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Hans-Peter L'Orange on Portraits and the Arch of Constantine: A Lasting Legacy

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Hans-Peter L'Orange on Portraits and the Arch of Constantine: A Lasting Legacy

In the world of scholarship Hans-Peter L'Orange will always be remembered for his study of the Arch of Constantine. He came to the Arch through portraits, however, and portraiture was the most enduring thread of his scholarship, from the inaugural *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts* of 1933 to *Das spätantike Herrscherbild*, posthumously published more than 50 years later in 1984.[1] To English-speaking readers he was perhaps better known for *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture* (1947) and *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship* (1953), although his most familiar work, at least in the U.S., was probably *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire* (1965; Norwegian original 1958), which was widely assigned to college students taking courses on late antiquity and the early middle ages.

Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts was the author's dissertation. Since there was no Norwegian Institute in Rome when he was a student, L'Orange found mentors of other nations. In his preface he thanks the director of the German Archaeological Institute, Ludwig Curtius; Axel Boëthius, the director of the Swedish Institute; and a number of other scholars, "especially" Guido von Kaschnitz-Weinberg and Armin von Gerkan, with whom he collaborated on the Arch of Constantine.[2] The influence of Kaschnitz is evident in L'Orange's assimilation of principles of *Strukturanalyse,* which was the cutting-edge art-historical theory of its day.[3] His use of the method was understated, but it transpires immediately from his opening paragraph:

> Characteristic of the art of the third century is the rapid succession of differently oriented trends sharply reacting to one another. Until the fourth decade of the third century the development of portraiture continued by and large in the direction of the preceding century; around the middle of the fourth decade a reaction came in, in the spirit of the old Roman realism; in the fifties came the counter-current, and the Roman portrait was renewed by Greek form; and the death of Gallienus [268] again con-

1 Torp 1985.
2 L'Orange 1933, "Vorwort".
3 Brendel 1979, 108-109; cf. Wood 2000, 40-41. On Brendel himself see Elsner 2004, xix-xxi.

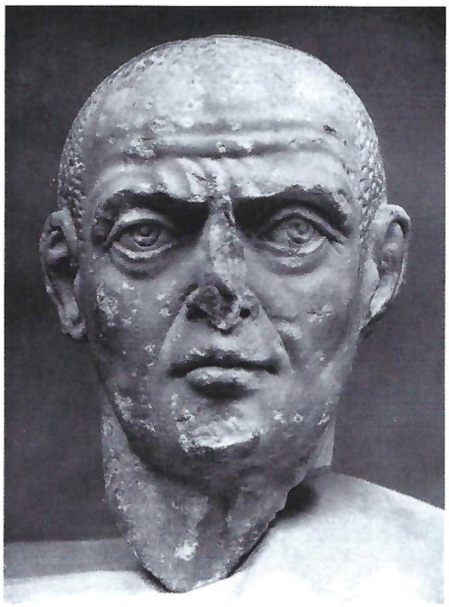

Fig. 1 – Head of a Man from a togate statue, late third century, Rome, Musei Capitolini (after L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts*, Abb. 68).

> cluded an era, after which new trends began. These movements quickly succeeding one another give clear witness of the almost experimental direction of the time, with its inner unrest, its groping and seeking; and yet despite their differences they were led by a common destiny toward a common goal.[4]

The conception of stylistic change as a progression of abstract, mutually influential trends or principles ("realism" and its opposite), the assumption that certain principles were innate to national groups ("Roman realism", "Greek form"), and the teleological construction of the history ("common destiny") all were inherited from Austrian and German scholarship of the preceding thirty years.[5] They were standard assumptions of the day. The innovation of *Strukturforschung* was to postulate an underlying sculptural form, distinct from the superficial treatment of physiognomy, that embodied the mode of perception peculiar to the time in which the work was made.[6] L'Orange's application of this theory is exemplified by his description of the head of a frowning man then in the Villa Doria Pamphili (FIG. 1):

> A striking characteristic of the portraits of this group is the frequently recurring restlessness of the structure (*Aufbau*), the nervous contractions and displacements of the musculature ... And yet this life occurs inside a façade; externally it clings to the block of the head-mass and so remains isolated on part of the physiognomic surface; it does not flow from a movemented and enlivened whole ... Asymmetry is neutralized as a

4 Translated from L'Orange 1933, 1.
5 Brendel 1979.
6 Ibid., 109-110.

> form of motion, consequently as a form of expression it no longer suggests a momentary physiognomic movement; solidified in this manner, it acquires a new spiritual value, it turns into an inner, more painful and incurable distortion, an insurmountable splitting and splintering of the soul.[7]

