Venus, Polysemy, and the Ara Pacis Augustae

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Abstract

The intentionally multiple iconography of the “Tellus” relief on the Ara Pacis Augustae deliberately was designed to create multiple meanings and associations. Attempts to limit it to one particular type, such as Pax, are not tenable because none of the actually existing iconographic details and symbols, including the companion figures, are exclusively those of Pax. The Zollos relief and the Sebastoion at Aphrodisias shed new light on the iconography of Venus, as does the relation of the relief to the floral scrolls. The intentional polysemy of the relief is considered against the background of Republican representations, religious and artistic syncretism, the occurrence of multivalence in other areas of the Augustan culture (including the Res Gestae), and within the total concept of the artistic and architectural program of the Ara Pacis. The guiding idea was to represent the concept of the Pax Augusta not simply, such as by means of one image, but by evoking the richness of its ramifications. Hence the complex and associative imagery of this particular Andachtsbild.*

Some 20 years ago, I proposed that the mythological relief on the southeast of the Ara Pacis was interpreted best in terms of its composite iconography,¹ as it incorporates figural details and symbols especially of Venus and Terra Mater and, to a lesser extent, of Pax (fig. 1). This “polysemous” interpretation of the female figure and her two companions has appeared in several subsequent discussions and been extended to include Ceres.² Conversely, it has been rejected on the categorical grounds that “the possibility of giving two names to the same figure was completely alien to Roman customs and mentality”³ and with the specific argument that a single identification as Pax Augusta is appropriate.⁴

In view of these arguments, the extensive discussion of the monument in the past two decades, and some additional pertinent evidence especially from Aphrodisias, it is useful to consider the state of the question from three principal aspects: 1) whether a single iconography, as exemplified by Pax, is both in evidence and adequate; 2) without a return to a single interpretation, the relevance of further material to the iconography of Venus; and 3) the relation between multivalence, especially multiple iconography and viewer response, and an intended, central meaning. This involves the related discussion of the intellectual level of the viewing public or, to borrow a useful term from aesthetic and literary theory, the “horizon of expectations” current at the time.

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The following abbreviations are used:


Kaiser Augustus Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik (Catalogue of Berlin Exhibition 1988).

La Roca E. La Roca et al., Ara Pacis Augustae: in occasione del restauro del fronte orientale (Rome 1983).

Torelli M. Torelli, Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs (Ann Arbor 1982).

Zanker P. Zanker, Augustus und die Macht der Bilder (Munich 1987).

¹ The point was made clearly and repeatedly in the text (Galinsky 200, 215, and 224); de Grummond 664 n. 3 makes it appear as if it had been relegated to a footnote (Galinsky 200 n. 34). Accordingly, there is scant mention in her article of my discussion of the iconographic details pertaining to Pax (Galinsky 237–39), which was not lost on others (e.g., Torelli 42).


⁴ de Grummond, passim and esp. 664.
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF PAX

Pax, under her aspect of Pax Augusta, is the animating concept of the entire pictorial program of the altar proper and of the figural and floral decoration of the precinct walls. The relief panel under discussion is an integral part of this overall intent. “Venus,” as I put it, “is the figure most emblematic of Pax.”

De Grummond quotes German Hafner, who uses similar terms (“the motherly figure, surrounded by children, animals, and lavish vegetation, personifies the blessings of peace”), to deduce from such a characterization that “it is, of course, but a small step further to say that she actually is Peace.”

It is, actually, quite a significant step. It needs to be supported by the presence of sufficient iconographic details to enable us—and the Roman viewer—to identify the figure predominantly or even exclusively as Pax. Virtually none of the few indices that are adduced satisfy that criterion. Poppies and ears of corn are symbolic of Ceres even more copiously than of Pax; the same goes for the ears of grain or corn in her crown, which also appear on coins of Venus. The presence of two children—Pax or Eirene is always represented with only one—is explained not with references to literary or artistic comparanda, but with the simple assertion that “it is natural that the Roman goddess should double her offspring and have twins, no doubt alluding to Italian fertility in general and Romulus and Remus in particular; the twins Castor and Pollux and their counterparts from the imperial family, Gaius and Lucius and Tiberius and Drusus, may have come to the viewer’s mind as well.”

What is correctly noted here is the richness of associations that is precisely the hallmark of both the architectural and the sculptural program of the Ara Pacis. It con-
travenes, intrinsically, any attempt to reduce that multifacetedness to one aspect. The explanation de Grummond proffers in fact fits Venus a great deal better than Pax: she has an established iconography with two children, and she is Genetrix and geminorum mater amorum. As for further arguments in support of an unequivocal identification as Pax, the collocation of Pax and Roma is matched by that of Venus and Roma, and the hypothesis that the female figure may have held a caduceus in her hand is an argumentum ex silentio in the absence of any traces. As de Grummond herself candidly admits: “Unfortunately, we are unable to make comparison with other monumental images of Pax from Roman times, since no securely identified ones have survived.”

With this we come to the “Horae.” Two basic, related points emerge. First, the side figures on the relief are riding on creatures—a cetus and a swan—quite unlike those on which the Horae are represented even on late sarcophagi; this is fully recognized by de Grummond. Second, the underlying reason is the extraordinary range of associations of the Horae since their beginnings in early Greek literature and art, which produced anything but a fixed identification with, or as, Eirene, let alone Pax.

The earliest mention of the Horae occurs in the Iliad, where they appear as the keepers of Zeus’s cloud gates (5.749–51). Hardly any traces of that function are found in the subsequent tradition. Instead, two basic variants are evidently in Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns, where the Horae are mentioned several times. In Theogony 901–903, Hesiod says of Zeus that “he married bright Themis who gave birth to the Horae, and [in the sense of ‘that is’] Eumonia, Diké, and blooming Eirene, who mind the works of mortal men.” Apparently, that was an innovation on Hesiod’s part because the usual, and stronger, tradition is one that associates the Horae, who vary from two to three in number, with Aphrodite on the basis of their original function as seasons of life and growth.14 In Attic cult, for instance, their names are Thallo and Karpo; the small boys held by the female deity on the Ara Pacis are generally referred to as karpoi. In Hesiod’s Works and Days (74–75), the fair-haired Horae, along with the Charites and Peitho, participate in crowning Pandora with spring flowers; the model, as West comments, “seems to be a typical scene in which a goddess such as Aphrodite dresses and adorns herself with help from her attendants. Cf. Cypria fr. 4 (Aphrodite wore clothes made for her by the Charites and Horai, such as the Horai themselves wear, dyed with spring flowers); Hom. Hymn 6.5–13. (Aphrodite, emerging from the sea, is dressed by the Horai and adorned with a gold headband, gold and orichalc ear-rings, and gold necklaces).”

