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Time, History, and Ritual on the Ara Pacis Augustae

Peter J. Holliday

Studies of the Ara Pacis and similar public Roman monuments traditionally address the potent political symbolism of their decorative programs, and emphasize dynastic and other imperial policies. It is suggested here that the Altar's imagery of the Golden Age, usually discussed as mere poetic allusion, actually appealed to a significant component of the Roman populace. The program of the Ara Pacis addressed this group's very real fears of cyclical history, and promised that the rule of Augustus would avert the cataclysmic destruction of the world predicted by contemporary models of historical thought.

Ancient Romans were obsessed with history. Fearful of the potential chaos effected by the random actions of men, the Romans sought to make all events fit into a comprehensible, cosmic pattern of history. The analysis of significant events and their identification within a restricted repertoire of typologies, therefore, became a fundamental intellectual task during the turbulent Republican period, a task that neatly accounted for troubling phenomena.¹ History imposed order. This extraordinary process pervades Roman literature and art, and recognition of this historiographical habit can clarify many of the questions they pose. For example, why do monuments like the Ara Pacis have scenes commemorating historical events combined with scenes from myth or legend? Why did Roman artists freely combine seemingly contrasting stylistic and iconographic traditions on the same monument?

The Cyclical Conception of Time
To comprehend the Roman obsession with history and understand its unusual manifestations in the visual arts, it is first necessary to appreciate a conception of history prevalent in Classical antiquity. Just as there is no single geometry that must be applied to space, so there is no unique intuition of time that is common to all mankind; various civilizations have assigned different degrees of significance both to the temporal mode of existence and to the importance of its perspective.² In Classical historical thought, though, the dominant concern was with the process of change. Research into the distant past forced Greek and Roman historians to consider the relative antiquity of foreign cultures, a crucial factor for the emergence of ideas about the rise and fall of empires. Beginning with the investigations of the Greeks, historians wrote of past glories for which there was real, physical evidence. Imperial rise and fall were interpreted as a manifestation of recurring, cyclical configurations such as growth and decay, mutable fortune, or regular heavenly influence upon human affairs.³ In such cyclical conceptions of time, particular deeds and events lose their singularity and fall into recognizable configurations that appear again and again. The order of the past thereby illuminates not only the present, but future occurrences as well.⁴

Several times in the course of their own history, moreover, the Romans underwent the terror of an imminent end to their city.⁵ It was commonly believed that the longevity of Rome had been determined at the very moment of its foundation by Romulus, and, at every historical crisis, even sophisticated Romans returned obsessively to two crepuscular myths. First, they feared that the life of the city was ending, its duration limited to a certain number of years:

¹ The historical writings of Q. Fabius Pictor (fl. 225 B.C.) and M. Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.) justified Rome's place in the world during a period of territorial expansion. Against the backdrop of long civil wars, C. Sallustius Crispus (ca. 86-34 B.C.) and M. Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) explored the moral challenges facing Romans racked by violent political and social upheaval, reflecting the anxiety and turbulence of the late Republic. Significantly, in the works of T. Livius (59 B.C.-A.D. 17), who began writing history after the Battle of Actium, the cynicism and despair of the previous generation gave way to a new sense of security: "Augustus Caesar brought peace by land and sea to the world" (1.19.3).

² For a recent survey of comparative views of time from prehistory to the present, see Whitrow.

³ Trompf, 60-61; for discussion of Greek recurrence paradigms, see A. Momigliano, "Tradition and the Classical Historian," History and Theory, xi, 1972, esp. 284, 286, and 291.

⁴ "Since Fate was the power that kept order in the universe, as revealed particularly by the stars and planets, the prevalence of Stoicism influenced the growing belief in astrology in Hellenistic times and in the days of the Roman empire. The cyclical nature of events was regarded by many thinkers as inevitable, because it was thought that otherwise they would be deprived on both 'rationality' and 'legality';" Whitrow, 48.

⁵ The issues summarized here are eloquently presented by Eliade, 130-137; see also M. Sordi, "L'idea di crisi di e rinnovamento nella concezione romano-etrusca della storia," Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, i, 2, 1972, 781-793.
the “mystic number” revealed by the twelve eagles seen by
Romulus.

And, as the sun
Its golden orb upraised, twelve sacred birds
Flew down from heaven and betook themselves
To stations set apart for goody signs.
Then Romulus perceived that he had gained
A throne whose source and prop was augury.

Ennius, *Annals*, frags. 96-100

Secondly, many Romans believed that the conclusion of the “Great Year,” which marked the end of a cosmic cycle, would put an end to all history, and hence to that of Rome, through a universal catastrophe: the cycle would end with a fiery cataclysm, or *ekpyrosis*. (Briefly, the Great Year is the period required for the sun, moon, and planets to return to the positions they originally held at a given time in the past.) For Heraclitus, the Great Year signified the period of the world from its formation to its destruction and rebirth; according to his teachings, the universe sprang from fire and will end in fire, a periodical *ekpyrosis* putting an end to the universe in order to purify it. The idea was probably transmitted from Iran, where it originated.

In Rome, Stoic philosophers conflated myths about the mystic number and Great Year. They taught that when the heavenly bodies returned at fixed intervals of time to the positions they had at the beginning of the world, there would be a complete destruction of the universe, followed by a restoration of everything just as it had been before, when the entire cycle would begin again. Yet down to a very late period, Roman history itself revealed the baselessness of these fears, and, slowly, a hope took hold that the transition from one age to another could be effected without universal destruction. One hundred and twenty years after the traditional founding of Rome, it became apparent that the twelve eagles seen by Romulus did not signify 120 years of historical life for the city. After the passage of 365 years, Romans realized that there was no question of a Great Year composed of twelve-month days; rather, they supposed that Rome had been granted another kind of Great Year, one in which each century in the life of the city equalled a month. Similarly, in the middle of the first century B.C., the Etruscan soothsayer Vettius declared that the twelve eagles meant that Rome would last for twelve *saecula*, or periods of a hundred years. But such hopes were always mingled with anxiety. Each time historical events approached a catastrophic rhythm, the Romans again believed that the Great Year was on the point of ending and that Rome was on the eve of her fall. Following the Gallic invasions in the fourth century B.C., many Romans feared that their capital would be moved to Veii, and during the later wars with Antony and Cleopatra, to Alexandria. When Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the polymath Nigidius Figulus foresaw the beginning of a cosmic and historical drama that threatened the destruction of Rome. Yet he did not believe that cataclysm was inevitable, and hoped instead that a renewal was possible.

