VENUS GENETRIX OUTSIDE ROME

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WHEN CAESAR ESTABLISHED in Rome a cult in honor of Venus Genetrix, he added a new dimension to Roman public religion. New cults had often been established in the past, but none had the personal associations that this one did. Although the epithet "Genetrix" had been used of Venus in poetry for over a century, it was as an ancestral goddess of the Roman people in general. Caesar's family, the Iulii, however, claimed direct descent from Venus through Iulus, the son of Aeneas, and apparently honored her as their particular ancestral deity. In establishing his cult of Venus Genetrix, Caesar was for all practical purposes giving a public form to this family cult, and thereby expressing in religious terms his unique standing in the state.[1] This aspect of the cult has long been recognized and has rightly been the subject of much discussion, for it was in these personal associations that the cult was an innovation. In institution and organization, on the other hand, it was traditional enough: Caesar vowed a temple as a general during a battle, dedicated it as a Roman magistrate, and presumably entered an annual sacrifice into the civic calendar as *pontifex maximus*.[2]

I owe thanks to Maura Lafferty and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The following works will be referred to by author's name only: P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford 1971; reprinted with corrections, 1987); A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13.2 (Rome 1963); B. Galsterer-Kröll, "Untersuchungen zu den Beinamen der Städte des Imperium Romanum," *EpigStud* 9 (1972) 44–145; C. Koch, "Venus," *RE* 8A (1955) 828–887; R. Schilling, *La Religion romaine de Vénus depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d'Auguste* (Paris 1954; reprinted with new preface, 1982); S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971); G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*[2] (Munich 1912).

[1]Sulla's cult of Venus Felix is discussed below; Pompey established a cult in honor of Venus Victrix (Schilling 296–301), but did not claim kinship with her. "Genetrix": Enn. *Ann.* 58 Skutsch; Lucr. 1.1; cf. "Aeneidum genetrix" in a graffito from Pompeii (*CIL* IV 3072). Family cult of the Iulii: Weinstock 15–18; Venus Genetrix in general: Weinstock 80–90 and Schilling 301–324.

[2]According to Appian (*BCiv.* 2.68 and 102), Caesar made his vow at Pharsalus; for such vows in general, see T. Mommsen, *Römische Staatsrecht*[3] (Leipzig 1887-88) 3.1049–62. Weinstock 81–82 argues that Appian must be incorrect, since Caesar did not report his victory to the Senate (Dio 42.18.1); instead, the temple was planned as part of the new forum from the beginning. But Caesar could break tradition by celebrating a triumph after Munda (Dio 43.42.1–2; Suet. *Iul.* 37.1), and he may have done so after Pharsalus in honoring his vow. Moreover, the temple was dedicated during his quadruple triumph in 46 B.C. (Dio 43.22.2; App. *BCiv.* 2.102), which would have

Although there was nothing unusual about the form of the cult in Rome, Stefan Weinstock has argued that Caesar "established the cult of his Venus outside Rome also" (90). This is rather more unusual. Despite the fact that Rome was the ruling power of an empire, and despite the fact that the inhabitants of the entire Italian peninsula were by now its citizens, its religion was still that of a city. That is, its cults were specifically those of *urbs Roma*, tied to specific locations in the city or its immediate vicinity. The other communities in Italy were in turn responsible for determining and observing their own *sacra publica*. Although these often conformed to the public cults of Rome, there was also a great deal of local variety. Cities that had originally been independent retained the cults that had existed before their acquisition of Roman status, while in newly founded colonies the local town councils were responsible for the selection of their own *sacra publica*.[3] If Weinstock is right, then, and Caesar did establish his new cult outside of Rome, he was not only introducing a new personal aspect into public religion, but was setting a precedent for the direct involvement of the central government in the public religion of local communities. This argument raises in an acute form the general question of Roman religious policy in the imperial period. While most historians would agree that the central government had a significant impact on local *sacra publica*, they often leave its precise role unexamined. As a result, one sees in discussions of imperial religion vague terms such as "official cults," which imply without defining some active involvement in local religion by Rome. The cult of Venus Genetrix, as presented by Weinstock, allows us to examine in a particular case how religious policies set in Rome affected the public religion of local communities.