The major portion of that Hymn to Aphrodite is devoted to the description of the work of the Horae who adorn her (lines 5–15; the poem has 21 lines). Nor is the preceding description of Aphrodite being carried by the “moist breath of the western wind over the waters of the sea” incompatible with the imagery of the Ara Pacis relief, in particular the companion figures. The use of the dual in the Hymn seems to indicate two Horae.

In the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (3.194–203), the Horae, Aphrodite, and the Graces dance together on Olympus while Apollo plays the lyre. As personifications of fruitfulness and growth, they were naturally associated with Demeter, too.18 A good example of the resultant multiplicity in art is their representation with Aphrodite, Demeter, and others on the Apollo Throne in Amyclae.

Their representation in art reflects these associations and others before they are stereotyped into Seasons especially from the third century A.C. on-

11 de Grummond 668, citing suggestions of E. La Rocca and G. Koeppel.
12 de Grummond 668.
13 de Grummond 671.
15 Pausanias 9.35.2; cf. Hyg. Fab. 183.
16 M.L. West, Hesiod, Works and Days (Oxford 1978) 161 where further documentation can be conveniently found.
19 Paus. 3.19.4; see Hanffmann (supra n. 14) I.83. Cf. Ar. Pax 456, where Aphrodite, the Horae, the Graces, Pothos, and Hermes appear as the antitheses of War.
ward. As Hanfmann has wisely remarked, "the representations of the Horae in classical art are an extremely difficult problem," especially because they tend to be shown as "general and distant symbols." One specific element, however, is that "their appearance in processions corresponds to the description of the Homeric Hymn of Aphrodite." We see them, i.a., in connection with the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the mission of Triptolemus, Herakles' reception on Olympus, and as Aphrodite's attendants as she is readying herself for the Judgment of Paris (fig. 2). This last association is attested for stage performances as late as the time of Apuleius (Met. 10.32.9).

In sum, in the case of the Horae we are dealing with an iconographic tradition that up to the time of Augustus and beyond is as diverse as it can be unspecific. In mythography, this is reflected by their acquisition of no fewer than nine names as is shown by the compilation of Hyginus, Augustus's freedman (Fab. 153). That very adaptability, of course, may have appealed to the designers of the Ara Pacis as they endeavored to create as large a range of associations as possible with a concomitant multi-referential imagery. At the same time, this obviates any attempt to limit the meaning of the figures to Pax and Horae; certainly, the iconographic evidence belies the presence of an exclusive typology. Even if we could construe, at best, a Greek Eirene out of the scant iconographic evidence that would support such an interpretation, we would need to consider that this is not simply an Ara Pacis, but an Ara Pacis Augustae. That, as Momigliano recognized many years ago, calls for a connection with "traditional Roman mores" and "the values of a moral and religious tradition which Augustus understood." For similar reasons, the posited similarities between the Athenian Altar of Pity and the Ara Pacis have rightly been categorized as no more than generic.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF VENUS

In addition to the material I adduced previously, two aspects merit discussion. One is the connection with sculpture at Aphrodisias. The other is the relation between the imagery of Venus and the floral frieze.

Aphrodisias

As I noted in my earlier discussion, the closest typological parallels between the Ara Pacis goddess as Venus under her aspect as goddess of earth, sea, and sky are the cult images of the Aphrodisian Aphrodite. Aphrodisias also furnished, in terms of both artistic conceptualization and style, a close precedent, which has led Bernard Andreae to posit that the Ara Pacis was a product of the same workshop. That is the monument of Zoilos at Aphrodisias, dating from

Frankfurt am Main 24.3, Stuttgart 1988).


25 Galinsky 216–17 with fig. 160. Reference is to the relief decoration of these statues; see LIMC II (1984) 151–54, esp. nos. 18–40 (R. Fleischer).

26 Andreae (supra n. 2) 59.
the late 30s or the 20s B.C.\textsuperscript{27} It most probably was a heroon or commemorative monument for Julius Zoilos, a freedman of the "son of the divine Julius." The epigraphic evidence attests that Zoilos was a major benefactor of the city, probably not in the least because of his relations with Octavian/Augustus.

Fig. 3. Monument of Zoilos, Aphrodisias. Representation of Polis. (After A. Alföldi, \textit{Aion in Merida und Aphrodisias} [Mainz 1979] pl. 23)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig3.png}
\caption{Monument of Zoilos, Aphrodisias. Representation of Polis. (After A. Alföldi, \textit{Aion in Merida und Aphrodisias} [Mainz 1979] pl. 23)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig4.png}
\caption{Monument of Zoilos, Aphrodisias. Timé crowns Zoilos. (After A. Alföldi, \textit{Aion in Merida und Aphrodisias} [Mainz 1979] pl. 24)}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{28} Cf. the hypothesis that Honos might be present on the Roma panel of the Ara Pacis; at the time of this writing, in fact, the youthful head of "Iulus" on the Aeneas panel is being transposed to the Roma relief as Honos.

The decorative program of the frieze showed Zoilos surrounded and being welcomed by various symbolic and allegorical figures. He is being greeted by Demos and crowned by Polis (fig. 3). Polis, of course, is the representation of Aphrodisias. Her iconography, therefore, is assimilated to Aphrodite with her \textit{velificatio}, which recurs on the side figures of the Ara Pacis relief, and her clinging drapery; the modeling of the drapery around one shoulder and the breasts is similar to that of the central figure on the Ara Pacis relief. Both the latter and Polis wear crowns: respectively, one of fruits and flowers and a mural crown. Zoilos is shown again as being crowned by Timé (= Honos) (fig. 4).\textsuperscript{29} Her upper body is bare like that of the side figures of the Ara Pacis relief in the manner of the
have been identified without an inscription—and the inspiration from various artistic styles and traditions.