The periodic renewal of the world (*metacosmēsis*) was a favorite doctrine of Neo-Pythagorean teachings, which, along with Stoicism, dominated Roman thought in the second and first centuries B.C. Unlike the Stoics, the Pythagoreans refrained from postulating any cosmic conflagration, and took recurrence to happen within one continuous historical order. Various concepts of cyclical temporality, especially those based on such Neo-Pythagorean philosophy, impressed themselves on Roman minds toward the end of the Republican period. Cicero, for example, wrote

6 Laeva volavit avis, simul aureus exoritur sol.
Cedunt de caelo ter quartuor corpora sancta
avium, praepetibus sese pulchrisque locis dant.
Conspicit inde sibi data Romulus esse proprio
timorium regni stabilita scamna solumque.
For additional sources for Romulus and the auspices of the twelve eagles, see Livy 1.6; Plutarch, *Romulus* 10; and Dionysius of Halikarnassos 1.87.
7 Trompf, 62; Whitrow, 42-43.
8 Heraclitus, frag. 22 (Diels-Kranz): Empedocles, frags. 115, 118, 121 (Diels-Kranz).
9 Seneca, *Nat. Quaest*. 3.29.1, mentioned the work of the late Babylonian astronomer-priest Berossus (ca. 300 B.C.), who believed in the periodic destruction and re-creation of the universe. See also Plato, *Timeaues* 22d and 22e, the latter describing the deluge referred to by the priest of Sais; Chrysippus, frags. 623-627; and Zeno, frags. 98 and 109. For a discussion of the Oriental connection, including possible Chaldean origins for some of these concepts and also a discussion of Babylonian influences in Plato’s *Politics*, see J. Bidez, *Eos ou Platon et l’Orient*, Brussels, 1945.
10 Cf. Whitrow, 43, 48, 59. Although it was the ethical system of Stoicism that dominated the later Imperial period, its theoretical speculations appealed to a sophisticated audience during the late Republic; cf. P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire. Economy, Society and Culture*, Berkeley, 1987, 179, 182; on the moral appeal of Stoicism in the Empire, see S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, Berkeley, 1977, 109-111. This Stoic conception of cosmological recurrence, through the complete destruction and subsequent re-creation of the universe, should be distinguished from historical recurrence involving only the repetition of a general pattern of political and social events, held by such writers as the Greek historian Polybius; cf. Whitrow, 43; Trompf, 60-115, and *passim*.
11 Eliade, 134.
12 Censorinus, *De die natali* 17. J. Hubaux analyzed the difficulties and uncertainties that the Romans faced in calculating the potential life of their city: *Les Grands Mythes de Rome*, Paris, 1945; see also Sordi (as in n. 5), who emphasizes the influence of Etruscan beliefs on later Roman conceptions of cyclical history.
13 Sordi (as in n. 5), 789-791.
14 Lucan, *Pharsalia* 639, 642-645; Carcopino, 147. Nigidius Figulus (100-45 B.C.), an active follower of Pythagoras, was a close friend of Cicero, whose own fears for the astral predestination of Rome are reflected in *Re pub. 6.1*. It is doubtful that the majority of the Roman populace shared any immediate concerns about temporality; however, such speculations did preoccupy a highly literate and sophisticated elite during the Republican and Imperial periods.
References to Temporality and Eternity on the Ara Pacis

Scholarly discussion of the Ara Pacis has tended to concentrate on the purely political symbolism of its sculptural program. However, problems basic to representing the historical event in relation to the continuum of history underlie many of the thematic and artistic choices represented in the Altar. Accordingly, the Ara Pacis will be analyzed here as an intricate architectural and sculptural allegory, a metaphor for the nature of the transitory moment in relation to larger cycles of time. The emphasis on the reliefs as a depiction of two kinds of coexistent time, crossing into one another in religious ritual, will help account for the Altar’s extraordinary combination of legendary scenes and symbolic images with representations of actual events; it will also elucidate the contrasting sculptural traditions found in those reliefs. Finally, attention to Neo-Pythagorean thought and its importance during the Augustan period will illuminate the significance of Roman ritual, both in actuality and in artistic representation, as an attempt to transcend the limits of profane space and time.

The Ara Pacis was built to commemorate Augustus’s victorious return to Rome from Spain and Gaul in 13 B.C. Following Augustus’s adventus, but before July 4, the day of the altar’s constitutio, the Senate decreed that an altar of Pax Augustae be erected. It took sculptors three and a half years to complete the monument, which was dedicated on 30 January 9 B.C. These two events, foundation and dedication, were commemorated in sacrifices held annually at the Ara Pacis: the constitutio of July 4, and the dedicatio of January 30. Ovid described the ceremony celebrated on January 30: “Add incense, ye priests, to the flames that burn on the altar of Peace, let a white victim fall with cloven brow under the blow and ask of the gods, who lend a favoring ear to pious prayers, that the House [of Augustus] which is the warranty of peace, with peace may last forever” (Fasti 1.719-722).

The Ara Pacis stood on the eastern edge of the Campus Martius on the Via Flaminia, outside the Augustan city boundary, the sacred pomarium. Essentially, the structure consisted of a raised sacrificial altar surrounded by precinct walls. Two doorways along the central axis opened into

18 Cicero used cyclical language loosely and appealed to more popular, less restrictive models of recurrence; cf. Trompf, 180-181.
14 On the attempts by Augustus to address freedmen through his artistic programs, see Kleiner (as in n. 20). On the intellectual and political achievements of some freedmen, see S. Treggiari, Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic, Oxford, 1969, 110-161.
The sacred precinct, whose main entrance was from the Campus Martius on the west, with (in antiquity) a flight of nine steps to reach the doorway (Fig. 1). The second entrance was to the east on the Via Flaminia, the road taken by Augustus when he entered Rome in 13 B.C. (Fig. 2); this doorway could be reached from ground level, as the terrain sloped up toward the street. Religious processions probably approached the Ara Pacis from the city along the Via Flamina, and circled around the precinct to reach the main entrance, an action suggested by the bifurcated processional panels on the north and south sides. At the conclusion of the rites, the participants then exited toward Rome.