Strukturanalyse was quickly tainted by its alignment with Nazi ideology in the writings of its most prominent exponent, Hans Sedlmayr, and it never attained credibility on its own terms outside a relatively small circle of devotés.[8] Writing in the *Art Bulletin* in 1936, Meyer Schapiro judged the work of its practitioners to be "relatively poor in positive historical conclusions and rich in ingenious but unverified insights and in vague assertions"; "sketchy, clever, unsystematic, and full of original aperçus and 'belletristic' characterizations".[9] L'Orange's application of the method was thus doomed to pass out of favor, but it achieved a significant advance. Reviewing his book in the *Burlington Magazine*, David Talbot Rice praised it as "a valuable addition to our literature on later Roman and early Byzantine sculpture, for his detailed analysis ... permits a far more accurate dating than has heretofore been possible... His researches show that accurate results can be arrived at from the study of style..."[10] In fact, despite a decisive turn away from the kind of analysis on which it is based, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts* is still the authority for the dating of many portraits. When his original chronology has been revised it is sometimes the work of L'Orange himself, who continued to refine his conclusions over the course of his long career.[11]

Among the most long-lasting contributions of L'Orange's first book on portraiture is the publication and analysis of the recarved heads in the second-century roundels and frieze segments on the Arch of Constantine. Working from a scaffold erected by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in 1931, with funding from the Norwegian Nansenstiftung, he was able to observe the heads with unprecedented precision.[12] The photographs made during this and a later campaign are still available from the DAI's remarkable and indispensable Fotothek (FIGS. 2, 3).[13] The recarved heads – portraits of Hadrian and Trajan made over to be images of Constantine and a companion – turned out to be critical to L'Orange's chronology because they are exactly dated (312-315) and include the earliest certain portraits of Constantine in stone. In them L'Orange saw the very birth of the Constantinian image – itself a triumphant *Reichsporträt*, unifying the innate formal tendencies of East and West – at a moment when the old tetrarchic type was still in use.[14] Youthful, idealized, clean-shaven, with wavy but still well-reg-

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7 Translated from L'Orange 1933, 31. On the same head, now in the Capitoline Museums, see Bergmann 1977, 140-141.

8 Wood 2000, esp. 11-14, 32-43.

9 Schapiro 1936 (2000), 457, 459.

10 Talbot Rice 1934.

11 For an example of his self-revision see Kiilerich 1993, 104-105.

12 L'Orange 1933, 47 n. 1; 127-129; L'Orange 1939, III; Aavitsland 1999, 64-71.

13 http://www.dainst.org/index.php?id=7003; accessed 18-VIII-2010.

14 L'Orange 1933, 45: "das konstantinischen Porträt des konstantinischen Reiches".

Fig. 2 – Head of Constantine (Hadrian) in the roundel of the Boar Hunt, Arch of Constantine, Rome, 313-315 (after L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts*, Abb. 120).

ulated hair, this type of Constantine (FIG. 2) was simultaneously the fulfillment of the late tetrarchic tendencies represented by the two recarved portraits that he identified as Licinius (FIG. 3), and the dawn of a "new classicism oriented toward Augustus," a tectonic naturalism that constituted "classicism in the Roman sense."[15] Finding the same synthesis of tetrarchic tectonics and Augustan idealization in a few other portraits, L'Orange classified these examples as the "earlier" type of Constantinian portrait, which was succeeded after the founding of Constantinople in 324 by a late group represented by the two colossal heads in Rome (FIGS. 4, 5) and a marble head in the Metropolitan Museum. The later type was distinguished by a different hardness in the outlines of the features and a new, "icon-like" intensification of the expression, mostly by means of the exaggerated, wide-open eyes.[16]

The understanding of style as the product of autonomous tendencies in representation – realism, classicism or hellenism, "iconic" rigidity or abstraction – lived on in Roman and early medieval art history, receiving its definitive articulation in Ernst Kitzinger's classic *Byzantine Art in the Making* of 1977.[17] It is still a staple of the discourse, even among those who nominally reject it, but it is no longer taken for granted. Even as Kitzinger was writing, the lack of agency ascribed to artists or craftsmen by such a model, and its detachment from the