The interaction between Rome and Aphrodisias was reciprocal. This is strongly suggested by the relief sculptures of the Sebasteion and especially those of its south portico, which was built mostly during the first half of the first century A.C. The reliefs in the lower story represent Greek myths, and those in the upper story the emperors and members of their family. Their exact collocation and the degree of connection between the mythological and imperial representations will require some speculation in most cases. An exception is the reliefs above Room 1 at the east end, where a generalized representation of the Victoria Avgusti, here an Augustus with Nike and a trophy, seems to have been accompanied in the lower story by reliefs with Aeneas's flight from Troy (fig. 6), and with Aphrodite, Eros, and Anchises (fig.

Fig. 5. Monument of Zoilos, Aphrodisias. The goddess Roma. (After A. Alföldi, *Aion in Merida und Aphrodisias* [Mainz 1979] pl. 26a)

Arles Aphrodite type, and she holds a cornucopia. Other personifications are Andreia (= Virtus), Aion (resembling Kronos or Saturn), Mneme (= Fama), and Roma. As the Roma on the Ara Pacis, Roma here is seated and turned to the left, resting her left arm on a clupeus (fig. 5). Since the exact sequence and arrangement of the Aphrodisias panels cannot yet be established with absolute certainty, generalizations about the total program need to be made with care. It can be argued, however, that relative to the Ara Pacis, the various allegories are juxtaposed rather than integrated into an ambitious ensemble. The lesser degree of sophistication is also indicated by the outright labeling of most of the figures (Roma is an exception, but there are traces of an inscription on her shield). A common element of the two monuments, however, is the combination of diverse iconographies—one can only speculate how Timé would

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79 For details, see Giuliano (supra n. 27) 395.

The schema of the flight is the familiar one “but with the ‘local’ addition of an escorting Aphrodite in the background.”31 While her blowing veil is only suggested here, her *velificatio* is worked out fully in the relief with Anchises and Eros. The figure is seated and the *velificatio* cannot be explained by vigorous motion. As Smith remarks: “The carefully elaborated *Aphrodite and baby Eros* seem to be a unique composition with a perhaps intentional allusion to the famous Tellus figure on the Ara Pacis”32 and more particularly, to the companion figures. It is another indication that these figures on the Ara Pacis relief need to be understood under the iconographic aspect of Venus. Their conventional identification as Aureau, as de Grummond has demonstrated, rests on the thinnest of foundations.33

*The Floral Scrolls*

Preoccupation with the figural reliefs on the upper tier of the outside walls of the enclosure of the Ara Pacis has led to a neglect of the fact that the reliefs with the floral scrolls are considerably larger: their height is 1.82 m, as compared with 1.55 m for the upper reliefs.34 A look at the model (fig. 8), which can be viewed from a greater distance than the present monument, makes the different proportions even more obvious. It is the largest known application of the motif from antiquity. Its function goes well beyond mere decoration as it contributes significantly to the

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31 Smith in *Aphrodisias Papers* (supra n. 30) 97.
32 Smith in *Aphrodisias Papers* (supra n. 30) 97. The allusion may be enhanced by the possible reference of the other side panel with Poseidon and a standing male figure, *captis velato* and with a long cloak, to Aeneas’s arrival in Italy.
33 de Grummond 669.
meaning of the monument. L'Orange's high-flown and sweeping interpretation, based mostly on some lines in Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*, of the floral scroll as a reflection of the *aurea aetas* has come to be considered axiomatic and been repeated uncritically, but is untenable simply in view of the complexity of the

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tradition of the Golden Age by the time of Vergil and Augustus.\textsuperscript{36} Discreet as it may be, the presence, for instance, of snakes attacking a bird’s nest (fig. 9) and of scorpions (fig. 10) accords well with Vergil’s reformulation of the Golden Age in the \textit{Georgics} as one based on unremitting work against harmful obstacles.\textsuperscript{37} At the time of the \textit{rediust} of Augustus in 13 B.C., which the Ara Pacis celebrates, there was no indication of the utopia of the \textit{Fourth Eclogue}, but far more realistic dimensions prevailed: Augustus’s principal action after his return, as Dio relates in the same chapter in which he discusses the genesis of the Ara Pacis, was to settle the long-standing problem of the compensation of the soldiery, a measure that “in the rest of the population . . . aroused confident hopes that they would not in the future be robbed of their possessions” (54.25.6). This was one aspect of \textit{pax}, too, as a lingering relic of the civil wars was finally laid to rest; on the foreign front, so far from the gates of the Temple of Janus staying closed for long, \textit{pax} was \textit{parta victorius} (\textit{Res Gestae} 13) and conquests continued.\textsuperscript{38}

Clearly, the floral scroll, which is a tour de force in purely artistic terms (as Kraus has observed, “neither previously nor later was a surface of more than 20 m\textsuperscript{2} ever decorated with a continuous vegetal ornament arising out of one root”),\textsuperscript{39} expresses the notion of the growth and abundance of vegetation accompanying the age of the Pax Augusta. Another corollary is that this growth is ordered, although several asym-


\textsuperscript{37} G. 1.121–59; cf. my discussion in \textit{Atti del Convegno mondiale scientifico di studi su Virgilio} (Milan 1984) 1.241–

\textsuperscript{38} For the reflection of these warlike themes on Augustan monuments, including the Ara Pacis, see the perceptive remarks of E.S. Gruen, “Augustus and the Ideology of War and Peace,” in R. Winkes ed., \textit{The Age of Augustus} (Providence 1985) 60–63.

\textsuperscript{39} Kraus (supra n. 34) 5.
metries prevent monotony and indicate the Augustan sense of nuance rather than a neurotic rage for order.\footnote{E.g., the distance between the swans and the floral stalks varies on the long friezes (Büsing [supra n. 35] 248); also, Sauron 1977 (supra n. 35) 209: “Alors que l’axe central de la composition, c’est-à-dire le candelabre végétal, répond à}

There are several examples of connections between the ambience of Aphrodite/Venus and floral scrolls. On a lekythos by Douris, Atalanta is pursued by Erotes

\footnote{un principe de symétrie . . . les deux axes latéraux fondent une dissymétrie à l’intérieur de chaque moitié de composition.” “Neurosis” because of “strictly symmetrical order”: Zanker 185. We are dealing with value judgments; whatever}
one of whom holds a floral spray in his right hand and a fuller palmette and bud tendril in his left (fig. 11). The florals recur on the shoulder of the vase. Similarly, a flying Eros holding in each hand a tendril with palmettes and a blossom decorates the shoulder of a lekythos by the Syriskos Painter (fig. 12). Closer to the time of the Ara Pacis, around A.D. 7, a statue of a seated female deity holding a child was set up in the Forum at Cumae. The figure is seated on a throne covered by acanthus scrolls akin to those of the Ara Pacis (figs. 13–14). The statue probably is a copy of a Rhodian work; it is not clear whether the floral decoration of the throne was part of the original composition or was executed especially for the Cumaean copy. If it was inspired by the Ara Pacis, it was in good company: the famous Augustan silver crater from the Hildesheim treasure is a playful adaptation of the Ara Pacis scrolls (fig. 15). The largely symmetrical arrangement is still present, except that Cupids now take the place of the swans and try to catch fishes and locusts. Zanker has aptly characterized it as

“monotony” remains is dispelled by the decidedly non-monotonous representation of the individuals participating in the processions. Also, there is the question of a constructive alternative to an ordered floral frieze—a more disorganized one, perhaps?

