, with previous bibliography, Sorcha Carey, "In Memoriam (Perpetuum) Neronis: 'Damnatio Memoriae' and Nero's Colossus," *Apollo* 152, no. 146 (July 2000): 20–31; and Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 66–67.
  21. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Hadrian* 19.12.
  22. The archaeologist Antonio Maria Colini sketched and measured the remains of the base just before its destruction. These notes were studied by Claudia Lega, "Il Colosso di Nerone," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 93 (1989–90): 339–48, who used them to reconstruct a measurement of 57 by 48 feet (17.6 by 14.75 meters, or 60 by 50 Roman feet) for the base.
  23. Marianne Bergmann, *Der Koloss Neros: Die Domus Aurea und der Mentalitätswandel im Rom der frühen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994), fig. 10. The coins date from the reign of Alexander Severus (r. 222–35) (Harold Mattingly, Edward Allen Sydenham, and Carol Humphrey Vivian Sutherland, eds., *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 4, pt. 2, *Maximinus to Pupienus* [London: Spink and Son, 1962], 64, 104, nos. 410, 411) and also from the reign of Gordian III (r. 238–44) (Francesco Gnechchi, *I medaglioni romani* [Milan: V. Hoepli, 1912], 89, nos. 22, 23). The image on the gem, in the Pergamon Museum of Berlin, was first identified as the Colossus of Nero by Bergmann, 11.
  24. Fred C. Albertson, "Zenodorus's 'Colossus of Nero,'" *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 46 (2001): 103–6. Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1, gives a measurement of 120 Roman feet for the Roman colossus, while Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 66.15.1, gives 100 feet. The manuscript traditions of Pliny offer conflicting, and occasionally impossible, numbers (CVIX, CVIX, CVI, X, and CX). Late antique sources oscillate between 107 and 127 feet; the fourth-century *Reginary Catalogs*, which list many of Rome's monuments, specify 102 feet plus an additional 22 for the rays of the solar crown. All the ancient sources on the colossus are presented by Lega, "Il Colosso," 364–68.
  25. For example, Smith, "Nero and the Sun-God," 536–38; and Albertson, "Zenodorus's 'Colossus of Nero,'" 109–12. See also n. 10 above.
  26. D. Kreikenbom, *Griechische und römische Kolossalporträts bis zum späten ersten Jahrhundert nach Christus* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1992), 51–63.
  27. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.51–52.
  28. On the rays at birth, see Suetonius, *Nero* 6.1; and Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 61.2.1; on the lyre-playing, see Suetonius, *Nero* 23–25; and Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 4.17–20; on the coins, see Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, vol. 1 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1923), *Nero*, nos. 56–60; on the curtains, see Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 62.6.2; Lega, "Il Colosso," 349–50; and Bergmann, "Die Strahlen der Herrscher," 189–94.
  29. Suetonius, *Vespasian* 18. Carey, "In Memoriam (Perpetuum) Neronis," 24, argues that such a rededication seems a very weak damnation of the memory of Nero on Vespasian's part, given how closely associated Nero was with the sun god. She suggests that this and subsequent attempts to undo the statue's association with Nero were never more than halfhearted, because the colossus was useful to subsequent rulers as an illustration of Nero's excess (by comparison to which they were paragons of modesty and restraint). This may have been the case for the Flavian emperors, but it is hard to believe that Hadrian would have gone to such pains to relocate the statue had its associations remained so negative. Certainly by the fourth century, the connotations were predominantly positive (see below).
  30. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 56.15.1.
  31. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Hadrian* 19.12–13, trans. David Magie (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967): "Et cum hoc simulacrum post Neronis vultum, cui antea dicatum fuerat, Soli consecrasset." Neither Lega, "Il Colosso," 352, nor Bergmann, *Der Koloss Neros*, 9, believes that the features of the statue were altered at any point.
  32. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Commodus*, 17.9–10; and Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 72.22.3.
