THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND VISUAL POLITICS:
THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
COMPARING THE SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF CONSTANTINE AND AUGUSTUS

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> Augustus primus primus est huius auctor imperii,
> et in eius nomen omnes velut quadam adoptione
> aut iure hereditario succedimus.
> The first Augustus was the first founder of
> this empire, and to his name we all succeed,
> either by some form of adoption or by
> hereditary claim.
> (Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Alexander Severus 10.4)

I begin with political history. To understand what happened after the Battle of Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312 AD and how the new political order of theempire was constituted I start with the question: What does Constantinian artsay about imperial politics in the aftermath of the year 312 CE? This article addresses this question at the intersection of art, politics, and ideology, comparing Constantine's visual self-representation with that of the first emperor, Augustus. The visual image Constantine created incorporated a variegated mixture of messages that echoed contemporary trends in the equally complex eulogistic writing.

It all began with the Constantinian Arch in Rome. Constantine had just overcome the army of the usurper Maxentius and captured Rome. Maxentius died disgracefully and his head was paraded in triumphal procession exhibited to the populace of Rome, his military forces – the equites singulares and Praetorian Guard – were dissolved, and his memory was obliterated. In the exultation of victory, the time was ripe for Constantinian revenge, yet the Roman senators, the very aristocrats who had supported Maxentius, retained their offices. Like young Octavian, who chose to exercise the politics of clementia towards supporters of Mark Antony after his Actian victory, Constantine sought to maintain good relations with the most influential members among the senatorial aristocrats. At that time he appeared to be a glorious winner over the common enemy and as such received the triumph traditionally granted by the senate. What is more, around 315 AD the emperor also received a commemorative monument from the senate, the triumphal Arch; Constantine's defeat of his enemy was therefore put in the context of previous famous imperial victories.

Having liberated Rome from the rule of a tyrant, in terms reminiscent of the claims of Augustus expressed in the Res Gestae three and a half centuries earlier, Constantine evoked his ideological "father", the founder of the empire Octavian, the future Augustus, had received a triumphal arch from the senate in the Roman Forum about 29 BCE, after the naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The Roman revolution of Augustus was paralleled in the Roman revolution of Constantine: An empire at peace with itself was founded on the forgetting of civil conflict.

Constantine reigned longer then any of the emperors had since the forty-five years of Augustus, who had created the imperial system three centuries earlier. For twenty-three of the thirty years of his reign, Constantine ruled as a Christian, the first ever to sit in Augustus' place. Resembling the first Roman emperor, Constantine launched an enormous urban building program and spread imperial images all over the empire.

Evoking a comparative perspective, Constantinian art can be assessed on a large scale in its relation to earlier imperial imagery, apart from specifically Christian affiliations. However, approaching Constantinian visual politics, the samples of approximately fifty surviving sculptural portraits of Constantine pose limitations when contrasted to the samples of two hundred and twelve preserved portraits of Augustus.

Eusebius and the Theology of Augustus

Focusing on the structural correspondence between the realm of the divine and the empire, the domain of politics – following the original Schmittian construct of political theology – Erik Peterson has dealt with an ancient version of political theology that consisted of an ideological correlation of political structure and religious belief system: One God and one emperor on earth. In the Christian version after the conversion of Constantine, this construct served the same purpose as previous polytheist theories on kingship had; it legitimated a monarchical government by authorizing the belief that a single divine power is the ultimate source of political rule. It demonstrated a particular affinity for theologies that emphasized the subordinate character of the Logos (Word) to God the Father.