The reliefs on the interior, private side of the precinct walls represent the customary provisional boarding of the templum at the constitutio: its form recalls the four anguli (corner pillars) and the wood tabulae of the traditional aural tabernaculum (Fig. 3). A frieze of classicizing lotus motifs crowns the lath fence, above whose simple vertical slats hang twelve garlands of fruit, miraculously rich and full. No one garland is exactly the same as another, yet they all adhere to a basic artistic scheme. And although precedents for such decorative motifs can be found in the Hellenistic East, the combination of both summer and winter fruits, wild and cultivated, with their foliage, is handled in a way that can be described as uniquely Augustan. The swags are attached with fluttering ribbons to bucrania. These skulls, with the sacrificial plates (paterae) placed above each garland, are appropriate to the sacred character of a feriatum space, and probably refer to the white cows traditionally offered as a sacrifice to the goddess Pax. And yet the garlands of fruit make a further reference to the seasonal round, the recurrent natural cycle. The alternation of bull's skulls with swags of fruit alludes to cycles of decay and regeneration, the opposite poles in the fearful Roman conception of temporality discussed above. Their number, twelve, further alludes to the passage of the twelve saecula, which would mark the conclusion of the Great Year and usher in a new Golden Age, the aurea aetas.

The scroll friezes that run along the base of the exterior, public side of the precinct walls correspond with the height of the interior wooden tabulae (Fig. 4). Like the garlands on the interior walls, the floral forms combine real and imaginary plant species, but here animated by small creatures and trumpeting swans, to evoke the fertility and prosperity of an earthly paradise. It is generally accepted that these friezes also have Hellenistic precedents, but are again made uniquely Roman, here through overt references to the wealth of the new Golden Age. It has often been noted that passages in Virgil's fourth Eclogue describe water lilies mixed with acanthus and grapes hanging from thorn bushes similar to those depicted on the friezes. The swans sacred to Apollo are also mentioned: Apollo was closely associated with the House of Augustus, under whose rule of peace the new aetas was to come. A well-known passage from Ovid's Fasti (1.709-722) also reflects many other motifs found in the scroll friezes: "Ipsum nos carmen deduxit Pacis ad aram," etc. However, the entire artistic program of the Ara Pacis, not just its floral ornamentation, indicates that Augustus's accomplishments were to be rendered eternal through their association with this sacred precinct.

The greater part of the sculptural program on the public face of the Ara Pacis consists of life-sized figural panels. Their densely packed forms seem to float above the sinuous rhythms of the slightly taller floral frieze, but all are locked together by the enfolding architectural elements. The processional reliefs on the long north and south walls allude to a historical event: the founding of the altar precinct following Augustus's return to Rome. It is this singular event, drawn from the realm of profane time, that the Ara Pacis commemorates and celebrates. The chronicle appears to consist of a record of the personages who attended those ceremonies in the ritual order of their procession. In giving...
1 Ara Pacis Augustae, west face: Lupercal and Aeneas sacrificing (all photos: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome)

2 Ara Pacis Augustae, east face: Tellus and Roma
this story a plot, the artists organized their material in order to emphasize two tendentious doctrines: first, the position and political rights of the Imperial Julian line, as distinct from the remainder of the Roman populace, and, second, the beneficent effects of the *Pax Augusta*, which is seen to emanate from the imperial family. These two elements represent the overt political philosophy of the monument, but they also overlay the thematics of time.

The program seeks to endow the historical event with mythic qualities by placing it in a series of metaphoric contexts. The schematic plan of the Ara Pacis indicates that of the thirty individual relief panels that form the sculptural program, only the panels on the north and south depict in a seemingly literal way the details of the procession (Fig. 5), while the remainder of the reliefs are figurative analogues providing a context for the primary event. The program has been summarized as one in which the procession incorporates an appropriate legendary past, brought into the living present under the aegis of an emblematic image, but all unified in a common enterprise (a ritual ceremony), a common achievement (the *Pax Augusta*), and a common expectation (an auspicious future).  

The processional reliefs specifically portray the *constitutio* of July 13 B.C. (Fig. 6). The *constitutio* included the *inauguratio*, in which the augurs recited the ritualistic formulae to free the site from the possible jurisdiction of any deity and to give it over to another god. The pontifices then consecrated the ground thus inaugurated. The completed structure or object at the inaugurated and consecrated site also required consecration, and this was usually followed by a dedication on the same day (for the Ara Pacis, the *dedicatio* of January 9 B.C.). As a representation of a precise historical moment during the principate of Augustus, these reliefs indicate the isolation of one significant event from a diachronic succession in time, and the formal structuring of the long sides emphasizes this temporal perspective. The primary motion is lateral. The processional figures scan the plane like so many columns following one another in a regularly punctuated rhythm; each element has its assigned position in the sequence. The clarity of the individual forms enhances the sense of calm and restraint of the figures. We see the procession in its context as a specific, but separated, event in the progression of time. And although an identifiable occasion is depicted, it is not

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32 It should be noted that Torelli, 43, has raised objections to this traditional view. Citing the presence of Agrrippa and the *flamen Dialis* (which I discuss below), he claims that there is no historicity in the *Ara Pacis* reliefs. Torelli’s significant contribution to our understanding of Roman commemorative art has been to compare monumental programs to analogous legal texts; his dependence on such sources, however, imposes strict criteria for “historicity” on the visual evocation of an event, ignoring the license taken in other Roman literary traditions, and he thereby loses the rich implications of Augustan narrative.
33 Pollini, 95-97.
The depiction of figures who may have been absent, however, lends another dimension of reality. Their presence creates a type of temporal projection pointing to events that either preceded or will follow the moments occupied by the current ceremony. Within the southern processional relief, for instance, are two references to the sequence of imperial dynastic succession. In the center of the procession, the artist depicts the mature Sextus Appuleius, the flamen Iulialis, the priest of the deified Julius Caesar (Fig. 7). He is one of the few significant personages to be placed in the rear plane of the relief, thus standing — literally and figuratively — behind the events at hand. Farther back in the procession, again, is a reference to the emperor’s heir apparent: the small boy who clutches Agrippa’s toga displays the features of Gaius Caesar (Fig. 8). Gaius was Agrippa’s son, and the elder grandson and adopted son of Augustus, chosen originally as the princeps’s successor. Thus the emperor is in close proximity to two figures who create a temporal configuration, a scheme that alludes to three generations of the Julian line. This scheme serves to emphasize the transient nature of the procession by placing it in the context of larger temporal processes.

Another specifically temporal reference is found in the figure of Marcus Vinsanius Agrippa, whose large and powerful form dominates the procession. Yet Agrippa died before the Ara Pacis was dedicated, although he was alive at the time of the constitutio. Agrippa’s almost iconic presence in this relief could only serve to emphasize his actual absence from the dedication for those viewers he had accompanied at the altar’s foundation. His sculptured presence here recalls the nature of biological time, symbolized by the garlands and bucrania on the interior of the precinct wall: the fact of life and its end in death, its brief flourishing and its passing.