41 Cleveland 66.114; ARV² 446 no. 226 bis; CVA Cleveland 1.21–23, pls. 32–35; D.C. Kurtz, Attic White Lekythoi (Oxford 1975) 30–31, pls. 10.2 and 11.

42 Berlin (formerly East) 2252; ARV² 263 no. 54; Kurtz (supra n. 41) 127–28, pl. 8.1b.

43 M.E. Bertoldi, “ Recenti scavi e scoperte a Cuma,” BdA 58 (1973) 40, figs. 6–7; Settis (supra n. 3) 417, fig. 193. Identified by Bertoldi as Psyche and Cupid, by Zanker 309 as the same deity as on the Ara Pacis.

a private and lighthearted adaptation of the Altar's Fruchtbarkeitsprogrammatik.  

It was not a purely whimsical transference: the swans of the Ara Pacis refer not merely to Apollo, but to Venus, the Genetrix of the domus Augusta.  

Another indication of this connection is the most immediate predecessor of the acanthus frieze of the Ara Pacis in Rome. Significantly, that is the frieze of the Temple of Divus Julius, dedicated in 29 B.C. There a Victoria figure sprouts forth from acanthus leaves amid the candelabra-like scrolls and tendrils that recur on the Ara Pacis (fig. 16). The iconography of the figure deliberately goes beyond that of a generic Victoria and is intended to have several meanings. The acanthus scrolls associate her with Venus, the deity of vegetation. Venus, for Julius Caesar, was both Venus Genetrix and Venus Victrix. Both, as Mommsen showed long ago, were subsumed under the concept of Victoria Caesaris. The multiplicity of the concept produced a multiple and associative iconography that served dynastic purposes.

**POLYSEMY**

The same is true of the pictorial program of the Ara Pacis Augustae. In order to do justice to the many ramifications of the concept of the Pax Augusta, the artists intentionally chose to represent Pax not one-dimensionally as, for instance, by means of a statue. Paradoxically, that absence was the basis of Stefan Weinstock’s famous argument that the monument therefore could not be the Altar of Augustan Peace.

It was countered with the hypothesis that Pax surely was represented somewhere on the Ara Pacis, which really amounts to accepting Weinstock’s premise. Thus Toynbee, following Hanell, imagined a personification of Pax to be present near Augustus on the south frieze; Simon posted a statue of Pax near the altar; de Grummond speculates about the possibility of a caduceus in the hand of Venus/Tellus, and so on. The fundamental realization, however, of the designers and artists was that the Pax Augusta was too rich a concept to be presented so simply. Hence the challenge they set themselves was to represent it by evoking the comprehensiveness of its many associations. This is reflected by the multilayered relationships between the images on the various relief panels—the full meaning, as in Pompeian pictorial programs, emerges only when they are “read” or viewed in conjunction with one another—and by the equally multilayered and complex iconography of the Venus/Tellus/Pax relief.

One circumstance that may have given the artists this freedom was the erection of a cult statue of Pax in 11 B.C. Dio (54.35.2) reports that Augustus received a donation of silver from the Senate and the People to have a statue made of himself. As always, he refused to do so and instead had statues erected of Salus, Concordia, and Pax. Since Ovid mentions a sacrifice to these three deities and Janus on 30 March (Fasti 3.881–82), Wissowa assumed the construction of a sanctuary with altars and statues to these deities where the annual festival was held on 30 March. The Fasti Praenestini (CIL I, p. 234) mention no such event, and Dio speaks only of eikones and not of altars. Ovid, on the other hand, besides adding Janus, refers to ara Pacis (iam adorantes cumque hoc Concordia mitis/ et Romana Salus araque Pacis erit) and it would be disingenuous to say that this is an ara other than the Ara Pacis, especially as his reference to alma Venus, gemonitor Amorum occurs only three lines later, at Fasti 4.1. The janiform configuration of the Ara Pacis may have suggested to Ovid the addition of Janus.

Still, even these additional arguments are not enough to support Hanell’s hypothesis that Salus, Concordia, and Pax therefore appeared on the Ara Pacis Augustae. Dio speaks of eikones, statues, and the theory that Pax, Salus, and Concordia were made an annual sacrifice on 30 March raises more problems than it solves: Pax in that case would have had two

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46 Busing (supra n. 35) 248 n. 7; Galinsky 209–10 with reference to the frieze of the Apollo altar at Arles; Bartman (supra n. 2) 272.
47 Kraus (supra n. 34) 41–42; Helbig II.828–29 no. 2057 (E. Simon), especially with reference to inv. 3693; Holscher in Kaiser Augustus 373–74, no. 206.
48 I follow the interpretation of Simon (supra n. 47) 829 where the relevant documentation can be found; see esp. H. Jucker, Das Bildnis im Blätterkelch. Geschichte und Bedeutung einer römischen Porträtf orm (Biblioteca Helvetica Romana 5, Rome 1961) 201–203. Also germane to the connection of the images of Roma and Venus on the Ara Pacis is the frequent representation of Caesar’s Venus with a shield on her side; see, e.g., Crawford (supra n. 10) 4809–18 and BMCRR I.547 nos. 4169–75. Cf. the denarius of Octavian, issued between 32 and 29 B.C.: RIC I² p. 59 no. 250a.
49 CIL I², pp. 322–23.
53 G. Wissowa, Religion und Kultur der Römer² (Munich 1912) 329.
54 Hanell (supra n. 2) 95–98; followed by Toynbee (supra n. 51) 153–54.
annual festivals at the Ara Pacis, a problem that Hanell tries to resolve by arguing that the sacrifice on 30 January really was not to Pax, but to Augustus. All that can be safely said is that the connection between Ovid’s notice and Dio’s is unclear.\textsuperscript{55} Dio speaks of a statue of Pax being set up somewhere in Rome at the time the Ara Pacis was built. It can be safely assumed that this statue showed Pax in her traditional iconography. There was, therefore, no need to do the same in the much more ambitious, conceptualized, and intellectualized pictorial program of the Ara Pacis Augustae.