  33. Bergmann, *Der Koloss Neros*, 11–13.
  34. *Non vidi*. This very important inscription, built into the interior of the attic, was seen during conservation work on the monument in the mid-1980s. It was presented publicly in a talk by Adriano La Regina at the ninth Incontro di Studio sull'Archeologia Laziale in 1988 but remains unpublished. It is referred to, apparently always secondhand (as in the present case), by many scholars, including Alessandro Cassatella and Maria Letizia Conforto, *Arco di Costantino: Il restauro del sommità* (Pesaro: Maggioli, 1989), 41; Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, "I marmi svelati," *Archeo* 48 (1989): 43; Phillip Pierce, "The Arch of Constantine: Propaganda and Ideology in Late Roman Art," *Art History* 12 (1989): 404; Panella, "La valle del Colosseo," 87; Melucco Vaccaro and Ferroni, "Chi costruì l'arco di Costantino?" 56; Mats Cullhed, *Conservator Urbis Suae: Studies in the Politics and Propaganda of the Emperor Maxentius* (Stockholm: Paul Aströms, 1994), 61; John Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 62; Antonio Giuliano, "L'Arco di Costantino come documento storico," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 112 (2000): 442; Serena Ensoli, "I colossi di bronzo a Roma in età tardoantica: Dal Colosso di Nerone al Colosso di Costantino: A proposito dei tre frammenti bronzei dei Musei Capitolini," in *Aurea Roma: Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, ed. Ensoli and Eugenio La Rocca (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000), 86; and Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 66. None of these citations gives the complete text, the exact dimensions, or a photograph.
  35. On Maxentius's building program in Rome, see Filippo Coarelli, "L'Urbs e il suburbio: Ristrutturazione urbanistica e ristrutturazione amministrativa nella Roma di Massenzio," in *Società romana e impero tardo antico*, ed. Andrea Giardina (Rome: Laterza, 1986), 1–35; and Cullhed, *Conservator Urbis Suae*.
  36. C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 356; Nazarius, *Panegyrici Latini* 4.12.2: "Ecce enim, pro dolor! (verba vix suppetunt), venerandarum imaginum acerba delectio et divini vultus litura deformis."
  37. Nixon and Rodgers, *ibid.*, 356 n. 54, note that "this is the only evidence that Maxentius destroyed images of Constantine."
  38. Antonio Giuliano, "Augustus-Constantinus," *Bollettino d'Arte* 68–69 (1991): 7.
  39. Ensoli, "I colossi di bronzo a Roma," identifies the six-foot-tall bronze portrait head of Constantine in the Conservatori Museum, Rome, together with its hand and globe, as fragments of the Constantinian incarnation of the colossus. Sol is indeed usually depicted with a globe in his hand, and the Conservatori head is marked by regularly spaced holes across the top, perhaps for the insertion of rays. Ensoli cites a number of medieval sources that she claims show that the fragments were believed to have come from the area around the Colosseum. These sources, however, speak only to the etymological connection between the Colosseum and the famous Colossus of Nero. Some of them also link Nero's colossus to the colossal bronze statue fragments then on view in front of the church of St. John Lateran, but none actually states that the pieces were found at the Colosseum. For the texts, see Lega, "Il Colosso," 367–68. There are further reasons for caution, including the scale of the pieces, as noted by Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 66 n. 170. The head of a 105-foot- (32 meter-) tall colossus (without the rayed crown) should be at least 13 feet (4 meters) tall; the Conservatori piece is only half that. The portrait type is also a very late one, dating to the period after the founding of Constantinople. Given the bad terms on which Constantine left Rome in 326, it seems likely that whatever monument bore this image of him was set up posthumously, perhaps in time for the arrival in Rome of his son, Constantius II, in 357. Some scholars have, in fact, suggested that it is the son represented by the image (Hans Peter L'Orange, *Das Spätantike Herrscherbild von Diokletian bis zu den Konstantin-Söhnen, 284–361 n. Chr.* [Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1984], 85, 135), although the general consensus remains with Constantine; see Heinz Kähler, "Konstantin 313," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 67 (1952), 22ff.; Calza, *Iconografia romana imperiale*, 231ff.; Hans Jucker, "Von der Angemessenheit des Stils und einigen Bildnissen Konstantins des Grossen," in *Von Angesicht zu Angesicht: Porträtstudien; Michael Stettler zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Stettler et al. (Berlin: Stämpfli, 1983), 51ff.; Klaus Fittschen and Paul Zanker, *Katalog der Römischen Porträts in den Capitolischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom.*, vol. 1, *Kaiser- und Prinzenbildnisse* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1985), 152–55; and Sandra Knudsen, "The Portraits of Constantine the Great: Types and Chronology, AD 306–337" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1988), 245–48. Thus, there is little reason to accept Ensoli's hypothesis that the bronze fragments in the Conservatori have anything to do with the Neronian colossus (or the Constantinian incarnation thereof).