With Melito of Sardis and Origen, a link between the establishment of the Augustan Pax Romana and the birth of Christ became a topos. With Eusebius, who historicized

and politicized Origen's ideas, one encounters firstly a typological parallel connecting Augustus with Constantine (not really conveyable by quotation), the moment of imperial foundation with its ultimate accomplishment through which both Augustus and Christ were finally manifested in the person of the first Christian emperor, Constantine. For Eusebius, in principle, monotheism – the metaphysical corollary of the Roman Empire – began with Augustus, but had become reality in the present under Constantine. When Constantine defeated Licinius, Augustan political order was reestablished and at the same time the divine monarchy was secured. Eusebius asserts that Augustus inaugurated monotheism by triumphing over the polyarchy, the cause of endless wars, and Constantine only fulfilled what Augustus had begun. The political idea that the Roman Empire did not lose its metaphysical character when it shifted from polytheism to monotheism, because monotheism already potentially existed with Augustus, was linked with the rhetorical-political idea that Augustus was aforeshadowing of Constantine.
Peterson has emphasized the "exegetical tact" – a "striking lack" of which he found in Eusebius – that kept all other ecclesiastical writers from binding the empire so closely to God's intentions that it would appear to be less an instrument and more the object of divine blessing for its own sake. At stake in this open political struggle was that, if monotheism, the concept of the divine monarchy in the sense in which Eusebius had formulated it, was theologically untenable, then so too was the continuity of the Roman Empire, and Constantine could no longer be recognized as the fulfiller of what had begun in principle with Augustus, and so the unity of the empire itself was threatened.

Actium and the Milvian Bridge as Sites of Civil War

Constantine's commemoration of the victory over his political rival referred to the first and paradigmatic one in the imperial context, evoking the Augustan victory over Mark Antony that constituted a precedent for Constantine. Like Maxentius, Mark Antony suffered sanctions against his memory soon after his suicide in Egypt; before victorious Octavian returned to Rome, the senate had ordered the erasure of Antony's name along with the names of all his ancestors. This severe action did not meet with Octavian's approval, however. Exercising clementia Caesaris, both Octavian and Constantine forgave political opponents their previous loyalties to the losing side. By the very proclamation of clemency and amnesty they strove to forget, officially and institutionally, that there were two parties and the winners themselves solicited the forgetting by making equal both those who were on their side and those – no longer dangerous – who were not.
Ordered by the senate, born of a negative sentiment of repentance after Maxentius' defeat, the Arch of Constantine did not glorify a splendid foreign victory, but a civil war between Roman armies, radically different from most, if not all, of its precursors. Hence, the only related monument was Octavian's commemorative series of Actian arches, and, in particular, the Arch in the Forum Romanum that mirrored the Augustan politics of memory and forgetting. One of the monuments honoring Actium, which Octavian dedicated to Neptune and Mars in Nikopolis with a celebratory inscription and ornamentation in the form of spoils of war – the prows and warship rams of Antony's fleet – was erected in 29 BCE near the very site of the battle. Another one was the Actian arch in the Roman Forum recorded on the coin reverses of 29–27 BCE.
What unites early Augustan and Constantinian monuments is the idea of inception; through momentous victories both cemented, first and foremost, their positions as rulers, and, at the same time, the conquest was presented to the populace of Rome as one over a despot (Antony), a foreign queen (Cleopatra), and a tyrant (Maxentius). This version of negation also concerns the positive content of memory in relation to a military victory. In other words, the triumphant one hesitates between not – or never – evoking an enemy who must be forgottenand exploiting a procedure for commemorating his own military achievement. Yet he could emphasize the negation as such. Negation resulted in an official decree of forgetting; the case of Mark Antony after his defeat in 31 BCE was the first example of the "sanctions against memory," thus, as with the striking resurrection of the practice in the early fourth century, Maxentius became one of the first victims of the damnatio memoriae decree.

To Remember and Forget in Rome: A Founding Forgetting

A panegyrist praises Constantine by referring to Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, implicitly evoking the Pax Augusta. The laudatory inscription on the Arch of Constantine thanks the emperor for having saved the state from a tyrant and his faction in a way that linked a number of Augustus' accomplishments: ending civil wars, restoring peace, and returning power to the senate and the Roman people. The Constantinian inscription – reminiscent of Augustus' Res Gestae – claims to have taken revenge over the tyrant, stopped the factio, and saved the city. Alluding to the founder of the Augustan

Peace, the inscription characterizes Constantine's accomplishments by calling him liberator urbis and fundator quietis. It is not surprising that the Christian Lactantius eulogized Constantine for his unification of the empire, the "illegitimate" division of which during the period of tetrarchy is considered to be against God's will.