Sophisticated programs of this kind did not lack precedent in Rome. A conspicuous example is the honorary monument for Sulla erected by the Mauretanian king Bocchus in the city around 91 B.C.\textsuperscript{56} While presupposing a high degree of intellectual understanding on the part of the viewer, its individual, multivalent images and motifs (including Victoria, Erotes, Hercules, Jupiter’s eagle, and the Dioscuri) lack any relation to one another except for expressing different aspects of Sulla’s ideology. The pictorial program on the Ara Pacis, by contrast, is much more cohesive. Its images, even more so than the mere juxtaposition of emblems on the Bocchus monument, have several significances and challenge especially the educated viewer to discover the many associations that make up the entire program, i.e., the notion of the Pax Augusta. Five related aspects or backgrounds of the resultant and deliberate multivalence need to be considered briefly to provide some context.

1) As Hölscher has masterfully demonstrated with reference especially to numismatic representations of the last century of the Republic,\textsuperscript{57} historical representation, and particularly the representation of formerly shared concepts (such as \textit{fides}, exemplified in the paintings from the third-century Fabian Tomb on the Esquiline),\textsuperscript{58} yields to an unrestrained proliferation of private representations and values. There are disparate efforts to urge the acceptance of such individual values or “programs” as public ones, but all this expresses only the excessive relativization of the \textit{res publica} into a multiplicity of \textit{res privatae}.\textsuperscript{59} Formerly communal values are privatized: the Roma Victrix of the entire Roman people on a denarius of 119 B.C.\textsuperscript{60} changes into the personal goddess of victorious generals from Marius to Caesar, especially the Venus Victrix of Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar.\textsuperscript{61} A good example is one of Caesar’s denarii, struck in 44 B.C., which shows his wreathed head, with the legend \textit{dictator perpetuus} on the obverse, and his ancestress Venus, holding a statuette of Victory in her right hand and a scepter in the left, on the reverse (fig. 17).\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{55} It is significant that Ovid’s otherwise indefatigable modern commentator, Franz Bömer, does not take up this issue at all in his brief annotations on Fast. 3.882 (\textit{P. Ovidius Nasi. Die Fasten} 2 [Heidelberg 1958] 204).

\textsuperscript{56} For a good summary with illustrations and complete bibliography see T. Hölscher in Kaiser Augustus 584–86; cf. Hölscher, \textit{Staatsdenkmal und Publikum} (Xenia 9, Constance 1984) 17–18.


\textsuperscript{58} Helbig I* no. 1600 (B. Andreae); F. Coarelli in \textit{Roma medio-republicana} (Rome1973) 200–208; Hölscher 270–71; for a different interpretation, see E. La Rocca, “Fabio o Fannio,” \textit{DialArch} 3rd ser. 2 (1984) 31–53.


\textsuperscript{60} Crawford (supra n. 10) no. 281; \textit{BMCRR} II.283, no. 555.


\textsuperscript{62} Crawford (supra n. 10) no. 480/7b; \textit{BMCRR} I.546, no. 4155.

\textsuperscript{63} For details, see Hölscher 271–73 and in \textit{Proceedings} (supra n. 57).

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\textbf{Fig. 17. Denarius of Caesar, reverse. Venus Victrix. (Courtesy Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich)}

A related development, which also provides one of the backdrops to the polysemy of Augustan art, is the plethora of personifications into which the representation of formerly communal concepts and abstractions, such as \textit{libertas, pietas, pax}, and \textit{fides}, is dissolved by moneyers who use them for the projection of personal interests.\textsuperscript{63} Their representation, which originated from the cult statues of these deities in their temples, now is freed from such a referential context. Given a virtually unlimited allowance for free play, it develops into a multiplicity of personifications, alle-
Fig. 18. Denarius of Octavian, obverse. Pax or Venus. (Courtesy Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich)

gories, symbols, and emblems that can be combined and recombined in ever new associative constellations. The range of personifications exceeds the availability of clearly differentiated iconographies: the same female head, for instance, can represent Pietas, Libertas, and Venus, whereas the same male head can serve for Vulcan, Saturn, Jupiter, and Neptune. The interchangeability continues on Octavian’s coinage: the female head (fig. 18) on the obverse of one of the denarii he issued as divi filius between 36 and 29 B.C. has been interpreted variously as Venus or Pax, thus constituting an interesting precedent in parvo for the debate on the Ara Pacis relief. Strictly speaking, however, we are not dealing with polysemy, but with neutrality of semiosis. Hence symbols, such as a caduceus and a pilaus, had to be added to help in understanding the identity of the representations. The artists of the Ziolos monument at Aphrodisias achieved the same by simply adding the names of the allegories.

We can see the changes that come about in the pictorial program of the Ara Pacis. Its underpinning is the Augustan social and political program of a return to a central value system: “Peace as prosperity now depends on Roman mores.” Instead of the chorus, though by no means the symphony, of many different speakers and voices in the late Republic, and instead of the discordant din, as reflected by their diverse proclamations, aspirations, achievements, and designs, Augustan public art, parallel to the changed political situation, marks the return to a far more limited, repetitive, and didactic selection of motifs that convey traditional and shared values. With the Augustan restoration of genuine meaning to such concepts, in particular that of the res publica, in the political and moral realms comes the establishment of genuine polysemy to the images and symbols in art: the female personification on the Ara Pacis is not simply a chiffre that can be filled in as one wishes but has a variety of significances that complement one another. This is accompanied by another reciprocal process: compared with the confusing multiplicity of Republican representations (and individual “programs”) there is now a reduction, as we just noted, in Augustan public art in general to a few repeated motifs. This quantitative reduction, however, is more than compensated for by the multiplicity of associations and purposely evoked meanings. A corresponding development is that the coin issues with indefinite identities disappear; there are no representations of Libertas, for instance, nor of Pax in Augustan coinage after the cistophoric series of 28 B.C. Even there, Pax is represented not with a generic divine head, but unambiguously with a caduceus and the accompanying legend PAX (fig. 19).