15 Ibid. 56-57. The identification of Licinius was subsequently contested; Rohmann 1998 defends it.

16 Ibid. 63-64.

17 Kitzinger 1977; cf. Kinney 1982, Kitzinger 1982.

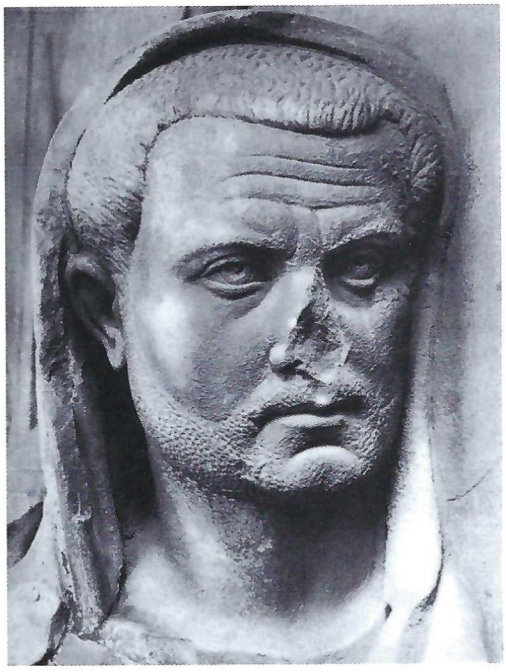

Fig. 3 – Head of Licinius(?) in the roundel of the Sacrifice to Apollo, Arch of Constantine, Rome, 313-315 (after L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts*, Abb. 129).

concrete historical conditions of patronage, production, use, and spectatorship, were beginning to seem irritatingly out-of-touch. In 1985, in a review of several new books on Roman portraiture, R.R.R. Smith derided the "picture which conceives the surviving portraits as set out on a single notional line, punctuated by emperors, of which the only dimension is time", calling it "misleading and a distortion of the reality".[18] By then it was more acceptable to speak of portraits as a means of "self-representation" of the sitter, and to treat differing styles of representation as options from which sitters and artists were able to make purposeful selections. Consonant with the "linguistic turn" in art history as in other disciplines, style was being reconceived as a conscious and voluntary form of language, albeit with unconscious and involuntary complications. Tonio Hölscher's treatise on Roman art as a rhetorical or "semantic" system was published in 1987. According to Jaś Elsner, his approach "breathed new life into a kind of art history many have left for dead".[19]

Long before such critiques were current, L'Orange himself expounded the deliberate constructedness of certain kinds of portraits in *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture*, which was written in Norway during the Nazi occupation and published in 1947. In some respects this book constitutes a departure from the stylistic analysis of the 1933 *Studien*, as it focuses on significant motifs – the luxu-

18 Smith 1985, 213; similarly and even more vehemently Smith 1997, 176.

19 Hölscher 1987; Hölscher 2004; Elsner 2004, xv.

Fig. 4 – Marble Head of Constantine, 313-337, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori (photo: Kinney).

riant mane of hair and enlarged, upward-directed eyes – rather than form as conveyors of meaning, but it is still predicated on the belief that works of art are expressions of collective psychologies, often oppositionally ascribed to East and West. Thus "the Hellenistic Saviour-Type invades Rome" in the first century BCE, bringing with it "the whole world of ideas that it represented".[20] In the following century renditions of the "Imperial Saviour-Type" are said to depict either the "functionary" ("constitutional") Western conception of the emperor or the "transfigured" god-emperor of the East.[21] Constantine took up the formula of the transfigured visage – only in the second, post-324 "iconlike" type of portrait (FIG. 4) – as "the typical expression of inner contact between the emperor and the heavenly powers", but it was also by then a "soul-picture", "a profoundly expressive psychic formula" in a sense ascribed to von Kaschnitz-Weinberg.[22]

20 L'Orange 1947, 49.
21 Ibid. 54
22 Ibid. 93, 97.

Fig. 5 – Bronze Head of Constantine, 313-337, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori (photo: Kinney).

Relying on the writings on beauty of Plotinus (d. 270 CE), L'Orange argued that the upward-turning eyes of late antiquity formed a "transcendental gaze" that passed into Christian imagery as the expression of spiritual beauty or holiness.[23] One of his most striking examples of this phase is the dramatically elongated and simplified head known as "Eutropius" in Vienna (FIG. 6):

> The large, mask-like lineaments of the face have been charged with expression: it is as if the soul, in these lineaments, has been released from its physical integuments to hover, like an abstract picture of the inner man, in front of the block. This soul-portrait is dominated by its gaze. The eyes, eyelids and raised brows are set off by converging lines repeating one another in widening oscillations, enhancing the intensity of the gaze. The shape of the face shows a τύπος ἱερός of the time: the sacred rectangularity of the god-like man.[24]