Once the transient moment had passed, however, the Romans were not content to let the event remain as a unique historical occurrence. Instead, by imposing upon it one of

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35 In honor of his adoptive father, Augustus allowed this priest to walk with the flamines Maiores. On the identification of this figure, cf. Toynbee (as in n. 34), 83; Simon, 17; Pollini, 115-117; Torelli, 45-46; R. Syme, “Neglected Children on the Ara Pacis,” American Journal of Archaeology, lxxxviii, 1984, 588. Pollini has recently discussed the problem of whether the figure actually represents the elder or younger Sextus Appuleius (favoring the younger): “Athenbarbi, Appulei et Some Others on the Ara Pacis,” American Journal of Archaeology, xc, 1986, 456-460, including appendix.

36 On the identification of this figure, see E. Löwy, “Bemerkungen zur Ara Pacis,” Jahreshefte des Oesterreichischhen Archäologischen Instituts, xxvii, 1926, 60, n. 28; Moretti, 270-271; H. Kähler, “Die Ara Pacis und die augustische Friedensidee,” Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, lxix, 1954, 80-81; and Pollini, 105-106. More recently Pollini (as in n. 35), 453-454, has given up his identification of this figure as Gaius, whom he prefers to see in the tall, tunic-clad boy on the north frieze. Nevertheless, the fact that children were depicted in the procession demonstrates the importance of the next generation of the Julian line to maintaining Augustus’s policies. Also see Simon, 18, who argues that the youth represents a barbarian prince.

37 The youth’s distinctive attire (i.e., the tunic rather than toga, and the torque and thyrsigian cap) may allude to his participation in the Troy games in 13 B.C. According to Virgil (Aeneid 5.589), boys partaking in this “gymkhana” wore tunics and golden circlets about their necks. It should not be forgotten that these games had been founded by the Trojan prince Aeneas, whose son lulus had been the leader of the games at the tomb of Anchises, and that Gaius was a member of the gens Julia. On this allusion to the Troy games, yet another reference to Rome’s collateral legendary and historical pasts, see Moretti, 270-271; Kähler (as in n. 36), 80-81; and Pollini, 106-107.

38 Agrippa died in 12 B.C., early in the period of the altar’s construction. Simon, 17-18, also notes the poignance of his death, and describes the face of the young man in the background turned towards Agrippa as “sad and full of grief.”
a set number of typologies, they translated secular events into the world of myth.\textsuperscript{30} This, it would seem, is the central purpose of the legendary and allegorical scenes on the eastern and western faces of the Ara Pacis.

The panels flanking the western entrance to the precinct allude to the origo urbis of Rome and the origo gentis of the Julian line. To the north, artists depicted the Lupercal, the discovery of Romulus and Remus with the she-wolf by Mars and the shepherd Faustulus. To the south is the scrofa Lavinias, the sacrifice of the Lavinian sow by Aeneas to his family gods upon his arrival in Italy (Fig. 9). Both scenes represent foundations, actions from Rome's legendary history, which had been foretold in the even more distant past, but which only reached their fulfillment with the contemporary principate of Augustus. There are also strong structural parallels between the two compositions. The discov-

\textsuperscript{30} In this regard, I must disagree with those Virgilian scholars who argue that typological constructs are primarily biblical. For example, see D. Thompson, "Allegory and Typology in the Aeneid," \textit{Arethusa}, \textbf{11}, 1970, 147-153, who describes the Romans, except for the "Hebraic" Virgil, as concerned only with the here and now in history. Rather, as I suggest here, typological systems of thought were fairly common among the educated Romans.
ery of an animal dominates the center of each, and indicates the primal initia of uniquely Roman institutions: the she-wolf of the urbs itself, and the sow of the gens Iulia (which are further personified by the twins and by Julius). Mars pater and Aeneas pater officiate at a locus sacer — analogous to the sacred precinct of the Ara Pacis — indicated by the fig tree (ficus Ruminalis) and the temple of the Penates. The presence of the augural litui in the gable of the aedes Penatium on the Aeneas panel underscores the augural significance of these two scenes, both prophesied in the past and pointing toward the future.

Personifications of Roma (to the north) and Tellus (to the south, Fig. 10) flank the eastern door. As with the panels on the western face, the Roma and Tellus reliefs are symmetrical in composition and meaning. Thus the program sets up a series of complementary correspondences: the mythic image of Rome is related to the scene of her initia, while the Tellus panel describes the pax terra marique parta established through the efforts of the Julian line.

The reliefs on the southern sections of the Ara Pacis are

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40 See the careful analysis by Torelli, 37-39. In addition, Zanker, 204, suggests that the ashlar-block temple of the Penates depicted on the Ara Pacis referred to Rome’s new aera templum. As indicated here, such multiple associations working on a deep level were a hallmark of Augustan propaganda.

41 Pollini, 128-130.

42 This was also the legal formula for declaring peace, which allowed the closing of the doors of Janus Quirinus as a sign of peace: cf. Res Gestae 13, and Livy 1.19.3 (as in n. 1). A. Momigliano, “The Peace of the Ara Pacis,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, v. 1942, 228-231; Torelli, 41.
the best preserved. A closer analysis of their allied iconographies will illuminate the temporal implications of both these specific panels and those of the complex as a whole. The fundamental relationship between the imperial procession and the scene of Aeneas sacrificing the sow is typological. Because Augustus is a direct descendent of Aeneas, the same set of household deities guards each of them. Augustus’s religious observances on his safe return home, a return to those same household gods, responds to and completes the pietas of Aeneas’s primeval sacrifice to the Penates upon his safe landing in Latium, an association underscored by the similar pose and gestures of the two men. There are additional correlations: both Aeneas and Augustus are laureate and veiled in their roles as the participants in sacred rites, and both are accompanied by family members and liturgical attendants with sacramental implements.

Owing to the poor preservation of the panel, the interpretation of Augustus’s action remains controversial. Most scholars have interpreted the figure as about to sacrifice, but not actually performing the rite. No animals are being led to sacrifice, however; no altar is shown, and women and children, who were excluded from Roman State sacrifices, are notably present. Yet whatever action the precise gesture of Augustus indicated, it was undoubtedly ritualistic in nature and typologically related to that of Aeneas. The depictions of the two religious rites create a comparatio. Typology orders the raw stuff of the historical field, and thus the historical event takes its place within a paradigm of legend. At this point the rites performed by Aeneas and Augustus exist on the same temporal plane. They are equivalent emblems for an identical fact: the initia of a new aetas for urbs, orbis, and gens. One temporal cycle has ended and another has begun. Significantly, the reliefs indicate that Augustus effected this transition peacefully, renewing the cycle of history without cataclysmic destruction.