64 See the chapter on “Polyvalence et diversité des effigies divines” in H. Zehnacker, Moneta. Recherches sur l’organisation des émissions monétaires de la République romaine (BEFAR 222, Rome 1973) ii.764–821.

RIC I² p. 59 no. 251; Grueber, BMCRR II.9, nos. 4327–32. Grueber interprets the head as Pax while Mattingly, as did Babelon earlier, regards the portrait as that of Venus. J.B. Giard, Catalogue des monnaies de l’Empire romain. I. Auguste (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1976) 65 no. 6 proposes Pax or Concordia, and designates almost the same head (no. 5) as Venus. Cf. A. Wlosok, Die Göttin Venus in Vergils Aeneis (Heidelberg 1967) 120 n. 67 with further bibliography.


RIC I² p. 79, no. 476; BMCRE 1.112, no. 691; Giard (supra n. 65) 908–10; C.H.V. Sutherland, The Cistophori of

Fig. 19. Cistophorus of Augustus, reverse. Pax. (Courtesy American Numismatic Society, New York)
2) The intentional multiplicity of meanings can be experienced on several levels, depending on the sophistication of the viewer. To some, the pictorial program would be understandable in relatively simple terms: prosperity; a linking of the Augustan present to the Roman past in the basic manner of Vergil’s Aeneid; references to peace and relaxed tranquillity, as is indicated, too, by the demeanor of some of the participants in the procession. Cognoscenti would appreciate the complex allusiveness of the imagery far more. For them, the function and appeal of individual reliefs and their entirety would be that of what Zanker has called an Andachtsbild or "contemplative picture": you can go back and again, look at the icons, and discover new meanings and associations. They are rooted in rich artistic, literary, religious, and mythological traditions. It is like reading the Aeneid. At the same time, it is not a matter of purely subjective and impressionistic understandings, which would lead to misinterpretation, but the variety of evocations operates within the framework of a clearly established overall meaning.

3) This intentional multivalence begins with the architectural configuration of the Ara Pacis and is enhanced by the multiplicity of artistic traditions on which it draws and the concomitant diversity of artistic styles. The building itself combines aspects of the augural templum and the shrines of Janus. In addition, the Ara Pacis was erected in lieu of a triumph, and despite its understatement on the relief decoration of the monument itself the triumphal dimension results from the building's incorporation into the design of the Holorogium.

Similar multiplicity of meaning inheres in the presentation of the "processions." They do not represent a specific, one-dimensional historical event, such as the constitutio or dedicatio. The representation of the ceremony includes, along with the stone garlands hung up on the inside of the enclosure walls, elements that fit both events, but it goes beyond both in the manner of the Boscoreale cups. The principal intent is to present the idea of the return of Augustus, the guarantor (auctor) of peace; formally, it presents "the meeting that could have taken place." The subordination of actual "reality" to the guiding ideas behind it is the hallmark, e.g., of Augustus's Res Gestae. It was a typically Roman concept whose antecedents are found, in different ways, in Republican art and in the very idea of the res publica as a series of normative concepts. Their implementation is not so much an individual action as a reflection of the underlying concept; the implementing actions, therefore, are thought of as repetitive and generic rather than specific. Hence it is also left open whether Augustus and his entourage form two processions, or one, or should be envisaged as standing in a circle. But there is no ambiguity about the central intent: the attention is focused on Augustus, and he, his arrival (adventus), and the rite he is performing are enhanced by the corresponding representation of the adventus of Aeneas on the adjacent panel on the west side.

Similarly, the well-documented multiplicity of artistic precedents and "citations"—Greek, Etruscan, Pompeian, and Roman—and styles (Atticizing, Hellenistic, and Roman) contribute to evoking a plethora of traditions and types. In short, the monument was deliberately designed to have an unparalleled multiplicity of dimensions that defy reductionism except in the sense that they harmoniously express the concept of the Pax Augusta in all the richness of its associations.

4) Another source of the artistic syncretism of the Tellus/Venus/Pax/Ceres relief is syncretism in religion and cult. Venus and Ceres, for example, had a joint cult. Similarly, there is a great deal of intermingling between the cults of Tellus and Ceres. The most

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Augustus (London 1970) 12–14, 40–44, 88–90, pls. 1–2, 15–17. The issuing mint was Ephesus.

71 Torelli 27–35; Horologium: E. Buchner, Die Sonnenwahr
    des Augustus (Mainz 1982).

72 Torelli 55 with reference to earlier scholarship; Settis
    (supra n. 3) 421; Borbein (supra n. 24) 245–46, 260; cf.
    G.M. Koeppel, "Die historischen Reliefs der römischen
    who considers the processional frizes as representing, in a
    general way, a supplicatio upon Augustus’s return.

73 Cf. Hölscher 314 and in Kaiser Augustus 360; cf. W.
    Kunkei's definition of the Republican constitution as a "Sys-
    tem traditioneller Begriffe und Leitsätze, die keineswegs
    immer mit der politischen Realität Schritt gehalten haben"
    (Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung des römischen Kriminalver-
    fahrens in voraurianischer Zeit [Münch 1962] 76) and Bor-
    bein’s remarks on "interpreted reality" taking precedence
    over actual reality (supra n. 24, 246, with reference to the
    "processions" of the Ara Pacis).

74 See, e.g., G. Koeppel, "The Role of Pictorial Models in
    the Creation of Historical Relief during the Age of Augustus,
    in Winke (supra n. 38) 89–105; Borbein (supra n. 24)
    249–52; for the floral frieze: Kraus (supra n. 34) and Börker
    (supra n. 35); for various artistic styles: M. Pallottino, "L’Ara
    Pacis e i suoi problemi artistici," Bâl 32 (1938) 162–78 and
    T. Hölscher, Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System
    (SBHeid 1987) 45–49.

75 Documentation in Galinsky 238 n. 142. B. Spaeth has
    further made me aware of the following: CIL 3.10307, 6090,
    3170; 10.5191; EphEp 8.315, 855 (Pompeii); cf. G. Colonna,
    "Sul sacerdozio peligro de Cerere e Venere," ArchChI 8 (1956)
    216–17; I. Chirassi-Colombo, "Funzioni politiche ed implica-
    zioni culturali nell'ideologia religiosa di Ceres nell' impero

76 H. le Bonnier, Le culte de Cérès à Rome. Des origines à
prominent example in the Augustan ambience is the coalescence of Apollo and Sol.77 Given this phenomenon alone, it is impossible to maintain that the multiple identification of this figure would run counter to the Roman mentality.