  40. For Constantine's building activity at the Circus Maximus, see John Humphrey, *Roman Circuses* (London: Batsford, 1981), 129. On the Circus Maximus in general, see P. Ciancio Rossetto, "Circus Maximus," in *LTUR*, vol. 1, 272–77.
  41. Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 40.27: "Circus maximus excultus mirifice"; trans. H. W. Bird (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 49.

42. Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, 381; Nazarius, *Panegyrici Latini* 4.35.5: "Circo ipsi maximo sublimes porticus et rutilantes auro columnae tantum inusitati ornatus dederunt, ut illo non minus cupide conveniatur loci gratia quam spectaculi voluptate."
43. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 16.10.17, 17.4.12–18. Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 3.51.8. The events leading to its installation in Rome are also recounted on its base: *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*, vol. 6, nos. 1163, 31249. Constantine was the first Roman emperor since Caligula to transport an original Pharaonic obelisk to Rome; other rulers, such as Domitian and Hadrian, had ordered new ones made. Constantine's obelisk was subsequently relocated from the Circus Maximus to the Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano in 1587 by Domenico Fontana, where it still stands.
44. It is also worth noting that the Circus Maximus itself, as the site of the Dies Natalis Invicti, the annual games celebrating the winter solstice on December 25, had long been associated with solar rites. Tertullian even notes cryptically in *De Spectaculis* 8.1 that "the circus is dedicated chiefly to Sol" (trans. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 232), and Humphrey, fig. 37a, posits a temple of the sun at the finishing line along the Aventine side. Alfred K. Frazer, "The Cologne Circus Bowl: Basileus Helios and the Cosmic Hippodrome," in *Essays in Memoriam of Karl Lehmann*, ed. L. Freeman Sandler (New York: Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1964), 105–13; W. Q. Schofield, "Sol in the Circus Maximus," in *Hommages à Marcel Renard*, ed. J. Bibauw (Brussels: Latomus, 1969), 639–49; Gaston H. Halsberghe, "Le culte de Deus Sol Invictus à Rome au III siècle après J.C.," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt* II.17.4 (1984), 2181–201, at 2198; and Curran, *Pagan City*, 247–49.
45. Susann S. Lusnia, "Urban Planning and Sculptural Display in Severan Rome: Reconstructing the Septizodium and Its Role in Dynastic Politics," *American Journal of Archaeology* 108 (2004): 517–44, with earlier bibliography.
46. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, *Septimius Severus* 24.3: "Cum Septizonium faceret, nihil aliud cogitavit, quam ut ex Africa venientibus suum opus occurreret."
47. There is no way to know from how far south the Arch of Constantine was visible, for this depends on how many other triumphal arches straddled the road. There is, at any rate, no extant evidence for any arches closer to the Flavian piazza than this one.
48. François Chausson, "Le site de 191 à 455," in *La Vigna Barberini*, vol. 1, *Histoire d'un site: Étude des sources et de la topographie*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: École Française de Rome and Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma, 1997), 55–73.
49. C. Buzzetti, "Claudius, Divus, Templum," in *LTUR*, vol. 1, 277–78; and Robin Haydon Darwall-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture: A Study of Flavian Rome* (Brussels: Latomus, 1996), 48–55.
50. As noted above, however, the modern road, unlike its ancient predecessor, is centered directly on the Arch of Constantine. The ancient road ran slightly (6½ feet, or 2 meters) to the west.
51. The relationship is first reported in the panegyric of 310 (*Panegyrici Latini* 6.2.1–5) and is also mentioned a number of times in the biography of Claudius Gothicus in the *Historia Augusta*. Ronald Syme, "The Ancestry of Constantine," in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium*, ed. Géza Alföldy and Johannes Straub (Bonn: Habelt, 1974), 237–53; and Adolf Lippold, "Claudius, Constantius, Constantinus. Die V. Claudii der HA: Ein Beitrag zur Legitimierung der Herrschaft Konstantins aus stadtrömischer Sicht," in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Perusinum*, ed. Giorgio Bonamente and François Paschoud (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 309–43, with further bibliography.