The iconic figure of Tellus is also controversial, rich with layers of meaning. Politically she represents Pax, the Pax Romana suggested by the arrival of Aeneas and the adventus of Augustus; she balances the bellicose image of Mars on the western end. Cosmically she is Terra Mater, the orbis as opposed to the urbs of Roma opposite her, an ecumenical omen of the arrival of Aeneas-Augustus. The maidens with billowing cloaks are the Aueae velificantes, personifications of the soothing winds that bless the land. And religiously she is Venus, the peaceful companion of Mars and the divine ancestor of both Aeneas and Augustus, the putti in her lap paralleling the twins of the Lupercal relief.

Eternity is the underlying theme of the Tellus and Roma reliefs, the image emblematic of the Augustan peace. The style is calm, idealized, classicizing. The symbolization of these panels complements that of the scroll frieze; and the features of the centrally placed goddesses recall the gravity of the female participants in the great procession. But in contrast to a procession, which must begin at some specific spatial and temporal point and progress to another, the forms here appear fixed. The victorious Roma, probably seated on the arms of conquered enemies, was also originally flanked by personifications of lesser entities. She symbolized the military feats of Augustus, as the Tellus panel alluded to the fruits of the ensuing peace. The focus of both centripetal compositions is a central, stabilizing personification. The orbital movements of the individual figures of the Aueae, focused on the massive central form of Tellus, also reflect the circular route of the participants in the ritual procession around and through the stable locus sacer of the Ara Pacis.

The ancient Roman’s perceptual and conceptual reading of the relief program, filtered through layers of mythical and etiological structure, could only heighten the appreciation of its temporal implications. Drawing from the works of Greek critics, educated Romans emphasized the simultaneity of the presentation and perception of the events represented in art; Aristotle first established this critical approach in his analysis of eusynchism in literary form. Roman artists seem to have embraced the potential advantages of this scheme in their programs; representations of events took on an immediacy, and the Roman viewer became a participant in them. This viewer converted the scenes depicted in relief into a contemporary event, for the relationship between that scene and the perception of it was both intimate and cohesive. Therefore, for Romans, the finite episode of the historical constitutio on the exterior processional panels, an event from the past, could occur both in the present and again in the future. As noted above, the ritual actions of Aeneas and Augustus also took place simultaneously in the realm of sacred time. The viewer’s intense, participatory identification with the

44 Cf. Zanker, 203-204.
45 Recently Pollini, 87-89, has proposed restoring a litus in the damaged right hand of the princeps; Augustus would therefore have been depicted performing an augural act at the constitutio.
46 The best summary of the various interpretations for this figure is found in Torelli, 39-42, who also discusses the possible Hellenistic (specifically Alexandrian) sources for the composition and iconography of this allegory; cf. also Simon, 26-29; Zanker, 172-179.
47 Pliny, Nat. Hist. 36.29; cf. G.E. Rizzo, “Aueae velificantes,” Bulletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma, LVII, 1939, 141-

168; Simon, 27.
49 Aristotle had also proclaimed sight as the most potent of the senses, De An. 432a.17; cf. 431b.2. His influence is reflected in Roman authors like Cicero, De Or. 2.87.357; cf. F. Yates, The Art of Memory, Chicago, 1966, 32-34.
reliefs translated the scenes into images of lasting possibility. The maintenance of peace through the line of Augustus guaranteed that the events could recur in the future. This conception of continual regeneration through infinitely repetitive readings helps explain the deliberate stylistic choice for the figural reliefs decorating the exterior walls. Sculptural style reinforces the temporal significance of these reliefs, by evoking the atmosphere of fact. Their style heightens the illusion of reality through careful description of actions set in a specific place and time, through the representation of specific personages, and through devices that indicate the position and function of subsidiary figures. But the Augustan artists nonetheless gave an idealized impression of reality. The same classicizing treatment observed in the iconic Tellus and Roma panels governs the drapery, pose, gestures, and even the facial features of most of the figures in the processional and legendary narratives. Stylistic allusions to the “golden age” of Periclean Athens elevate these events to a higher plane where they take on an eternal quality. This aura is further emphasized by the

51 Cf. Borbein (as in n. 34), 242-266.
52 “Classicism and archaicism became after Actium the vehicle of ‘Apollo-nian culture,’ an outward symbol of the moral revival. The purely formal — i.e., style — became the meaning”; Zanker, 240; on the Augustan uses of classicism generally, see Zanker, 239-263.
very juxtaosition of the process with the allegorical and legendary panels.53

But where does the Ara Pacis itself recognize this conjunction of temporalitys? Inside the precinct walls, a small frieze surrounding the top part of the raised mena provides the visual inscription of the timeless law of the altar, the quasi-hidden inner point where history is reinscribed as impersonal and endless myth. This frieze also represents a procession (Figs. 11 and 12). Originally it extended around the full thirteen meters of the U-shaped altar. The procession began at the southeast corner of the altar, and its action probably would have culminated in a scene of sacrifice at the center of the west side. This section of the relief, now missing, stood at the point where the sculptured processions and the actual participants in the ceremony converged after having divided into two branches. The frieze is continuous: where the procession is interrupted by the curved bodies of the winged lions that terminate the balustrade, it takes up again around the corner on the obverse of the stone panel.

The iconographical detail of this frieze is exceptional, and deserves brief discussion. The outer face of the left wing of the sacrificial altar is fairly well preserved (Fig. 11). It shows the procession led by a young sacrificial attendant (camillus) carrying a casket for incense (acerra), a togate priest, the lictor to which every priest was entitled, and another attendant (calator). The sequence of sacrificial animals is unprecedented in Roman art: it includes a ram and a steer for the preliminary sacrifices to Janus and Jupiter, and a heifer for Pax herself. Ten victimarii in short kilts (limus) attend the animals. Two carry flat sacrificial tablets and one holds a branch, perhaps a laurel sprig for the sprinkling of holy water, or a bough of olive symbolic of the deity to whom the rite is dedicated. Among the victimarii are also a popa with a long knife (culter) and one with an ax (malleus) for slaying the animals, and two charged with a sacrificial knife on a platter and, respectively, the ladle (simpulum) and pail (situla) for the entrails (exta). A second camillus closes this part of the procession. On the inner face of the left wing of the altar, six Vestal Virgins advance with a slow, rhythmic movement (Fig. 12). Although their differing statues indicate their different ages, their dress is uniform. Each wears her mantle closely wrapped, as well as a suffubulum, a white head-covering fastened under the chin. The first four carry sacred objects: the first a spherical incense jar, the second a simpulum, and the third and fourth tablets containing the ritual prescriptions. The Vestals are preceded by a young togatus and an attendant who carries the double rods; an attendant with the same official insignia follows. Other fragmentary sections of the small frieze are not as well preserved. For example, the figures of the velatus and flamen have been restored to the inside face of the right wing. However, it is uncertain whether their location can be fixed here on the basis of physical evidence.