Weinstock begins his argument by pointing out that a number of colonies founded or planned by Caesar are known to have included the epithet "Veneria" in their official titles; he sees a precedent for this in Sulla's foundation of "colonia Veneria Cornelia" in Pompeii. He then asserts that "the principal cult of such colonies naturally belonged to Venus," citing the fact that the charter of the Caesarian colony of Urso in Spain specified annual games in honor of Venus.[4] The key piece of evidence in this argument is thus the cult of Venus in Urso. This town is unique among Caesarian colonies in that

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distracted attention from its associations with Pharsalus. The annual sacrifice took place on September 26: Degrassi p. 514.

[3]The festivals in the Fasti Praenestini (Degrassi no. 17), which are largely complete for the months January through April, correspond closely to those in the Roman calendar, but also include a sacrifice on April 10 and 11 for the old local goddess Fortuna Primigenia; likewise, the Fasti Guidizzolenses (Degrassi no. 40) from the vicinity of Brixia include a sacrifice to the Celtic goddess Epona on December 18.

[4]Weinstock 90.

substantial portions of its foundation charter are extant, including among other matters the regulations for the establishment of its *sacra publica*. In keeping with Roman traditions, these entrust to the decurions the selection and organization of public cults. At the same time, however, the charter does specify two particular cults. One is that of the Capitoline Triad, in whose honor the *duoviri* were required to present four days, and the aediles three days, of *ludi scaenici*. These were of course the great patron deities of Rome, and the games perhaps served as smaller versions of the *ludi Romani*. The other exception is the cult of Venus, in whose honor the aediles were required to present one day of games in the circus or the forum. Since her traditional importance in Rome was in no way comparable to that of the Capitoline Triad, it is very likely that this reference to her cult was due either to Caesar himself or to one of his supporters. Venus also appears in the official title of Urso, "colonia Genetiva," an allusion to her epithet Genetrix. It is the connection between this colonial title and the games stipulated in the charter that provides the essential point of Weinstock's argument. As he sees it, Caesar founded (or at least planned) the colony, named it after his ancestral deity, and ensured that her cult would be one of its major *sacra publica*.[5] By using the situation in Urso as a model, Weinstock then assumes that the title "Veneria" found in other colonies also referred to Venus Genetrix, that these towns had public cults in her honor, and that Caesar was directly or indirectly responsible for their existence. To assess the validity of this assumption, we must examine separately the evidence for the various colonies.

It will be useful, however, to consider first the alleged precedent of Sulla, who did after all provide Caesar with a number of other precedents. We know that Sulla founded a veteran colony at Pompeii, while an inscription of Augustan date describes the city as "colonia Veneria Cornelia." Although it is possible that this title was adopted later for purposes of prestige (just as several towns in Africa assumed the epithet "Mariana"), given the later reputation of Sulla and of his veteran settlements, it is unlikely that Pompeii would have decided voluntarily to draw attention to this episode in its history. We may thus accept it as contemporary with the actual foundation.[6]

[5] *Lex Coloniae Genitivae Iuliae sive Ursonensis*: *ILS* 6087 = *FIRA* I no. 21; see also the translation of E. G. Hardy, *Roman Laws and Charters* (Oxford 1913). Games: paragraphs 70 and 71. The title of Urso is usually given as "colonia Genetiva Iulia": frequently in the charter; also *ILS* 2233; see further Galsterer-Kröll 110, no. 147. Galsterer-Kröll 67, n. 28 rejects the connection of "Genetiva" with "Genetrix," but she is surely mistaken; for a parallel we might note that Varro (*ap.* Macrob. *Sat.* 3.6.5) translated the Greek title "Genetor," used in the cult of Apollo at Delos (Diog. Laert. 8.13; Iambl. *VPyth.* 25), as "Genetivus."