52. That triumphal arches always served to support statues is clear in Pliny, *Natural History* 34.27, and any number of ancient numismatic images of triumphal arches, all of which prominently feature on their rooftops triumphators on horseback or in quadrigas. Some of these images are gathered by de Maria, *Gli archi honorari*, pls. 42, 43, 46, 51, 56, 61, 70, 74, 82. Likewise Kähler, "Triumphbogen," 474–75. Cf. Filippo Magi, "Il coronamento dell'Arco di Costantino," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 29 (1956–57): 83–110, who argues, on the basis of a handful of Renaissance paintings and the 1682 drawings by the French architect Antoine Desgodetz, that Constantine's Arch was topped by a low parapet wall rather than a statue group. His argument fails to convince, however, for the represented parapet could be either a remnant of the arch's incorporation into the fortifications of the Frangipane property in the Middle Ages or an imagined integration on the part of the later artists. Unfortunately, nothing can be learned about the statue group from the monument itself, as the paving stones of the Arch's roof were replaced in 1855; see Rosaria Punzi, "Fonti documentarie per una rilettura delle vicende post-antiche dell'Arco di Costantino," in Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, 204.
53. The footprint of the base was 60 by 50 Roman feet (see n. 22 above), but by the time the base was measured in 1933, only 7 feet 4 inches (2.25 meters, or 7.6 Roman feet) remained of its original elevation. The round numbers of the length and width suggest a minimum height of 10 Roman feet (about 9 feet 7 inches, or just under 3 meters), although these dimensions (60 by 50) would make for a very squat base. The base in Bergmann's reconstruction drawing is, by contrast, 20 Roman feet tall (see n. 23 above). This seems more appropriate in terms of overall proportions (both to the other dimensions of the base and to the height of the statue), although a statue base three times taller than a human being may strike some readers as implausible.
54. I arrived at this measurement for Constantine's arch-topping quadriga through a comparison with the proportions of the extant rooftop statuary from a different honorific arch in Rome. Found in the Tiber in the late nineteenth century were a number of elements from the Arch of Valens and Valentinian, including the bronze feet and shins of a human figure still attached to a cornice block from the arch's roofline; see de Maria, *Gli archi honorari*, 320–22, fig. 67. By my calculations (assuming that the preserved portion of the figure represents one-seventh of the statue's overall height), the statue would have been about 9½ feet (3 meters) tall. Also preserved from this arch was one of its Corinthian capitals, measuring 2 feet 9 inches (0.875 meters) tall. This yields a ratio of 1 to 3.4 for the height of the column capital and that of the rooftop figure. Applying this ratio to the Arch of Constantine, whose capitals are 3 feet 2 inches (0.97 meters) tall (Wilson Jones, "Genesis and Mimesis," 65), gives us a height of 11 feet (3.36 meters) for a human figure on the rooftop. A statue group with such a figure standing in a chariot would probably have been around 13 feet (4 meters) tall. This presents a ratio of about 1 to 5 for the height of the quadriga to that of the arch itself. Cf. Richard Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum* (Rome: Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, 1967), 253 n. 3, pl. 27, whose reconstruction of the height of the quadriga atop the Arch of Septimius Severus was based on a ratio of 1 to 4, "determined from the numismatic representation and an empirical analysis of the architectural design." Cf. also Fred Kleiner, *The Arch of Nero in Rome: A Study of the Roman Honorary Arch before and under Nero* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1985), pl. 22, whose reconstructed Arch of Nero has a quadriga to monument ratio of 1 to 3.4 (for which he offers no rationale).
55. It should be noted that even if these estimated numbers are off, the negative consequences for my model would be for the distances from the monuments at which the monuments appeared to overlap and frame one another, not the fact that they produced this visual effect.
56. There can be little doubt that statuary groups atop triumphal arches always faced out, toward the approaching parade or toward those arriving in the city, rather than in, toward the city itself or toward the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. This is clear from any number of ancient images of cityscapes with triumphal arches or images of triumphal processions themselves. Many of these images are collected in de Maria, *Gli archi honorari*, fig. 34, pls. 4, 25, 68.1, 70.2, and 79.2.