The small frieze thus gives an impression of a unified procession moving around the entire altar. Its parastructural composition does not suggest a regular, columnar scansion. Rather, the artists here abandon the closely packed figurial arrangement in two and three planes of the larger procession for a more loosely composed figural row. Nor does the small frieze share the same highly classicizing style of the larger procession on the exterior precinct walls. In contrast to the idealized features of most of the participants in the Augustan entourage, the figures of the small frieze exhibit an angular passage of planes and a summary coarseness (note especially the nude torsos and short drapery of the victimarii).

Such internal stylistic contradictions in the Ara Pacis have been used to try to determine the nationality of its designer and sculptors. The reliefs of the exterior walls are commonly attributed to a workshop that had assimilated a neo-Classical - or, more specifically, neo-Attic - idiom, while the small frieze has been described as an expression of Roman Volkskunst or popular art.54 It is not, indeed, unusual to find the work of more than one studio on the eclectic monuments of the late Republican and early Imperial periods. But the two contrasting styles here would seem to represent a deliberate choice within the larger program of the Ara Pacis. In the small frieze, all of the background is neutral, so that the figures of both human beings and animals spread easily across the frieze; through spacing and relief, each form is sharply differentiated from the other and from the background space. Another face of the Classical tradition is evoked. The small frieze recalls the "solemn" style (to sermon) of Early Classical painting, now lost but reflected in Attic vase paintings of the mid-fifth century B.C.55 The effect of this style in the Ara Pacis is to induce a contemplative mood. The informed viewer is made more sympathetic to the multiple layers of meaning embodied in the altar's program.

In further contrast to the exterior processions, the figures on the small frieze are all anonymous. Some of the persons on the great exterior friezes are undoubtedly typical filler figures. However, while the six vestals, the flamen, and probably the sacrificing velatus represent definite historical offices, it is significant that no figures on the smaller frieze seem to have portrait features. For all the precision of their

53 The practice of juxtaposing historical events with scenes from myth and legend had a long tradition, from the painted decorations of the Stoa Poikile and Stoa Basileios in Athens to Etruscan fresco cycles like the Francois Tomb to Roman triumphal painting. Cf. M.I. Thompson, "The Monumental and Literary Evidence for Programmatic Painting in Antiqut," Marxs, xx, 1961, 36-77; P.I. Holliday, "The Origins of Roman Historical Relief Sculpture," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1953, 28-34, 54-57. The reliefs on the Ara Pacis were originally polychromed, emphasizing their link with such traditions in painting. Thus the sculptural decoration of the Ara Pacis may even be meant to recall painted decorations hung on the original augural tabernacle.


carving, they do not represent identifiable personages. Rather, the iconographical detail outlined above specifies the ritual order of the various sacrificial animals and the members of the corporations described by Augustus who were required to participate in the annually recurring sacrifice, the anniversarium sacrificium, celebrated in honor of Janus, Jupiter, and Pax.\textsuperscript{54} Therefore, this frieze was never meant to commemorate a historical event in a literal manner: it is a figural translation of the lex arae spelled out in the senatorial decree.\textsuperscript{57}

It is in the representation of this annual sacrifice that two distinct dimensions of temporality intersect. The procession of the constitutio is presented as a unique event, which will only slowly, after the passage of many years, take its place in a typological paradigm in the minds of men. In contrast, the annual celebration is simultaneously a unique event and a single instance of the cyclically recurring ritual defined by the small interior frieze. As the sacrifice renews itself year in and year out, it defines simultaneously both the passage of time and the continual regeneration of the seasonal round. The specific historical event of the annual sacrifice is subsumed instantaneously into the infinitely repeatable.\textsuperscript{58} As if to underscore this, the central axis of the altar was oriented exactly east-west, tracing the course of the sun’s daily motion. As the officiating priest stood at the altar, ready to offer sacrifice at the altar table, he faced eastward toward the rising sun, fully united with the solar cycle, which is both a symbol of cyclic time and the recurring standard by which the passage of daily time is measured.

Significantly, there is also a close connection between the Ara Pacis and the Solarium Augusti.\textsuperscript{59} This colossal sundial stood just west of the sacred precinct at the extreme northern boundary of the old urbs. The two monuments must have been planned together (along with the preexisting Mausoleum of Augustus) when Agrippa transformed this section of the Campus Martius.\textsuperscript{60} The gnomon of the sundial was an Egyptian obelisk dedicated by Augustus to the sun between 10 and 9 B.C. for his victory over Egypt. The sundial cast its shadow toward the exact center of the Ara Pacis on September 23, the dies natalis of Augustus. Thus a monument commemorating an Augustan military victory was associated with a monument commemorating the Augustan peace in a very personal way. And the annual commemoration of the birth of the man responsible for generating the new aetas was subsumed into the means of marking the hourly passage of time throughout eternity.\textsuperscript{65}

Augustan Ritual and the Regeneration of History

As has been shown, during the Republican period the Roman populace had been obsessed with the ephemeral nature of time. They found a kind of solace, though, in a cyclical conception of cosmic and human history, a stratagem that had the further effect of reducing the imagined passage of time to a comprehensible pattern of life, death, and rebirth. Yet these cyclical constructions, in Classical antiquity, also typically accommodate a simultaneous perception of decline, a belief that the present age is inferior to preceding ages (descending from gold to silver to iron, and so forth), and also that the contemporary moment within the present age grows worse with the passage of time. But it is the promise of a better age ultimately to come that gives cyclical stratagems their appeal.\textsuperscript{62} The debilitating effects of profane time could be annulled by returning to the sacralized existence of a Golden Age.\textsuperscript{63}

It was further to negate the effects of a purely directional progression of time that the Romans evolved their interpretation of a Great Year whose conclusion would herald a new Golden Age. As briefly discussed above, the Roman Great Year went through several stages of development. Its original, strongly Stoic conception, in which a Golden Age would recur on the “other side” of a cosmic conflagration, still darkened Horace’s Epode 16. Yet during the late Republic, when popularizers and syncretists combined the beliefs of many different philosophies, and embraced especially the revival of Pythagorean conceptions,\textsuperscript{64} the belief eventually gained currency that Rome could gradually regenerate itself periodically ad infinitum through a kind of Neo-Pythagorean metacosmosis.\textsuperscript{65}

Romans tended to regard the course of history as alter-

\textsuperscript{50} Res Gestae 12.15.