23 Ibid. 95-110.

24 Ibid. 104.

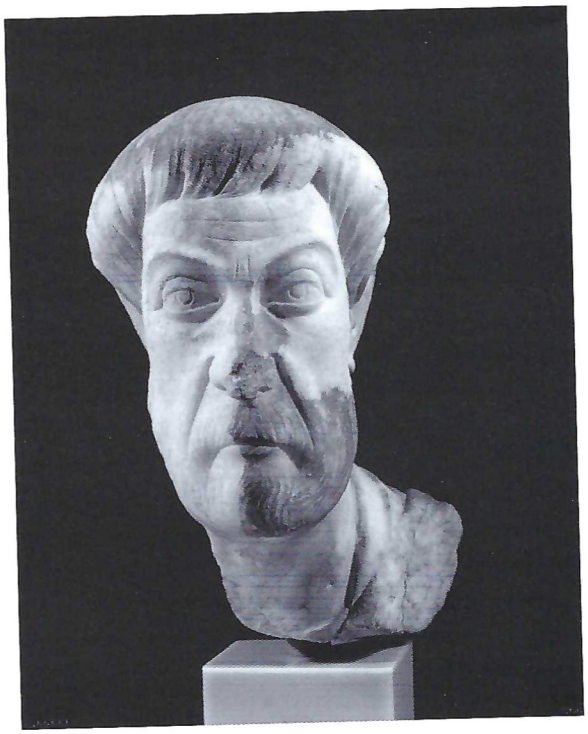

Fig. 6 – Marble Head of a Man from Ephesus (so-called "Eutropius"), fifth century, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY).

In the more pragmatic approach of R.R.R. Smith, upturned eyes are not the expression of an inward state of being, but a deliberate attempt to represent the "imperial gleam", the extraordinary vision and foresight characteristic of great rulers, which is a trope of late antique panegyrics. Imitated in non-imperial portraits, the over-sized eyes continued to denote "a claim to see more than others", "a claim to superior powers [that was] made on behalf of most figures of authority of whatever kind".[25] "Perhaps the most striking and period-specific aspect of many late antique portraits", exaggerated eyes were a "sudden" innovation of the tetrarchy that was adopted in Constantine's portraits with modified associations. Eyes were formulas that – in concert with other features – "allowed contemporaries to visualize different moral, cultural, and political agendas".[26]

Smith's account of the eyes forms part of a thorough reconsideration and redating of an unusual "fat-faced" portrait first published by L'Orange in 1933 (FIG. 7). L'Orange assigned it "with express reservation" to the period of Theodosius and Honorius at the end of the fourth century.[27] Later scholars placed it in the mid-fifth century and it had been tentatively identified as Marcian (450-457). Dismissing all such stylistic attributions as inconclusive, Smith reasoned

25 Smith 1997, 198-199.
26 Ibid. 171.
27 L'Orange 1933, 75, 144 Kat. Nr. 105.

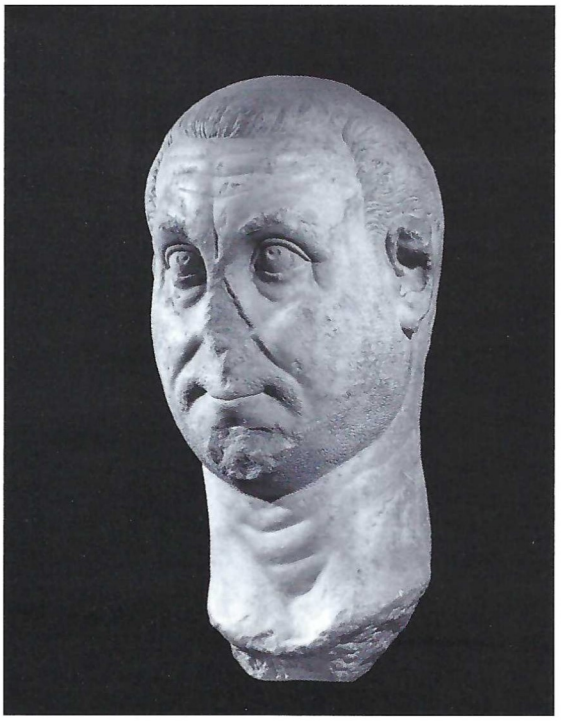

Fig. 7 – Marble Head of a Man from Ephesus ("Licinius"), fourth century, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY).

from a combination of circumstance (find-spot, existence of a replica), iconography (lack of a diadem), iconology (the values encoded in corpulence), comparison with third- and fourth-century conventions of imperial portraiture and panegyric, and a sense of fit with a particular historical context that the portrait matches the "physiognomical agenda" of Licinius (308-324):

> It was a personal dynastic style, a basically tetrarchic portrait with strong personal individuation ... an oppositional and reactive style ... in a sense a physiognomical inversion of Constantius' portrait, that is, it is energetic and tetrarchic in style, but fat-faced instead of lean-faced in identifying physiognomy. It may then be set beside the main type employed by Constantine in the period between 310 and 324: the thin-faced, handsome, Augustan youth versus the sturdy, corpulent old general.[28]

With respect to L'Orange and his tradition, Smith's redating of the portrait head by a century is less significant than the assumptions on which it is based. The postmodern demystification of art-objects into utterances that are at once ad hoc (responding to the needs of the occasion) and predetermined (constructed from the menu of conventions in use in any given moment and milieu) does not entertain intrinsic formal meanings and "expressive psychic formula[s]". This change in outlook

28 Smith 1997, 191.

Fig. 8 – Arch of Constantine, Rome, 313-315 (photo: Richard Brilliant).

is generational, and separates my own late teachers (men like Peter von Blanckenhagen and Hugo Buchthal) from the scholars whose work excites my students.