57. Constantine is frequently called "invictus" in public inscriptions; see Grünwald, *Constantinus Maximus Augustus*, 52–57.
58. The suggestion that the road met the piazza at a distance of about 115 feet (35 meters) from the Arch of Constantine is supported by the recent excavations in the area of the Meta Sudans. These uncovered the foundations of a Flavian wall running northwest-southeast that defined the border of the piazza along the edge of the Palatine Hill (Panella, *Le valle del Colosseo*, 74–82). If the line of this wall is extended south, it intersects the road at precisely this point.
59. Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 40.26: "Adhuc cuncta opera quae magnifice construxerat, Urbis fanum atque basilicam Flavii meritis patres sacravere"; trans. Bird, 49.
60. Elizabeth Marlowe, "Liberator Urbis Suae: Constantine and the Ghost of Maxentius," in *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation and Ritual*, ed. Björn C. Ewald and Carlos F. Noreña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
61. Anthony Minoprio, "A Restoration of the Basilica of Constantine, Rome," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 12 (1932): 1–25.
62. There has been some controversy in recent years surrounding the traditional dating of these alterations to the reign of Constantine; see Susanna Le Pera and Luca d'Elia, "Sacra Via: Note topografiche," *Buletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 91 (1986): 247–49, who believe that the Via Sacra entrance was part of the basilica's original design under Maxentius; and Filippo Coarelli, "Praefectura Urbana," in *LTUR*, vol. 4 (1999), 159–60, who dates the interventions to the late fourth century. The former suggestion is refuted by the evidence discussed in Theodora Leonore Heres, *Paries, a Proposal for a Dating System of Late Antique Masonry Structures in Rome and Ostia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), 111–12, although this shows only that the alterations postdate the original construction. The archaeological evidence is far from conclusive, but the Constantinian date still makes the most sense historically; see Amanda Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 116; and Curran, *Pagan City*, 81 n. 56.

63. The fragments of this statue are now in the courtyard of the Conservatori Museum in Rome. Kähler, "Konstantin 313," suggested that the new north apse was built to accommodate the relocated judicial tribunal, which Constantine's seated statue had displaced from its former setting at the west end of the nave. Others have argued that the statue originally represented Maxentius and was thus part of the building's original design; see Jucker, "Von der Angemessenheit des Stils," 55–57; Coarelli, "L'Urbs e il suburbio," 32; and Varner, *From Caligula to Constantine*, 14; and idem, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 287. Still other hypotheses identify the original statue as Hadrian (Evelyn B. Harrison, "The Constantinian Portrait," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 [1967]: 79–96; and Cécile Evers, "Remarques sur l'iconographie de Constantin: À propos du remploi de portraits des 'Bons Empereurs,'" *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 103 [1991]: 785–806) or as some third-century ruler (Knudsen, "The Portraits of Constantine," 169; and Fittschen and Zanker, *Katalog der Römischen Porträts*, 147–52). Most recently, Ensoli, "I colossi da bronzo a Roma," argued that it was Maxentius who first appropriated this colossus "of Hadrian" and recarved it to his own portrait, and that Constantine then had the image altered a second time to his own features.
64. Patrizio Pensabene, "Il riempimento nell'età costantiniana a Roma," in Bonamente and Fusco, *Costantino il Grande*, 762, for example, suggests that Constantine merely "limited himself to completing the projects begun by Maxentius."
65. The vault of the central east-west nave is estimated to have been about 33 feet (10 meters) taller than the 82-foot- (25-meter-) high extant vaults of the side aisles.
66. The effect of the alterations is comparable, in some ways, to that of the addition of I. M. Pei's glass pyramid in the Cour Napoléon, which utterly transformed both the appearance and the visitor's experience of the Musée du Louvre, Paris. It is also similar in terms of how central that renovation was to President François Mitterrand's much-touted, self-aggrandizing "Grands Projets."
67. It is interesting to note that the heights of the Flavian Amphitheater (160 feet, or 48.5 meters) and of the Temple of Venus and Roma (141 feet, or 43 meters, with the podium) are very close to that estimated for the colossus (145 feet, or 44 meters, with the base). These balanced heights are perhaps evidence of the careful planning that went into Hadrian's interventions in the Colosseum Valley.
68. Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, 248–51; *Panegyrici Latini* 6.21.4–7: "Vidisti enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum comitante Victoria coronas tibi laureas offerentem, quae tricenum singulae ferunt omen annorum. . . . Et—immo quid dico 'credo'?—vidisti teque in illius specie recognovisti, cui totius mundi regna deberi vatam carmina divina cecinerunt. Quod ego nunc demum arbitror contigisse, cum tu sis, ut ille, iuvenis et laetus et salutaris et pulcherrimus, imperator." On this passage, see Ramsey MacMullen, "Constantine and the Miraculous," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 9 (1968): 81–96; Barbara Saylor Rodgers, "Constantine's Pagan Vision," *Byzantium* 50 (1980): 259–78; and Nixon and Rodgers, 248–50 n. 92.
69. Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 36.
70. Sabina Zeggio, "L'intervento costantiniano," in Panella, *Meta Sudans*, 189–96, on the archaeological evidence for the foundations of this parapet.
71. See n. 59 above.
72. The difficulty of tracing the building's early architectural history is due to the numerous postclassical adaptations of the structure, including its twelfth-century transformation into the church and convent of S. Francesca Romana and the heavy-handed reintegrations under the Fascists. A recent archaeological analysis of the temple's fabric, conducted from 1998 to 2000, may improve our understanding. A preliminary report mentions ancient, immediately post-Maxentian (and thus presumably Constantinian) alterations to the interior, including the filling in of the large square niches on either side of the central apse and the installation of a new architrave composed of spoliated blocks; Ernesto Monaco, "Il Tempio di Venere e Roma: Appunti sulla fase del IV secolo," in Ensoli and La Rocca, *Aurea Roma*, 59.
73. For example, a group of solidi from Trier with the legend RESTITUTORI LIBERTATIS and an image of the goddess presenting a globe to the emperor; Patrick M. Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 7, *Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313–337* (London: Spink and Son, 1966), Trier, nos. 22–26. In the bronze coinage from London, Roma appears with the legends FELICITAS AUGG (Sutherland, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 6, nos. 245–48), ROMAE AETER AUGG (nos. 269–71), and ROMAE RESTITUTAE (nos. 272–74).
74. It has even been suggested that this figure (and the nearly identical one adorning the keystone of the contemporary quadrifrontal arch in the Velabrum) is in fact an image of the cult statue of Roma from the Temple; L'Orange and von Gerkan, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck*, 147ff.; and Pensabene and Panella, "Reimpiego e progettazione architettonica," 52.
75. A similar argument is made, with different evidence, by Wilson Jones, "Genesis and Mimesis," 69, who sees the Constantinian interventions in the piazza as being characterized by a "unity of intention." It should be noted, however, that some of the claims in his discussion are erroneous. There is, for example, no evidence for the installation of a cult of the *gens Flavia* in the Temple of Venus and Roma. Furthermore, in his figure 2, Wilson Jones indicates that the exterior of the Flavian Amphitheater was the site of another "Constantinian restoration project." The only renovations made to the amphitheater of which I am aware were on the interior: the installation of a parapet wall in front of the first row of seats. The marble blocks of this wall were inscribed with the names of senators, which allows us to date the addition to the late third/early fourth century, but not necessarily to the reign (and certainly not to the impetus) of Constantine (Ada Gabucci, *Il Colosseo* [Milan: Electa, 1999], 179). It should also be noted that Wilson Jones leaves out a key piece of evidence for Constantine's program in the valley, namely, the aggrandizement of the Meta Sudans.
76. For the identifications of these badly worn figures, see L'Orange and von Gerkan, *Der Spätantike Bildschmuck*, 138–44. The figure of Sol in the niche on the left side of the west wall of the east forum is identifiable by his radiate crown, raised right hand, and globe. The figure of Constantine opposite him is identified by his military garb and by the Victory crowning his head (*ibid.*, 138–39).