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Torelli, 36.

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Zanker, 114: “For the contemporary Roman each year unfolded in a continuously repeating pattern of religious/dynastic festivals filled with spectacle. . . . The dramatic experience of ritual slaughter . . . was able to unleash powerful emotional forces every time.”


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. In conversation, John Pollini has pointed out that the close association between the obelisk and the Ara Pacis would have suggested that Augustus had been natus ad pacem: it was his destiny to bring peace through victory to the Roman people.

\textsuperscript{61} Carcopino, 200, notes that the birthday of the princeps was regarded “as the point of departure of the universe, whose existence had been saved, and whose face had been changed, by Augustus.” Zanker, 114, also observes that Roman monuments “came alive in the festivals connected with them, especially on the dies natales.”

\textsuperscript{62} Thus the optimism inherent in the belief that better days must follow the most fearful hours in Homer (Odyssey, 19.108-124) and Hesiod (Works 225-227).


\textsuperscript{64} Cf. the writings of the 3rd-century a.c. popularizer, the pseudo-Ocelius Lucanus, who adopted a thoroughly cyclical view of cosmic and human events in Univ. nat. 3.1.42; and Cicero (Somnium Scipionis 7.23-25), who refers to a recurring Great Year when, after “many Aetas [saecula] of man” had elapsed, the planets eventually returned to their original positions.

\textsuperscript{65} Trompf, 76.
nating between defection from and adherence to traditional values. But in the Roman conception of cosmic time, any passing of one age, which required correction, to another one was marked by a discernable transition.\(^{66}\) Coming after a series of long and bloody civil wars, Augustus promulgated the image of his principate as a reversion to the standards of better days. The Augustan Age (\textit{saeculum}) seemed to inaugurate a \textit{pax aeterna}.\(^{67}\) In this period, the wars, the destruction, the sufferings of history were no longer the premonitory warnings of a transition from one age to another; rather they were themselves the signs of that transition.\(^{68}\) As \textit{dux pacificus}, Augustus restored peace on earth, and, consequently, a new world began.

The sacred rituals depicted on the large processional panels of the Ara Pacis were meant to mark not only a particular turning point in Roman history, but the regeneration of history itself. Augustus skillfully utilized the Roman longing for the reemergence of the Saturnian Age, a Latin equivalent to Hesiod’s golden reign of Kronos.\(^{69}\) Whether such ideas were ultimately derived from Etruscan lore concerning the Ages, the Sibyline Books, or other literature now lost, they had gained a reasonably wide acceptance.\(^{70}\) When Augustus passed the doors of the original tabernacle at the Ara’s \textit{constitutio}, he exited as the new Aeneas and the new Romulus. At an earlier point the Senate had debated whether to address Octavian as Romulus for founding Rome anew; after deliberation it was decided to grant him the honorary name of Augustus, indicating the auspicious augury for the second foundation of the city.\(^{71}\) Augustus’s famous boast of having found Rome a city of brick and leaving it one of marble should be considered in this context;\(^{72}\) rather than a mere literary trope or proud reference to some urban beautification project, this passage becomes an urgent attempt to claim the actual physical refoundation and spiritual regeneration of the city. The \textit{adventus} of the \textit{princeps} ushered in the new Romulean age. He had founded the new \textit{aetas}. In the traditional poetic metaphor for temporal cycles, the return commemorated on the Ara Pacis signaled the transition from an age of iron to a sacred one of gold.

In essence, the establishment of the Ara Pacis was similar to the celebration of the Secular Games held between 30 May and 3 June 17 B.C. The games, sacrifices, and processions in honor of various gods at the \textit{ludi saeculares} were conducted in atonement for the excesses of the preceding century and to ensure good fortune for the future. Although the cosmic timing was actually wrong, Augustus subtly manipulated the calendar and sacred traditions so that the festival, heralding the beginning of a new age, would coincide with the expected arrival of a comet.\(^{73}\) The \textit{ludi saeculares} thus defined the beginning of an auspicious age of renewal; the reliefs on the Ara Pacis commemorated the same transition in concrete, visual form. Horace had praised Augustus in these words:

\begin{quote}
On humbled knee, Phraates
Has acknowledged Caesar’s control and authority.
Meanwhile Plenty
Pours from her full horn a golden harvest over Italy.
\textit{(Epistolarum 1.12.27-29)}\(^{74}\)
\end{quote}

And in the fourth book of \textit{Odes} Horace described fruits of the Augustan regeneration, which recall the images of the Tellus panel:

\begin{quote}
Thy age, Caesar, restores rich harvests
To our countryside.
\textit{(Odes 4.15.4-5)}\(^{75}\)
\end{quote}

In Virgil’s cosmology, the last \textit{saeculum} was that of the sun, which could bring about the combustion of the universe (\textit{ekpyrosis}). However, in an alternate interpretation of history echoing the optimistic hopes of the Neo-Pythagoreans, he also believed that the reign of Augustus had prevented catastrophe, and substituted the \textit{saeculum} of Apollo.\(^{76}\) Virgil hailed it as \textit{Saturnia Tellus}, the earth of the

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66 Cf. Livy, \textit{Frag. 56} (from \textit{Ab urbe} 136) in Censorinus 17.10; Florus, \textit{Epitome} 2.14.5-8.

67 The \textit{Pax Romana} first became the \textit{Pax Augusta} in Velleius Paterculus 2.89. The Augustan Peace is both divine in essence and the creation of the \textit{princeps: numen opusque ducis} (Ovid, \textit{Fasti} 6.92).

68 Several writers interpreted the civil wars as the last in the series of nine ages based on Etruscan lore: cf. Diodorus Siculus, \textit{Bib.} 38-39.5; Lucan, \textit{Pharsalia} 7.387 (following Houseman’s emendation).

69 Among those authors who addressed the imminent reemergergence of the Saturnian Age in the early Empire were Virgil (\textit{Eclogae} 4.5), Calpurnius Siculus (\textit{Eclogue} 1.42-45), and an anonymous writer preserved in the \textit{Antiquaria Latina}, \textit{no. 726} 22-24 (ed. F. Buechler and A. Rice).

70 Trompf, 77.


72 Suetonius, \textit{Augustus} 28.3. On the high value placed on marble and on the early quarries at Luna, see D. and F. Kleiner, "A Heroic Funerary Relief on the Via Appia." \textit{Archäologischer Anzeiger}, 1975, 257-259.