It was only later that Eusebius fully adopted the traditional language of the panegyrists and the ideas that stemmed from the rhetoric. Symptomatically – appearing as a "curious accident" entirely in a Sherlock Holmesian sense of the term – there is but a single explicit literary parallel to the growing resemblance of Constantine to Augustus over time, which, on the contrary, is wholly visible in representational art.

In turn, Maxentius' massive architectural program aiming to restore Rome to her former glory as the capital of the empire was appropriated by Constantine, who in fact did not launch an architectural damnatio memoriae, destruction of the buildings of his ill-fated predecessor. After Augustus' demise, the buildings of the first emperor became emblematic of the Golden Age he had inaugurated, and restoring or rebuilding one of them constituted a visible act of alignment with his memory: Maxentius thus deliberately publicized his affiliation to the "founder of the city," Augustus, the new Romulus-Quirinus. The resonant message of Maxentius' building campaign – that Rome had been saved and reborn – was ideologically significant enough to ensure Constantine's unreserved expropriation of it. A quick walk through Maxentian Rome would have included his major building projects (appropriated by Constantine together with the disfigured andre-carved portraits of his defeated enemy) – the basilica, the circus complex on the Via Appia, the imperial baths on the Quirinal. In effect, in an intricate play of metaphors, Constantine, the expander of the city, reappeared as a new Augustus, the pater urbis of Rome.

The Revenue of Remembering: The Evocative Power of spolia

Once again, forgetting was the foundation of the Pax Constantiniana; traces of the internal war were quickly erased and replaced metaphorically. While the re-use of sculpture and architectural elements formerly belonging to the defeated rival was triumphant in character (as such related to the spoils of victory and thus reminders of the conflict), the treatment of spolia in the Constantinian politics of memory appears revivalist. Whether in opposition or affinity, Constantine bound himself with the symbolic capital of its owners through spolia. It was not by chance that in a series of alignments and juxtapositions he associated himself with the victorious emperors of the second century – expanders of the empire – appropriating Trajanic, Hadrianic, and Aurelianic reliefs. Moreover, the civil war panels of the Constantinian monument – the only representation of internal stasis in imperial art – included representations of great victories over barbarians, and metaphorically equated abominable domestic conflict with the prestigious foreign campaigns of the Roman army in a single narrative.

Jaś Elsner has suggested a structural parallel between the aesthetics of spoliation, e.g., Constantine's Arch, and the cult of Christian relics exemplified in his Constantinopolitan mausoleum. The mausoleum rotunda bears are semblance to mausoleums of the age of the tetrarchy, themselves referring to an Augustan precedent. Although, Eusebius explains, Constantine had consecrated the building to the Saviour's apostles, he himself intended to be buried there, to place his tomb in the midst of the "cenothaphs" of the twelve apostles so that his soul would benefit from the prayers that would be addressed to them.

Thus, the late antique practice of using spolia structurally paralleled (if it was not genealogically related to) the use of polytheist trophies and, later, Christian relics like those kept in the celebrated statue and its pedestal in the Forum Constantini, the monument that later acquired symbolic status far above that of any other non-Christian monument in Constantinople. One of the famous spolia the Palladion, an ancient guardian statue of the armed Pallas Athena, associated first with Troy and its fortunes and later with Rome and its destiny, is reported to have stood under the porphyry column Constantine brought from Rome. Similarly, the largest collection of heroic statuary appropriated for Constantinople, around three dozen in all, placed in the Baths of Zeuxippos, were linked to the Trojan epic. The vision of Roman origins articulated by Virgil in the Augustan age still retained its currency in the Constantinian era.

If, looking for the possible location of his new city, as is clear from fifth-century commentaries on the foundation written by Zosimos and Sozomen, Constantine had chosen Ilion, there could be little doubt that the empire would have eventually reenacted its primary Augustan model. The first Roman emperor was known for his foundation of a new Ilium city on the alleged site of Troy. Constantine's foundation thereafter, itself an appeal to Augustus, would have been grounded in the reality of its mythical origin.