Were he alive today, L'Orange might engage with equanimity the proposition that the "procession of style-phases ... third-century realism, Gallienic renaissance, tetrarchic abstraction, Constantinian classicism ... [is] essentially ahistorical" and should be supplanted by a wider spectrum of research and contextual analysis.[29] But he would find the pragmatic and secular approach to art profoundly uncongenial. He continued to believe that art forms embody an inner spiritual or psychological dimension and that they tangibly represent world-views; indeed, the force of this belief was one of the great strengths of his writing. It enabled a revolutionary interpretation of the Arch of Constantine, and it was a principal source of the appeal of a book like *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*, which departs from the observation of a "marked similarity between the way in which the late antique state was organized and the predominating types of composition in both the figurative art and the architecture of the period".[30]

The conviction that works of art and architecture are more than objects of aesthetic value – the criteria that doomed the Arch of Constantine – led L'Orange to one of his most enduring and influential contributions. His study of the Arch's figural decoration (*Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*), co-authored with Armin von Gerkan, was published six years after *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts* in 1939. Approaching this *Spolienbau* (FIGS. 8, 9) as a meaningful assemblage rather than a miscellany of new carvings and looted materials, L'Orange

29 Ibid. 202.

30 L'Orange 1965, v.

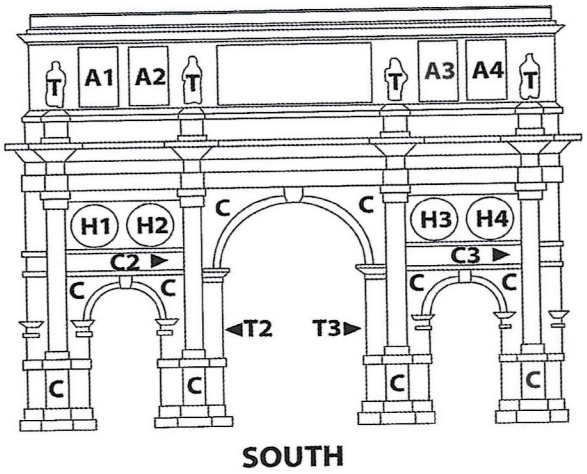

Fig. 9 – Arch of Constantine, diagram showing reused sculpture (Alfred Frazer, courtesy of Richard Brilliant).

found that its fourth- and second-century reliefs were woven together by "connecting threads" (*Verbindungslinien*) in a "network of reciprocal ... relationships" that constituted an intelligible fourth-century whole.[31] In reuse, the relief imagery originally depicting Trajan (98-117), Hadrian (117-138) and Marcus Aurelius (161-180) lost its connections to specific events in the past, to become "abstract state imagery" comprising generic emblems of imperial *virtus* and triumph.[32] Recontextualized by fourth-century roundels representing Sol and Luna, the medallions of Hadrian represent a "solar apotheosis" of Constantine and Licinius; seen high above the ceremonies depicted as historical events in the fourth-century friezes, the attic reliefs showing Marcus Aurelius in similar ceremonies appear as their abstract echoes; and through its framing inscriptions, the Trajanic battle frieze becomes the image of Constantine as Rome's saviour: Liberator of the City and Founder of Peace. Thus "the Constantinian thought-world assumes an organizing rôle throughout all of the reused figural reliefs, which in their new arrangement are radically reinterpreted according to the concepts of the new age and made to correspond with the late antique parts by means of new combinations of content and through reworkings that, while small, affect fundamentals. The thought-world of the Arch is uniformly Constantinian; conceptually the monument is of a single cast."[33]

L'Orange went on to ask, rhetorically, whether it was "an accident that major image-cycles of Trajan, of Hadrian, and of Marcus Aurelius specifically were used to represent Constantine and his co-regent?"[34] The answer, of course, was

31 L'Orange/von Gerkan 1939, 29.
32 Ibid. 169, 186.
33 Translated from L'Orange/von Gerkan 1939, 190-191.
34 Ibid. 191.

no, it was not an accident; L'Orange answered his own question with the proposal that the reused reliefs associated Constantine and Licinius precisely with these three second-century emperors and their "golden age". In other words, the recarved and reused reliefs were meant to depict Constantine and Licinius not just as themselves but as a "new Trajan", "new Hadrian", and "new Marcus".