74 \textit{Ius imperiumque Phraates}
Caesaris accepti genibus minor; aurea fruges
Italie pleno defundit Copia cornu.
Actually written in connection with the campaign for the return of the Parthian standards (ca. 20 B.C.), this passage presages the fuller use of such imagery in the hymn that Augustus commissioned Horace to write for the games.

75 “Tua, Caesar, aetas fruges et agris retulit uberes.”

76 Apollo was, of course, the special patron of Augustus (cf. n. 30 above). On Virgil’s Neo-Pythagoreanism, see Carcopino, 45; and P. Boyancé, \textit{La Religion de Virgile}, Paris, 1963.
aurae aetas over which Saturn was to reign:

Hail, land of Saturn, great mother of earth's fruits,
Great mother of men.  

( Georgics 2.173-174)77

Yet more crucial for Augustan policy was Virgil's description of the aureum saeculum in the Aeneid.78 Early on, Jupiter assures Venus that he will place no limitations of time or space on the Romans: "Empire without end have I given them."79 In the underworld, Aeneas learns that the empire founded by his descendants will usher in a new Golden Age lying beyond the confines of the sun and the year:

Caesar Augustus, son of the deified,  
Who shall bring once again an Age of Gold  
To Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned  
In early times. He will extend his power  
Beyond the Garamants and the Indians,  
Over far territories north and south  
Of the zodiacal stars, of the solar way,  
Where Atlas, heaven-bearing, on his shoulder  
Turns the night-sphere, studded with burning stars.

( Aeneid 6.792-97)80

Significantly, only with the rise of Augustus did Rome become known as the Eternal City.81 The rituals celebrated on the Ara Pacis reinforce these optimistic interpretations of temporality. Most rituals have some mythical model. Human actions choreographed into any ritual acquire their effectiveness to the extent that they reproduce the act performed earlier by some god, hero, or ancestor.82 The ritualistic repetition of those actions in concrete time is projected into that mythical time (illo tempore) when the foundation occurred. Thus, the pious ritual act of Augustus at the constitutio reproduced the primordial act of Aeneas ab origine. Through ritual, profane time and space are transcended into mythical — or, rather, sacred —time and space. The duration of profane time is temporarily suspended.83 As suggested above, in this sense the actions of Aeneas and Augustus shown on the precinct wall reliefs are synchronous in the realm of sacred time. And it is through an infinitely repeatable ritual conducted at the Ara Pacis, the annually recurring anniversarium sacrificium, that Augustus wanted to secure immortality for his achievements. As the prototypical acts of Aeneas were imitated by Augustus, so the Augustan ritual became the model for successive generations of Romans.84 Each time the rites described on the small altar frieze were enacted, the diachronic passage of time was suspended: the cycle of profane time was regenerated with the dawn of an aurea aetas; the Augustan peace was renewed.

Succeeding emperors followed the example of Augustus. Scenes of the repetition or imitation of privileged events or acts from mythical or legendary time distinguish Roman Imperial art. Augustus and his acts themselves became the stuff of legend, and the theme of the aureum saeculum became a stock element of state propaganda.85 But no other monument displays the sophistication of the Ara Pacis; none approaches the complexity of its program. Few Romans of later periods feared for the end of the world with the same urgency that had been experienced during the late Republic. Nevertheless, although the influence of cyclical theories of time on Roman thought waned, they never completely vanished; many writers in late antiquity still betray their influence.86 When Alaric captured Rome in a.d. 410, the fears regarding the Great Year were revived, for it seemed Rome had entered its twelfth and final century. The bishop of Hippo wrote to convince both pagans and Christians that God, not astral destiny, would decide the duration of Rome. Throughout De civitate Dei, Saint Augustine vigorously rejected cyclical theories of history, and

77 "Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia Tellus, magna virum.


79 "Hs ego metas rerum nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi" (1.278-279). Ovid also described the unlimited extension of Rome: "Gen

80 Augustus Caesar, Divi genus, auroae condet

81 The earliest surviving reference to the urbs aeterna is Tibullus 2.5.23.

82 Cf. the ancient historian's encouragement of his readers to emulate ex

83 The Julio-Claudian drew heavily on the numen of Augustus; from Tiberius to Nero his image was appealed to for beneficence and authority. Thus it is not surprising that during his troubled reign Nero commemorated his extensive repairs on the Ara Pacis in a handsome coin issue: cf. H. Mattingly, Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum, I, London, 1983, 271-272, 47.2; C.H.V. Sutherland, Roman Imperial Coinage, I, London, 1984, 178, 21.485.

84 On the pious attitude of the Romans to their past, and their tendency to regard it as if it were a part of the present, see E.R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W.R. Trask, New York, 1953, 252.

85 For example, the Christian writer Lactantius only slightly modified the age theories of the middle Stoics and the Sibyls. He contended that in the seventh millennium the rule of Saturn, whom he identified as a post-

86 Did not see their city as absolutely or transcendentally eternal; rather, it was reborn and renovated perpetually throughout history, permitting the metamorphosis of the first Rome into the second (Constantinople).
argued that the life of any earthly city was finite, the City of God being the only eternal city.87

The marked political symbolism of the Ara Pacis, and its didactic, tendentious force, undoubtedly constitute the Altar’s immediate justification for existence. The overt iconography of an altar of peace, prominently situated on the fields dedicated to the war-god Mars, would be understood by the Roman masses; that Augustus was responsible for the establishment and maintenance of that peace is made clear to all. Yet the sculptured reliefs simultaneously addressed a more sophisticated audience familiar with the conventions of Graeco-Roman mythological and historical thought: the program reflects contemporary Roman concerns with the problems of the historic moment in relation to eternity. The Peace embodied in the Ara Pacis represents not only a superficially unique political program, but also the affirmation of a profound belief in the cyclical recurrence of time and the transfiguration of the present moment, through artistic typology and sacred ritual, into the eternal and infinitely repeatable.

Peter J. Holliday received his Ph.D degree from Yale University. His articles have appeared in the American Journal of Archaeology and other journals, and he is currently editing a collection of papers concerning issues of narrativity in ancient art [Department of Art, California State University at San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397].

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87 "The pagan philosophers have introduced cycles of time in which the same things are in the order of nature being restored and repeated, and have asserted that these whirlings of past and future will go on unceasingly. . . . It is only through the sound doctrine of a rectilinear course that we can escape from I know not what false cycles discovered by false and deceitful sages" (*De civitate Dei* 12.13).