An Embarrassing Triumph: Augustus and Constantine as triumphatores

From the day of Constantine's entry into Rome in triumph on 29 October 312 CE, one parallel with Augustan times seems indisputable. His battle resembled the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE in two fundamental respects. As Timothy Barneshas phrased it, first, both battles started with an awareness of a foregone result, for Constantine could have been defeated by Maxentius no more then Octavian could have been crushed by Mark Antony, and, second, both conflicts provided a foundation myth for the victor to transform the Roman state and its ideology. Both succeeded in a discursive alteration of their internal enemy into a foreign one. Augustus himself and the Augustan poets intentionally portrayed the campaign of Actium as a war waged by a united Italy against an Egyptian queen and her Oriental allies together with the Roman renegade, Mark Antony, reinforcing it with cultural opposition by presenting the conflict between Octavian and his adversaries a match between "our Roman Jupiter" and "barking Anubis."

Constantine denied that his defeated rival was the son of the legitimate tetrarch Maximian and forced Maximian's widow to confess in public that she had conceived Maxentius in adultery with a Syrian. Remarkably similar to Augustus' transformation of Mark Antony into the ideological figure of an eastern tyrant, Constantine, in the guise of a legitimate defender of the Roman people, presented Maxentius as a tyrannus.

When Constantine entered Rome, his arrival was conducted and perceived as a triumph, even if in the form of urban adventus. Roman emperors never celebrated triumphs over foes in a civil war; in August 29 BCE Octavian held triumphs on three successive days which officially commemorated his victories over the Dalmatae, the defeat of Cleopatra, and the conquest of Egypt. Although Roman forces marched into the city in times of civil war, they had never been forced to besiege the sacred Urbs Roma. His seizure of Rome was simultaneous with the construction of the enemy within the imaginary discourse. The degree to which art and ceremonies were used by both sides to foster this discourse in the popular imagination is striking.

Octavian's naval victory was commemorated by founding the city of Nikopolis in Epiros, beautified with a triumphal arch. Similarly, in 324 CE, Constantine founded Constantinople in commemoration of his victory over Licinius. The great Constantinian project of founding the city, viewed from the perspective of a visual strategy that developed over three decades, paralleled the Augustan exploitation of imagery. Along with a collection of statuary, Constantine brought a bronze statue of the Ass and Keeper from Nikopolis to Constantinople, a monument of Octavian's victory at Actium.

Like Augustus, Constantine was repudiating a system of power-sharing in favor of the more traditional apparatus of the Principate, a mode of rule defined by Augustus himself. One of the monuments Constantine imported from Rome was an imperial portrait of Emperor Augustus himself, which would have invited advantageous comparison. The statue of Augustus would even have pushed the equation back in time to imply similarity not only between Constantine and Augustus as rulers, but also between the Principate and the Constantinian Empire.

Circus and Palace

As much as the triumph staged political harmony by eliminating conflict, the ritual of circus games enacted social consent. Meeting eye-to-eye with the populus Romanus at the circus, Augustus firmly recognized it as an emperor's duty to attend the games and when unable to be present he sent his apologies (petitia venia) to avoid offence. Like Caesar, he used to watch games from the pulvinar, in a way constructing the shrine as an imperial box that allowed for his divine recognition. In Constantinople it was the kathisma where the emperor appeared in his full splendor before the public at the races, a box reminiscent of the pulvinar, the couch of the gods at the Circus Maximus at Rome.