5) The general context of the Augustan culture is characterized precisely by the same deliberate utilization of multivalency. In the political culture, this applies to terms like auctoritas, libertas, pater patriae, and res publica.78 The overall moral and guiding meaning is always clear. It is combined with a broad range of applications, and the associated elasticity and nuances of such terms were ideally suited for the complexity and variety of situations in which these concepts were operative. As for Augustan literature, to give but one example, the characters in Vergil’s Aeneid are similarly multilayered.79

This raises one final and important issue. How are the viewers to respond? What kind of identification, if any, are they to make of “Tellus”? How can we be sure that such an identification corresponds to the intent of the creators?

All these questions are at the center of current literary and aesthetic theory.80 Perhaps those who propose the reduction of the image to one meaning do so to stay clear of the deconstructionist chaos that might prevail otherwise. But there are no grounds for such misgivings. Augustan public art and, for that matter, some of Augustan poetry, is distinguished precisely by the combination of two aspects modern theory tends to wall off from one another: a central, authorial, and moral meaning and an invitation to viewer or reader participation. The viewer of the “Tellus” relief is invited, by means of an obviously multidimensional iconography, to discover the remarkable and intentional depth and multiplicity of meaningful associations.81 It is a process that Zanker has tried to capture with the notion of the Andachtsbild. This involves the connections with the representations on the other friezes, the floral decorations, and the monument as a whole. It is a deliberately participatory process, in accordance with the meaning of auctoritas and with the Augustan political milieu, which was far too dynamic to conform to the simple schema of a party leader handing down orders.82

Besides the overall meaning of the Ara Pacis, that of the southeast relief is clear also: whether Tellus, Venus, Pax, or Ceres, the deity and her companion figures personify the abundance of vegetation and the blessings of peace on land and sea. They also have a dynastic dimension, being related to the domus Augusta as are the other reliefs. To some, including myself, the aspect of Venus may prevail,83 to others, that of Pax, and so on. None are incompatible in terms of the iconography, which is a shared one, and the overall meaning. The artistic success of the Ara Pacis was precisely that it appealed to many different sensibilities and people, regardless of educational or social background. Its extraordinary degree of conceptualization, in contrast to the Zoilos frieze and the

80 Cf. my Introduction (“The Interpretation of Roman Poetry and the Contemporary Critical Scene”) in The Inter-

pertation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics? (Frankfurt 1992) 1–40; my chapter on “Reading the Aeneid in Modern Times” in Classical and Modern Interactions (Austin 1992); and, in terms of a general hermeneutic for Roman art, Holscher (supra n. 74).
81 This well-known aspect of the Ara Pacis has been articulated excellently by Zanker 178–81; cf. Setti’s (supra n. 3) 423–24 and E. La Rocca’s Introduction to Kaiser Augustus 22–23. Cf., from a somewhat different orientation, J. Pollini, “Time, Narrativity, and Dynastic Constructs in Augustan Art and Thought,” AJA 91 (1987) 298.
82 For a revision of Syme’s view of Augustus (The Roman Revolution [Oxford 1939]) see now the essay collection edited by Raaflaub and Toher (supra n. 68).
83 Without following Sauron’s (supra n. 35) extravagant interpretation of the relationship between the floral frieze and the individuals of the procession, a more general symbolic relationship may well exist: the floral frieze develops from one root only, as did the Julian family from Venus Genetrix, and the acanthus and floral decoration, in an association with Victoria Caesaris who incorporated Venus Genetrix and Venus Victrix, was used for the dynastic Temple of Divus Julius. Kenner (supra n. 2) 41–42 suggests that the name of the central figure of the Ara Pacis relief was left deliberately indeterminate, but “ihr schönster Name soll nach dem schweigenden Wunsch des Augustus Venus sein.” The procedure would be typical of his auctoritas.
plaining themselves. 86 In a similar vein, W. Weber three years earlier commented on one of the most significant chapters of the Res Gestae, that dealing with his auctoritas (34), by saying that Augustus "likes to veil things and leaves their interpretation to others." 87 It is in the context of this spirit that the Ara Pacis relief needs to be understood. With reference to Roman art, it may suffice to cite the concluding comments Karl Lehmann-Hartleben made over 60 years ago on the sculptural program on a provincial Augustan altar in the Museo Cívico in Bologna. 88 There we do find a caduceus, held by Mercury/Octavius who follows a briskly striding Roma (fig. 20). Other symbols, such as cornucopiae ending in capricorn heads, round out the ensemble of images. The upper part of the altar is not preserved, nor is there an identifying inscription. In response to some comments by Rostovtzeff, Lehmann-Hartleben used the occasion to characterize Augustan art in general:

Ob wir den Altar der Roma und dem Mercurius, oder ihr und dem Genius Augusti geweiht denken sollen, muss beim Fehlen der Inschrift dahingestellt bleiben. Der Synkretismus der Symbole wird in der künstlerischen Formensprache des augusteischen Zeitalters zu einer fein geschliffenen Sprachform, die durch immer wechselnde Verbindung einen jedesmal neuen Ausdruck schafft. Es kommt weder auf die griechische Göttergestalt als persönliches Element an, noch auf die begrifflich-zweckmässige Funktionsklarheit der altrömischen Gottesvorstellung, noch endlich auf die durch Zuteilung einmaliger Attribute bewirkte allegorische Einzelgestalt der neueren Zeit. Sondern in unendlichen Variationen spielt die Phantasie um das allgemeine Prinzip des Göttlichen als Wirkungsursprung und zieht dabei Gestalten, Attribute und religiöse Ideen in wechselnder Verbindung heran... Mit "Realismus" oder "Wirklichkeitssinn," den man immer wieder als Grundprinzip der römischen Kunst proklamiert, hat freilich auch das nichts zu tun. 89

In the sculptural program of the Ara Pacis, this kind of concept is pushed to unprecedented heights. That, too, is an aspect that makes the Ara Pacis the most representative work of Augustan art. It was an experiment like so much of Augustus's political dispensation and the Augustan culture in general, which were far from static. 90 In the case of the "Tellus"

85 Servius ad Aen. 1.1: "cano" polysemus sermo est; see the comments of A. Patterson, Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery (Berkeley 1987) 30.
86 Syme (supra n. 82) 524.
87 Weber (supra n. 78) 221: "Er liebt die Verhüllung und überlässt anderen ihre Deutung."
89 Lehmann-Hartleben (supra n. 88) 174–75. The italics are those of the original text.
relief, the experimentation with an exceptional degree of polysemy was scaled down on the well-known relief from Carthage (fig. 21): the seated figure now clearly is an earth goddess, accompanied by an astral goddess on the left and a male sea deity on the right. Concern for greater intelligibility takes precedence over multiplicity of meaning and associations; it is regrettable that we know nothing about the monument of which the Carthage relief was a part nor about the context in which it was found.