[6] Sulla's colony at Pompeii: Cic. *Sull.* 60–62; cf. Brunt 300–312. Title: *ILS* 5915; the inscription was erected when M. Holconius Rufus was *duovir iure dicundo* for the third

Both elements in this title are striking. The use of the founder's own *nomen*, in this case "Cornelia," became standard in the titles of Caesarian and later imperial foundations, but was at the time of Sulla something of an innovation. In the Hellenistic kingdoms of the east, rulers customarily bestowed their names on new foundations in a tradition that extended back to Philip II, while in the Roman world, the informal communities called *fora* sometimes took their names from individuals, especially those located on roads, such as Forum Appii on the Via Appia. Beginning in the second century B.C., Roman generals who resettled provincial towns in the course of military campaigns sometimes also lent them their names. Thus a town in Spain, organized after a victory over the Celtiberians in 178 B.C. by the elder Ti. Sempronius Gracchus, bore the name Gracchuris. The first person to extend the practice to formal colonies of Roman citizens was evidently Marius, if "colonia Mariana" in Corsica was actually named by him.[7]

Since the use of the founder's *nomen* as a civic epithet was clearly a means of stressing his association with the town, the juxtaposition of "Cornelia" with "Veneria" in the colonial title of Pompeii suggests that the latter was also a personal reference. The context for such a reference is ready at hand, since Wissowa and others have argued that Sulla was especially devoted to Venus, and established a new public cult in honor of Venus Felix both in Rome and elsewhere.[8] In addition to the epithet "Veneria," two other types of evidence from Pompeii are adduced in support of this hypothesis. The first is an iconographic type of Venus found in several wall paintings and peculiar to Pompeii. This is a regal Venus, always fully clothed, usually wearing a crown and holding a scepter and a rudder. Since the rudder was an attribute of the goddess Fortuna, people have seen in these paintings the Venus Felix of Sulla whose image has disappeared from Rome itself. There are also the remains of a temple, which Mau identified as that of Venus Pompeiana on the basis of a statuette of Venus and a

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time; the same man appears as *duovir* in *CIL* X 890, which can be dated to 8/7 B.C. "Mariana" in African towns: *ILS* 1334 and 6790; cf. Brunt 577–580, and *idem*, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford 1988) 278–280.

[7]On the use of founder's name in civic titles, see in general Galsterer-Kröll; on *fora*, see Brunt 570–576 and 715. Gracchuris: Pliny *HN* 3.24; cf. Livy 41.26.1; App. *Hisp.* 43; Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 5.3–4. Cf. at a later date Metellinum, perhaps founded by Metellus Pius (Pliny *HN* 4.117), and Pompeiopolis in Cilicia (App. *Mith.* 115). "Colonia Mariana": Pliny *HN* 3.80, Mela 2.122, Sen. *Helv.* 7.9.

[8]There is a possible parallel for Pompeii in the town of Aleria in Corsica, which according to Pliny (*HN* 3.80) was founded by Sulla; cf. Sen. *Helv.* 7.9 and Mela 2.122. In *CIL* X 8035 its name is abbreviated as "C. V. P. R. [A.]," which A. Grassi (cited with reservations by Mommsen *ad loc.*) proposed to resolve "colonia Veneria Pacensis Restituta"; he was followed by J. Carcopino, who proposed to read in *AE* 1964, 50 "c(olonia) V(eneria) I(ulia) R(estituta) A(leria)"; for neither expansion, however, is there any firm supporting evidence.

bronze rudder, similar to that held by Venus in the wall paintings, that were found on the site. Although later phases of construction have obscured the earliest building, enough remains that its date can be set firmly within the first twenty-five years or so of the colony's existence.[9] It is thus tempting to think that, like Caesar after him, Sulla instituted the cult of his patron deity in his foundation and that "colonia Veneria Cornelia" provides an exact parallel to "colonia Genetiva Iulia."