The circuses' spina was frequently adorned with obelisks, and if one can believe Pliny the Elder, the earliest obelisk had been installed on the euripus of the Circus Maximus on Augustus' orders after the annexation of Egypt following his victory at Actium. Constantine enlarged the circus eastwards and his son bestowed an obelisk on it to match that of Augustus, still standing in Constantius' times. Although it is possible that Constantine had already planned to remove the Theban (Lateran) obelisk before 324 CE, the obelisk would have been the most appropriate gift on the occasion of his twentieth anniversary visit to Rome in 326 CE. The obelisk would have been seen by the senatorial establishment as a pagan monument in the balance to the imperially-funded church-building program. It would therefore have been an offering to the capital from the newly re-conquered East, for the unique single obelisk (a major cult-object, previously the focus of its own small temple) could stand for the empire's unity under a single ruler. According to Ammianus, Augustus, who beautified

Rome with other obelisks, left it untouched for religious reasons.
Yet Constantine, as Ammianus continues shifting his focus from Augustus, "rightly thought that he was committing no sacrilege if he took this marvel from one temple and consecrated it at Rome, that is to say, in the temple of the whole world." As Ammianus points out, it was a solar symbol, and inscriptions confirm that Augustus dedicated his obelisks in the Circus Maximus and the Campus Martius to Sol. Egyptian obelisks with a pyramidal tip covered in gold glorified the sun, as the likeness of Apollo-Helios extolled Constantine on top of the porphyry column, another immense task of transportation from Egypt to Constantinople that he had embarked upon.
Intending to move the obelisk which Augustus had not moved, planning to place it in proximity to the existing Augustan obelisk of the Circus Maximus in Rome, Constantine launched a project that surpassed the height of the monolith Augustus had acquired, aggrandizing his sole rule enunciated after civil wars. Although he never acquired a genuine Egyptian obelisk, Constantine adorned the central barrier of Constantinople's hippodrome with one built of masonry.
The Chronicon Paschale, the Chronicle of Malalas, and the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai describe the ceremonial procession at the hippodrome on the occasion of the encaenia of Constantinople on 11 May 330 CE. Recalling the pompa circensis of Caesar and early Augustan Rome, Constantine's gilded statue with the Tyche of his new city in its right hand and, probably, the radiate crown, was transported on a wagon from the starting gates of the hippodrome to a point opposite the imperial box. After that, Constantine appeared wearing a diadem and presided over chariot races. Augustus did not dare to follow Caesar's precedent of displaying his own statue in a chariot in the procession of deities, but his keen interest in the pompa is demonstrated by Suetonius. The parading statue of the departing Constantine suggests that he was claiming to be a presens deus, the concept behind the ruler cult in the Greek East that had been articulated in Rome by Augustus' time. The panegyrist of 310 AD refers to Constantine as the praesentissimus hic deus, this most manifest god.
The spatial context of the hippodrome in Constantinople, remarkably similar to every one in all the tetrarchic capitals, included an adjacent palace directly connected to the imperial box by a stairway, evidently in direct imitation of the Domus Augustana/Circus Maximus complex in Rome. Malalas reports that Constantine completed the Severan hippodrome and built a kathisma like that in Rome for the emperor to watch races, and also built a large palace, closely patterned on that in Rome, near hippodrome, with a staircase leading from the palace to the kathisma. The author emphasizes that Constantine followed the pattern of Rome twice, once in the construction of the kathisma and once in linking it with the palace.