ADDENDUM

After this article went into print, John Elsner’s on “Cult and Sculpture: Sacrifice in the Ara Pacis Augusta” appeared in JRS 81 (1991) 50–61. The focus of Elsner’s discussion is not on iconographic matters, but on a concept of interpretation that allows for alternative readings and varied reader response, including irony and subversion. Hence the final artistic product is full of “ambivalences.” In that sense, it bears on the issue of what I call “polysemy.”

Our definitions, however, are quite different. To anyone conversant especially with the prevailing Anglo-American interpretation of Augustan poetry in the last 20 years or so, Elsner’s argumentation is quite familiar and is characterized by the same strengths and weaknesses. The former include a reaction formation against monolithic, ideological interpretations and more emphasis on the participation of the reader. As I briefly point out, such issues, and especially the problems of multiple interpretations and their validity or hierarchy, are at the center of the modern critical or theoretical debate, and it is important for Latinists (and Roman art historians) to use some methodological and hermeneutical precision instead of merrily confusing, to use only one example, intentionality and reception; I discuss these matters in more detail in the works cited in note 80. For the art historian (emphasis on historian), it is not enough to say that one subversive reading or the other is suggesting itself; he or she will need to produce evidence or at least the strong likelihood that a given artifact or monument

91 Bibliography in de Grummond 674 n. 70; see also Hölscher 1984 (supra n. 56) 31.
was read in that sort of key. We all have learned, in the past two decades, that “no text is resistant to interpretation” (Stanley Fish) or, to quote Gerald Graff, that “under the right kind of close inspection,” ambiguity, ambivalence, and irony somehow are never hard to find in poetry (Professing Literature. An Institutional History [Chicago 1987] 206). Works of art, and especially complex ones, are easily susceptible to such interpretive schemes, too.

The polysysem that I am discussing is different. It is set against the background of a discernible and documented iconographic tradition. It recognizes the peculiar dynamic of the Augustan culture of calling for wide viewer, reader, and, yes, even political participation within the framework of a guiding auctoris, a concept that is both elastic and precise. The phenomenon, of which the Ara Pacis is an excellent example, is too nuanced to be treated in terms of the convenient scholarly dichotomies such as Hellenistic vs. Classical, public vs. private, or ideology vs. subversiveness. A related problem, shared by Elsner, is that Augustan scholars do not take the trouble to define concepts such as “ideology,” let alone refer to modern discussions of the subject (cf. Duncan Kennedy’s review of T. Woodman and D. West, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus [Cambridge 1984] in Liverpool Classical Monthly 9.10 [Dec. 1984] 158–60).

There is, then, plenty of middle ground between the monolithic, Sysyecn view of the Augustan dispensation—and here Zanker deserves more credit than Elsner gives him for debunking the notion of “propaganda” and documenting the process of creative reciprocity—and the notion that any subjective interpretation that we can cleverly construct today must be 1) subversive and 2) also have been on the minds of a Roman audience at the time. This middle ground allows for the plentiful existence of contradictions and creative tensions, and the scholar’s task is precisely to work through these rather than be content with endlessly hectoring about “ambiguities” while not presenting convincing documentation. The Augustan notion of the Golden Age, for instance, in both art and literature is far from the idyll that Elsner, Zanker, and L’Orange would have us believe, but incorporates the seemingly conflicting notions of peace and war, and of labor and repose (cf. the apt summation of this as “pace laboriosa” by E. Montanari, Encyclopaedia Virgiliana V, 686, s.v. Saturno. Such concepts are presented as complementary rather than disjunctive. We can add to them death and life. The opposition, therefore, that Elsner is trying to build between the animals on the “Tellus” panel and the same kind of animals being led to slaughter on the smaller friezes (with the resulting bucchana on the inside of the precinct walls) is unfounded and his resultant overinterpretations about “the nature of the Principate itself” go further astray yet. In the current nonjudgmental and trivializing climate of literary interpretation there are no such things any more as misinterpretations of the “private voice” of Vergil, for instance. To apply the same approaches to as carefully planned and complex an official monument as the Ara Pacis is an even more serious mistake. In order to view the Ara Pacis as something more than an instrument of ideology and in order to recognize its intentional and sophisticated multiplicity of meanings we need not resort to misreading it in terms of facile ambivalences that were far from the minds of its creators.

As scholars of ancient art, archaeology, and literature we are fortunate to be dealing with dead people who cannot talk back. It is salutary to realize that this inability is due to the ravages of time rather than their volition and that live authors and artists tend to resist the currently fashionable modus interpretandi. John Updike’s comment is typical: “It is in the nature of deconstruction to rob literary works of their intended content, substituting instead the subliminal messages the author did not intend” (New York Times Book Review [10 June 1990] 40). Or, as I found out first-hand, some Classicizing postmodern architects will simply disagree that the production of irony was their intent, even if a given building may strike some viewers (and professional architectural critics in particular) as ironic (cf. my discussion in ch. 1 of Classical and Modern Interactions [supra n. 80] of John Blatteau’s remodeling of a branch of the Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C.). Like many of its current counterparts on Augustan poetry, Elsner’s article, which has many strong points, too (especially his discussion of general versus individual representation of cult acts, which intersects with some of my comments on the representation of underlying concepts as opposed to that of individual actions), illustrates the ongoing need for careful distinctions such as H.R. Jauss’s “horizons of expectation,” which differentiate between the reception of a work of literature (also applicable to art) at its own time and in later times. Similarly useful is E.D. Hirsch’s distinction between the “meaning” of a work of literature, which is intended for it by its author, and its “significance,” which is any interpretation given to it by others (Validity in Interpretation, New Haven 1967). The melding of such horizons in the 1930s did a great deal of lasting damage to the study of Augustan art; it is important that we not repeat the same mistakes again even in an ostensibly more academic fashion.

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