77. L'Orange, "Sol Invictus Imperator," 335.
78. L'Orange, *ibid.*, 330–31, suggests that the iconography was based on a specific cult statue, possibly brought to Rome through the agency of Julia Domna (the wife of Septimius Severus), who was descended from priests of Baal in Emesa, Syria. This hypothesis is rejected by Hijmans, "The Sun Which Did Not Rise," 124, along with his broader rejection of an eastern origin for the Roman cult of the Sun. At any rate, there is no question that, for whatever reason, the raised right hand became an attribute of Sol in Roman representations from the late second century on.
79. L'Orange, "Sol Invictus Imperator," 340–41.
80. *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*, vol. 6, no. 1139: "quod instinctu divinitatis mentis / magnitudine cum exercitu suo / tam de tyranno quam de omni eius / factione uno tempore iustus / rem publicam ultus est armis. . . ."
81. This view was first articulated by G. De Rossi, "L'iscrizione dell'Arco trionfale di Costantino," *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 1 (1863): 57ff. More recently, see Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine*, 72; Hermann Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954), 225; Richard Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 131 n. 27; Leeb, *Konstantin und Christus*, 10; and R. Ross Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 19.
82. Averil Cameron, "Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*: The Construction of Constantine," in *Portraits: The Biographical Literature of the Empire*, ed. S. Swain and M. Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 145–74.
83. The edict also restores to Christians all of their previously seized property. The rescript was issued jointly in Constantine's and Licinius's names, even though the latter, Constantine's coruler in the eastern half of the empire, was not himself a Christian. The key sources are Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 48.2–12; and Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.5.2–14. For a recent discussion, see Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 193–98.
84. A point forcefully argued by Wallraff, *Christus versus Sol*; and idem, "Constantine's Devotion to the Sun."
85. Pliny, for example, frequently describes Trajan as Jupiter's chosen prefect on earth; Pliny, *Panegyric* 8.3, 10.4, 80.3. This relationship is graphically represented on the attic of the Arch of Trajan at Benevento, on which Jupiter appears to be handing his thunderbolt over to the emperor across the inscription panel. Similar sentiments are expressed in Statius, *Silvae* 4.3; see also Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.15.1; and Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 4.
86. Most recently on the imperial cult under Constantine, see Kayoko Tabata, "The Date and Setting of the Constantinian Inscription of Hispellum," *Studi Classici e Orientali* 45 (1997): 369–410.
87. On the postantique fortunes of the Colosseum Valley monuments, see Marlowe, "The Mutability of All Things." What follows are a few caveats and final thoughts about the reconstructions presented in this essay. The Auto Cad program with which they were generated does not handle round shapes with ease, hence the ungainly and unarticulated appearance of the Colosseum. The implausible cleanliness of these images is also potentially disturbing. The urban passageway that is the focus of this article was one of the most heavily trafficked in ancient

Rome, and yet we see no trace of human impact or presence, such as broken paving stones, carts, filth, strutting senators, supine beggars. I chose not to add any such figures or details, as they would no doubt have distracted from the focus of the image and come across as simplistic or silly. Without them, however, the reconstructions take on a disconcerting purity of form, recalling the totalitarian's utopia of an ideal, dehumanized, classical cityscape.

Also of concern is the misleading semblance of equal certainty among all the data included in a reconstruction image. There is no way visually to convey the fact that some of the information (for example, the height and appearance of the Arch of Constantine) is indisputable, empirical fact, whereas other pieces of the picture are based on careful deductions from solid, reliable evidence (such as the heights of the Meta Sudans or the Temple of Venus and Roma), and still others are derived from far more hypothetical calculations (the height and appearance of the colossus). Nor is there a way to illustrate the possibility that there may have been other structures in the area (along the

slopes of the Palatine, for example, or other triumphal arches along the road) of which we no longer have any trace. These uncertainties become particularly worrying when one considers the aura of objective science and infallibility that computer-generated models invariably acquire, particularly in the minds of students. By contrast, the human marks of the hand-drawn reconstruction sketch, such as those published in Diane G. Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), seem to advertise their subjectivity and are more readily understood to be the product of a single individual's imagination and best guesses, emendable in the face of new evidence.

Despite these many drawbacks, the reconstructions offered here are useful, I hope, for showing the proportional relations among the structures and, more generally, for aiding the visual imagination of the reader. I would emphasize, however, that they are intended not as an end in themselves, but rather as a means to consider larger historical questions.

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