This temptation should be resisted, for two reasons. First, Sulla's cultivation of Venus is not so certain as some writers have suggested.[10] The evidence for his activities in the East, such as Plutarch's assertion that in Greek documents he used the *cognomen* Epaphroditos, suggests a public cultivation of Aphrodite, but as J. P. V. D. Balsdon has argued, they need not have entailed a cult in the West. There is in fact very little evidence for a Latin cult of Venus Felix. No ancient source mentions that Sulla established a cult of Venus Felix or built a temple in her honor. Sulla did take the Latin *cognomen* Felix, but there is no good reason to think that this was an equivalent of Epaphroditos: its connotations were clear enough without reference to any particular deity such as Venus. In the imperial period Venus Felix appears on a medallion and in a few inscriptions, one of which suggests some sort of shrine.[11] The evidence is scanty, however, and none of it predates the second century A.D. The attribution to Sulla of such a cult is thus very uncertain.

The second and more important reason to doubt the association of the epithet "Veneria" with Sulla is the fact that there was a distinctive cult of Venus in Pompeii long before Sulla established his colony there. Venus

[9]Depictions of Venus in Pompeii: M. Della Corte, "Venus Pompeiana," *Ausonia* 10 (1921) 64–87; on the rudder, see A. Göttlicher, "Fortuna Gubernatrix: Das Steuerruder als römisches Glückssymbol," *AntW* 12.4 (1981) 27–33; according to Wissowa, this depiction of Venus was due to Sulla, but see the criticism of Koch 841–842. Temple of Venus Pompeiana: A. Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art* (rev. ed., New York 1902) 124–129; for an updated account, see L. Richardson, *Pompeii: An Architectural History* (Baltimore 1988) 277–281.

[10]Arguments for the Sullan cult have been made, e.g., by Wissowa 291 and Schilling 272–295; cogent objections were raised by J. P. V. D. Balsdon, "Sulla Felix," *JRS* 41 (1951) 1–10; cf. Koch 860–863; see more recently the moderate views of A. Keaveney, "Sulla and the Gods," in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* (Brussels 1983, Coll. *Latomus* 180) 3.44–79, at 60–65.

[11]The evidence concerning Sulla's *cognomen* is somewhat confusing. Appian (*BCiv.* 1.97) says that the Senate confirmed the name Epaphroditos, but goes on to say that another of his names was Faustus (which he simply transliterates) and says earlier that the name the Senate put on his statue was Eutychês (= Felix): he has clearly garbled his sources. Plutarch, however, says that Sulla took the name Eutychês (explaining that this is the meaning of "Felix"), but that in writing to Greeks he used the name Epaphroditos (*Sulla* 34.2). Medallion of Venus Felix: R. Turcan, *Religion romaine* (Leiden 1988) 29, no. 50; inscriptions: *CIL* VI 8710 and 30831; *ILS* 3166; see further Koch 862–863.

was an old Italic goddess, and her cult was particularly well established in Campania and southern Latium. In the cities of this region she was worshipped in peculiar and apparently very old forms, such as the Venus Iovia attested in Capua. In Pompeii, Venus is in a few inscriptions given the epithet "Fisica." The meaning of this epithet is obscure, all the more so because it is otherwise used only of Mefitis, the goddess of noxious odors. Some scholars have interpreted this word as a simple transliteration of the Greek *physika*, while others have connected it with various Oscan roots. In either case, however, it indicates a local cult of Venus that existed before the activity of Sulla. There is further evidence for this in a few Oscan inscriptions to Herentas. Although little is known of this deity, she must have been equated with Venus, since in one inscription she is given the epithet "Herukina," i.e., Erycina. Lastly, in the imperial period Pompeii was considered particularly favored by Venus, and in some graffiti Venus is given the name "Pompeiana." While these manifestations could be attributed to a Sullan cult, in one graffito we find Venus Fisica Pompeiana. The association of the two epithets thus suggests that the "Pompeian" Venus was the goddess whose cult had long been established there, not a goddess introduced by Sulla.[12]