L'Orange's interpretation of the Arch of Constantine was enormously productive not only for the understanding of that monument, but for the study of *spolia* in general.[35] His demonstration that reused works of art of disparate date, appearance, and meaning could be reprogrammed by selective juxtaposition, to become cogent expressions of a time and outlook distant from their own, remains a touchstone for the interpretive dimension of "*spolia* studies", now a ballooning field. This contribution will live on regardless of the fate of any more specific claims about the Arch. As for the latter, L'Orange's theory that the Arch was a programmatic unity that expressed contemporary ideas about Constantine's rulership is still the predominant interpretation, although few today would adduce a "Constantinian thought-world" to explain it. His idea that the reused second-century reliefs depicted Constantine in two capacities – as himself and as the avatar of three great predecessors – is more controversial. In his otherwise appreciative review of the book, Johannes Kollwitz objected that when the imperial portraits in the older reliefs were changed, "everything that permitted the ancient spectator to recognize them as monuments of those [past] emperors also changed".[36] Others found L'Orange's claim more persuasive, but recently Kollwitz's objection has resurfaced. Now L'Orange's idea has become a kind of laboratory for testing models of art historical interpretation, some derived from the same postmodern framework that produced the critique of his approach to portraiture, others more traditional, still others seeking to integrate new archaeological information.

As with the portraits, contemporary objections to L'Orange's interpretation center on agency, models of communication, and lack of historical context. The context is largely factual. For example, L'Orange relegated to a footnote the observation that "it ... seems reasonable to suppose that for the construction of the Arch of Constantine older monuments were directly robbed of their figural ornamentation".[37] He did not find it necessary to ask who might have done the robbing, which monuments were robbed, or what the act of robbing itself might have meant to a fourth-century viewer. Today the answers to such questions are all considered potential ingredients of any secondary meanings the *spolia* might have conveyed. Similarly, the assumption that the three despoiled emperors were self-evidently "good" ones was not verified. Paolo Liverani's review of fourth-century literary and numismatic sources showed that it is unfounded; except on the Arch, Constantine was never associated with Hadrian or Marcus Au-

35 Kollwitz 1942; Kinney 2006, 240.

36 Kollwitz 1942, 115.

37 L'Orange/von Gerkan 1939, 191 n. 1.

relius, and only "sporadically" with Trajan. The evocation of past emperors was not a tactic of Constantinian panegyric in general.[38]

The issue of communication is more theoretical. L'Orange's model of a "Constantinian thought-world" that wrought meaning in the Arch by investing it with "the concepts of the new age" delicately avoids ascribing intention, but it seems to assume that there could have been a unified message (Constantine brings back the Golden Age) that would have been uniformly understood. Semiotic theory suggests otherwise. There is always a gap between the author (speaker, writer, artist) of a message and its audience (auditor, reader, viewer). Expectations, context, and the conventionality of most communication help to bridge the gap, but even simple communications can go awry ("Way Out" signs in the London underground are not meant to amuse their audience, but American speakers of English find them hilarious). We understand messages more clearly the more they resemble messages we have heard before. In that respect L'Orange's characterization of the reused reliefs as generic, "abstract" images of imperial virtues that would have been recognizable as such to fourth-century viewers is perfectly compatible with the semiotic paradigm; less so, however, the proposition that the content of these same images was a specific statement about Constantine.

This problem was explored at length by Liverani in a brilliant article of 2004. Drawing on semiotic theory, Liverani categorized the reused second-century reliefs as stereotypes that fulfilled the viewer's expectations of a certain kind of honorific monument. Like the verbal *topoi* of written panegyric, they are a hypercodification that identifies the nature of the building, announcing "this is a triumphal arch". Because the images were strictly conventional, the viewer would not have sought, and therefore would not have perceived in them any specific, historical meaning. Even if he knew the identity of the emperors originally depicted in the reliefs and could see that their heads had been recarved, he would not have been inclined to see them as simultaneous representations of two different historical people (e.g., Trajan and Constantine). Historical information was clearly contained in the fourth-century friezes; the reused reliefs operated in a different register.[39]

Liverani's model of communication is complex. Unlike most modern interpreters, who tend to write as if the author of the Arch were Constantine himself, he follows the dedicatory inscription in ascribing its authorship to the senate.[40] With this in mind the Arch may be said to participate in a "triangulation" of communication, in which the senate speaks *before* the emperor, *of* the emperor *to* the people, in the manner of a spoken panegyric. To understand the content of the communication we must take all points of the triangle into account. It is not enough to read the mind of the author, as in the traditional intentional interpretation; we

38 Liverani 2004, 394-396.

39 Some of these points already were made in a different framework by Jucker 1983. On the role of the fourth-century friezes see further Pace 2004, 210-213.

40 Marlowe uses the term "Constantinian designers", but this still puts the agency with Constantine: Marlowe 2006, 224.

must also consider how the communication was or would have been received, and what messages were generated inadvertently by circumstantial factors. Reuse was one such circumstantial factor, but Liverani found that it did not have any particular weight in the early fourth century; it was a neutral practice, neither ideologically valorized, as it would be later under Theoderic, nor deplored.