Consecratio

The ritual of consecratio, the funeral ceremony and apotheosis of deceased emperors from Augustus in 14 AD to Constantine in 337 AD – the mostp roblematic for Christian ideology – was a re-enactment of the elevation of the departed to heaven and his divinization. As rare examples of well attested imperial funerals, the consecrationes of Augustus and Constantine are remarkably parallel, for the latter partially followed a model provided by the former.
Both emperors died outside of their residential capitals. After the death of Constantine the ceremonial began with a military procession that carried the mortal remains to Constantinople, where the body, crowned and in imperial robes, was displayed in the palace. As in the case of Augustus in 14 CE, the official deification of Constantine, the last emperor for whom consecration coins were struck, came immediately after the funeral, but the ceremonial was transformed for the burial. Imperial funerals traditionally included ritualized deification of the emperor by staging a pompa funebris, which, for Augustus, was said to have included almost the whole population of Rome. Eusebius portrays scenes of lamentation evoking the iconography of the apotheosis, noting that the people and senateof Rome dedicated an image to Constantine with him seated above the heavenly vault, and describing a coin type chosen by Constantius II. It had a veiled effigy of the dead emperor on the obverse and him driving a quadriga up to heaven, from which the hand of God emerges, on the reverse. Gilbert Dagron has stressedthat Christianization allowed the Classical image of the imperial consecratio to be re-employed.
Augustus' funeral was designed by the emperor himself, who left instructions for the senate to follow. Similarly, Constantine initiated the building of his own mausoleum. The mausoleum-rotunda, as Cyril Mango has discovered, resembled tetrarchic imperial mausolea. It has been also assumed that the sarcophagus in which the remains of Constantine's mother, Helena, were placed had been confiscated from the mausoleum of Maxentius, for whom it was originally made.
Constantine was buried in a holy place of apostles, inaugurated the cult of relics initiated by the Roman Arch with its abundant spolia. The circular mausoleum of Augustus on the Campus Martius, the ultimate prototype for later imperial mausolea,

was one component of a tripatrite complex that also consisted of the Ara Pacis and Horologium, which also used Augustus' commemorative scheme and references to the Actian victory. Just as Augustus inaugurated the empire with his victory in civil war, so too did Constantine, who began the empire anew, establishing a new residential capital, palace, and burial place. The Constantinian mausoleum paralleled the message of the Augustan one as a dynastic monument, but also as a foundation of a new imperial line that had succeeded the original line of Augustus.

Sculpture: Memory in Marble and Bronze

The Constantinian reorganization of imperial portraiture was instituted in consequence of the civil war against Maxentius and affiliated with an Augustan figure. Although it lost continuity with the tetrarchic representation, Constantine's representation became a battleground for the different politics of memory. Iconography confirms that the emperor was aware of the advantages of representing himself in Rome in the fashion of a princeps, a soldier, but a civilian at the same time, and images of Augustus served as a model for Constantinian portraits.

At least one marble head has been securely identified as a portrait of Augustus re-utilized to represent Constantine. The iconography of this colossal head from Bolsena suggests a date for the re-carving due to its similarity with the emperor's figure in reliefs on the Constantinian Arch. As soon as his quinquennalia of 311 AD a new portrait type was defined for Constantine. David Wright has outlined the basic iconography of the Constantinian portrait: A youthful face with a broad forehead and prominent cheekbones that give the upper part of his face a rectangular character. This is complemented by strongly modeled facial muscles flanking the nose, mouth, and chin, and by a jaw-bone that expands outward slightly at the back of the jaw, giving a clear-cut articulation between jaw and neck. The image, in form and certainly in meaning, was modeled on the tall, lean-faced, and youthful-looking portraits of Augustus.

More than a dozen surviving versions of this basic type that follows Augustus' iconography embody diversity in the new clean-shaven image. One example is a colossal marble statue of Constantine that once occupied the west apse of the Basilica of Maxentius on the Forum Romanum, the other is a large marble head displayed in the Palazzo Mattei in Rome. After Licinius defeat in 324 AD and the seizure of the East, Constantine adopted the diadem and the heavenly-gazing Alexandrian type of representation, although the physiognomy retained an idealized youthful face with an aura of majesty developed on the basis of the Augustan model. It only changed into a heavier and old-age style of portraiture around 333 CE.

Coinage as a Medium of Commemoration

After a short period of conventional tetrarchic iconography on his first goldcoins, coin portraits of Constantine struck as early as 306-307 AD with the title "Caesar" abandoned the military image and defined a new one of a beardless young caesar, appropriate for Constantine's political expectations of accession after 306 CE. Rare gold and almost equally rare silver coins of high artisticq uality from Trier suggest different stylistic developments. The type established at the Trier mint during the first months of Constantine's reign were perpetuated – with some interruptions late in 307 AD when he assumed the title Augustus – for nearly three decades with only slight modifications.