Patrizio Pensabene's essay in the *Acta* of the Norwegian Institute of 2006 exemplifies the conservative pole of the debate, which retains as much of L'Orange's interpretation as is consistent with the latest information, and resists its problematic implications.[41] Pensabene maintains that reuse was inevitable in the early fourth century, when no new marble was available, but he denies that any ornament was taken from standing buildings, arguing that the urban prefect, who probably supplied the materials, would have found it in warehouses of salvaged or unused pieces. The pieces were deliberately chosen to illustrate the virtues of Constantine, not specifically as "novus Traianus" etc. but as generically represented by the "good emperors" of an earlier age. It was the intention of the patron – again, the senate – to show Constantine as one among this line of good emperors; and for interpreters, according to Pensabene, it is the intention of the patron that "counts".[42]

Most recently, Siri Sande's excellent summation of the debate identifies the key points at issue: the nature of the audience and the effect of reuse on audience perception.[43] She calls for greater nuance in our construction of the audience, which must have ranged from sophisticated senators to the *plebs*, with a concomitant range in the complexity of messages that might have been received. She stresses the determining role of context: such factors as the retrospective design of the Arch; its careful siting in relation to other monuments; the performance of its construction, including the taking and resetting of its reused imagery, all would have influenced (often deliberately) how the Arch was received. On the other hand, like Liverani and Pensabene, Sande maintains that the fact of reuse itself would have garnered little notice, because the reworking of older images, including imperial portraits, was already commonplace by the fourth century. She closes with a caution against any uniform reading of *spolia*: some connote the past (their own or a more generic one) when they are reused; others are cleansed of it by recontextualization.

Because of my own interest in *spolia*, I find this last point worth further consideration. Whether or not their provenance is remembered, *spolia* clothe their secondary bearer with the aura of another time or place of origin; they are a form of disguise. The famous bust of Commodus in the Capitoline Museums, "Commodo sotto le spoglie di Ercole" (FIG. 10) – though not itself a *spolium* – illustrates the *spolia*-effect. The word "spoglie" in the museum label has three meanings: (1) a hide stripped from an animal (the original meaning of *spolium*);

41 Pensabene 2006.

42 Ibid. 140.

43 Sande 2012. I am grateful to Siri Sande for providing me with a pre-publication copy of her article.

Fig. 10 – Commodus in the Guise of Hercules, 180-192, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori (photo: Kinney).

(2) a trophy taken from the Nemean lion by Hercules; and (3) the guise of (*sotto le spoglie di*) Hercules, which Commodus adopts by donning the hide. By appropriating the lion's skin for Commodus, the portrait also appropriates its history – Hercules' heroic wresting of the skin from the indomitable lion – and thereby invests the human likeness with god-like power and virtue.

Such images can backfire. Photographs of the U.S. president George W. Bush wearing a military flight suit after landing on an aircraft carrier in 2003 were intended to depict the president as the valorous commander of a military action in Iraq. A portion of the American public must have responded positively to this message, but a vociferous segment was outraged, and the images became a source of ridicule and a rallying point for political opposition.[44] The picture of "George W. Bush in the guise of a military hero" was rich in meaning and communicative potential, but not entirely on its own terms. The target audience turned out to be too small to dictate the reception of the image, and unanticipated responses took it in unforeseen (and doubtless unwelcome) directions.

Irreverent responses to the public imagery of political and military leaders were hardly possible when Hans-Peter L'Orange worked out his interpretation of the Arch of Constantine. Hitler visited Rome in 1938. A propaganda machine churned out pictures of single-minded adulation and obedience. The theory that images can undo themselves by generating counter-messages and meanings beyond the author's intention or control is the product of a very different environment, the post-autocratic West of the second half of the twentieth century. We are fortunate to live in the aftermath of that environment; but L'Orange's experience in the 1930s may have been closer to that of fourth-century Romans. An inability or unwillingness to deconstruct a calculated image would be as revealing of the Constantinian thought-world as the opposite. Further research into responses to authority in late antique Rome may illuminate this issue. In any case, the duplicity of *spolia* is a topic that has not yet been exhausted.

Nor do *spolia* exhaust the subject of reuse. Reuse is a capacious field of which *spolia* form a particular domain, comprising those objects purposefully taken, which remain recognizable in their new context and, as noted, carry an aura of otherness. Other forms of reuse might transform or even obliterate the original, as when marble statues were burned for lime, inscription stones were reused in pavements, and portraits were recarved with new features. Given his attention to the *Aufbau*, or underlying structure of sculptured portraits, L'Orange was oddly inattentive to recarving. He treated the recut heads on the Arch of Constantine no differently than heads he believed to have been newly made, characterizing the "new classicism" of the Constantinian portraits as an autonomous fourth-century development. The last trend I will briefly discuss makes that position impossible.

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44 A Google search for images of "Bush flight suit" still turns up many merciless parodies.

Already in 1983, Hans Jucker demonstrated that the colossal marble head (FIG. 4) shows extensive evidence of repair and recarving. He proposed that it originated as part of a statue of Maxentius, which was either waiting to be installed in his new Basilica or already in position when Constantine appropriated the building as his own foundation.[45] Cécile Evers subsequently claimed that the original head was actually a portrait of Hadrian, and that its ears and mouth are unchanged Hadrianic features.[46] Eric Varner argued for Maxentius, insisting that "the portrait retains Maxentius' wide, arching brows and large eyes ... [the mouth's] original Maxentian shape and receding lower lip" and "the cleft chin [which] is seen in unmodified portraits of Maxentius, but not generally in Constantine's".[47] For our purposes the original identity, date and style of the portrait are less important than the general agreement that whatever they are, they are not Constantinian. This head of "Constantine" is neither entirely the result of a fourth-century stylistic movement nor entirely the product of a "physiognomical agenda" such as Smith argued for the head of "Licinius". Both of these factors were probably in play, but ultimately the colossal marble portrait is a palimpsest: an overwritten original, in which the older substrate resurfaces and interrupts the later text.

Jucker observed that fourth-century artisans were highly skilled at reworking older portraits because it was a widely-practiced craft: "the quantity of third-century portrait heads that are still recognizably palimpsests is astoundingly large".[48] A younger generation of scholars has taken up the study of these recut heads and of the practice of recarving itself, and we now know that recarving was, indeed, normal practice, and not only in late antiquity.[49] The implications of this knowledge have not yet been fully worked out. In an article of 2006, Marina Prusac boldly suggested that the back-and-forth patterns of style traced by L'Orange among third-century portraits might be the result of recarving, and even that the canonical "classicisms" associated with the reigns of Gallienus (253-268) and Theodosius (379-395) were only reflections of the originals from which the portraits of those eras were recarved.[50] She also demonstrated four different methods for recarving portraits, citing as an example of the first method (memorably dubbed the "bandit type") the head of "Licinius" in Vienna (FIG. 7):

> [This] type is recognized by the shape of the heads. These portraits have no protruding facial features; it is as if the individuals represented have stockings over their heads, like bandits. These compact heads are ovoid, and the nose and ears are in low profile, almost not breaking the surface. The profile is shortened, the hairline high, and the facial features are centralized around the bridge of the nose. The mouth is vaguely smiling, giving a gentle look. The eyes are large and almond-shaped, with bags under-

45 Jucker 1983, 51-57.
46 Evers 1991.
47 Varner 2000, 14.
48 Jucker 1983, 59.
49 E.g., Varner 2004; Prusac 2006; Hannestad 2007.
50 Prusac 2006, 112-115, 126-128.

Fig. 11 – Diagram showing "Eutropius" recarved from a head of Zeno (after Prusac, "Re-carving Roman Portraits: Background and Methods", *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia n.s. 6, 20* [2006] 125 Fig. 16).

> neath. The pupils are bean-shaped, and the gaze looks upwards ... The head is inclined backwards.[51]

Another method of reworking is exemplified by the "soul-portrait" of "Eutropius" (FIG. 6), which, according to Prusac, owes its distinctive outline to the fact that it was recut from the head of a bearded philosopher, possibly Zeno (FIG. 11):

> The portraits [of this type] have beards, but they must have been made from portraits with even longer beards... [They] have long faces because the new chins are where the beard used to be. The faces are slender because the original ears and hair-locks with deeper drill-holes than the beard had to be removed. The eyes are wide, stretched upwards and outwards to fill the broad space that ... is a result of this method.[52]

Prusac's observations remain to be verified – and to judge from the disagreements over the original of the colossal Constantine, the specifics of individual cases will be challenged – yet the principle that reuse dictates form can hardly

51 Ibid. 117-118.

52 Ibid. 121.

be denied. Future models of the history of portraiture in late antiquity will have to be built around the possibility, or perhaps even the probability, of reuse. That seems to be the direction of the future.

It is a very different path from L'Orange's. Juxtaposing his poetic description of "Eutropius" to Prusac's more empirical and prosaic one gives the measure of how things have changed in 60 years. To some scholars the change is a great relief, while others may feel a sense of loss. L'Orange's beautiful *ekphraseis* can still inspire if we accept them as parallel creations to the objects he described, rather than objective accounts of them. They encode a desire to possess the object by assimilating it to the discourse of the interpreter's own time. In that respect his work on portraiture never will go out of style.

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