With Maxentius' defeat in 312 CE, the mints in Rome and Ostia, along with Ticinum (Pavia), began to strike coins for Constantine. Maxentius at the mint of Ostia and Constantine at Ticinum had equally experimented with thin-faced frontal heads resembling the lean-faced Augustan style. The type was modified to introduce more facial subtleties and became the standard Augustan portrait of Constantine. One can assess Augustan iconography on the famous medallion of 313 AD that featured Constantine in a double profile portrait with Sol and on frontal coin portraits of 316 CE.

After his final victory over Licinius, Constantine remained represented as a young ruler. About 324 AD he adopted the diadem of Alexander and his heaven-gazing pose with strong evocations of divine kingship for special issues of coins. The Constantinian portrait remained the heroic Augustan type that had been standardized a dozen years earlier; similar coins were struck in 324-325 AD at Thessalonica, Sirmium, and Ticinum. However, from circa 326 AD a new type was launched into circulation that eventually prevailed in the 330s CE. This type absorbed a placid Augustan tranquility yet kept the diadem. That Augustus was a model for Constantine (Fig. 1) is made explicit by a series of silver medallions minted late in Constantine's reign (336-337 CE) carrying the legend "AVGVSTVS" and "CAESAR" in direct imitation of Augustan coins produced three hundred years earlier.

Conclusion

The ideological discourse of the Constantinian empire was construed in remarkable resemblance to the Augustan one. Both the polytheist and Christian narratives placed the reign of Constantine in a typological relationship with that of the founder of the empire. Constantine appeared to re-enact the actions of his ultimate predecessor by putting an end to civil discontent and inaugurating peace anew, completing the work initiated by Augustus. The impulse toward typological thought and the desire to use this mode of interpretation that arose in the fourth century AD led Constantinian writers to see events that showed the way to the Augustan foundation of the empire as those that prefigured or foreshadowed political events in the time of Constantine. While the Christian texts are preoccupied with reconciling the Roman emperorship and salvation history, making Constantine the first Christian emperor and the liberating agent of divine providence through a typological link with Augustus, under whose reign Christ deliberately chose to be born, the polytheist panegyrics figurally interpret Constantinian rule as a return or indeed renewal of the Golden Age, referring to Virgil's Fourth Eclogue.

The visual narratives addressed the typological functions of the emperor insofar as Constantine was portrayed as a new Augustus, as a founder of a city and dynasty, and ultimately, as an architect of a new empire. Constantine's visual politics thus stood in striking parallel to the program of Augustan classicizing iconography, imagining a Constantinian likeness typologically. Constantine thus adopted a youthful and handsome clean-shaven portrait image from an Augustan model. The cohesion and integrity of the empires of Augustus and Constantine were therefore preceded by devastating internal strife which they subdued. All this suggests a parallel: whereas Octavian had established order and unity by putting an end to the dying republic, the Pax Constantiniana was constituted due to the final disintegration of a quarrelsome tetrarchic arrangement. In this respect, Augustus became the primary model for the iconography in for the Constantinian image that was worked out after his victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 CE. Although after the decisive defeat of the last Constantinian rival, Licinuis, in 324 CE, the typological focus shifted to Alexander the Great, it did not replace the Augustan iconography, now imbued with the divine attributes of Hellenistic kingship. The media of sculpture and coinage clearly show an increasing tendency to introduce elements from the royal iconography into the primary Augustan visual scheme first adopted by Constantine.

Within the typological scheme inherent in both polytheist and Christian textual narratives, Augustus functioned as a forerunner of Constantine, while, at the same time, the latter is iconographically represented in visual narratives closely modeled on Augustan sculpted and coin portraiture that similarly celebrated the all-mighty triumphant emperor of the unified state. Every beholder of Constantinian imagery was thus exposed to the power of this bewildering ideological combination of intricately connected imperial image-making, Augustan visual allusion, and historical reference to contemporary Roman political concerns.

See
https://www.academia.edu/40288763/_The_Politics_of_Memory_and_Visual_Politics_Comparing_the_Self_representations_of_Constantine_and_Augustus