Since there was in Pompeii a well established local cult of Venus, it is reasonable to associate the epithet "Veneria" with that cult and not with the hypothetical Sullan cult. If we consider the theophoric epithets of previous colonial foundations, this association seems all the more likely. For example, several Gracchan colonies bore names based on those of deities, the most famous being the abortive Iunonia established on the site of Carthage. At a slightly later date there was the foundation of Narbo Martius in southern Gaul. In both cases, the reference was almost certainly to local deities, since "Iuno" was the name the Romans gave to the old Punic goddess Tanit, while "Mars" was used of a number of important Celtic deities.[13] These precedents, together with the evidence for an old and distinctive local cult

[12]Venus in Campania and Latium: Koch 836–838; Venus Iovia in Capua: *ILS* 3185 and *CIL* X 3777; also in Nola: *AE* 1971, 85; cf. the *sacerdos Ioviae Veneriae* in Abella: *ILS* 3186. Venus Fisica in Pompeii: *ILS* 3180 and *CIL* IV 6865. "Fisica" is used of Mefitis in *CIL* X 203 from Grumentum; on Mefitis, see M. Lejeune, "Méfitis, déesse osque," *CRAI* 1986, 202–213. The meaning of *fisica* is discussed by Schilling 383–388, who supports the Greek origin, and by Koch 843–844, who argues for an Oscan derivation with the significance *fidelis*. Herentas: G. Radke, *Die Götter Altitaliens*[2] (Münster 1979) 142–143. Pompeii as a seat of Venus: Mart. 4.44.5 and Stat. *Silvae* 5.3.164. Venus Pompeiana: *CIL* IV 6399, 2457, and 4007; *ILS* 5138. Fisica Pompeiana: *CIL* IV 1520.

[13]Iunonia: Plut. *C. Gracch.* 11, Solinus 27.11; the Roman identification of the chief Carthaginian goddess as Juno is familiar from Vergil, but probably goes back to Ennius: D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford 1991) 125–127 and 130–131. Mars in Gaul: F. M. Heichelheim, *RE* 14 (1930) 1937–63.

of Venus in Pompeii, make it highly probable that the epithet "Veneria," as well as the cult centered in the new temple, referred to the traditional local goddess. At the most, one might argue that Sulla's interest in Venus led him to give new emphasis to this old cult.

We may now turn to the Caesarian foundations that bore the epithet "Veneria" as part of their title. Weinstock notes three of these by name: Sicca and Rusicade in Africa, and Dyrrachium in Illyricum. Of these three examples, we can now eliminate Dyrrachium from the start. The only evidence for its epithet is a coin with the inscription CIVE TITAR IIVIR D D, which Michael Grant assigned on stylistic grounds to Dyrrachium. Identifying a female bust in another coin as Venus, he proposed that the first four letters were an abbreviation of "colonia Iulia Veneria." This evidence for the epithet "Veneria" was long accepted, but the coins in question have now been securely assigned to other towns.[14] Since there is no other evidence that Dyrrachium had the epithet "Veneria," we are left with the two African towns. As Weinstock himself concedes, neither was an actual Caesarian foundation: Sicca was evidently founded by Augustus, while Rusicade was founded by the mercenary general and Caesarian supporter P. Sittius. One could of course argue that both men had an interest in spreading Caesar's cult of Venus Genetrix, but in neither case is there much reason to link the eponymous goddess with the Caesarian deity.

To begin with, we should consider Rusicade in the context of the other Sittian colonies. Sittius, an *eques* from Nuceria in Campania, established himself during the civil wars as a mercenary leader in support of Caesar, and was rewarded by him with a principality centered around Cirta. Although Sittius himself was killed by an African chieftain in 44 and his territory soon added to the province of Africa, it continued to function as a distinct political unit. This unit, which also contained the towns of Rusicade, Chullu, and Milev, is conventionally described as the Cirtean confederation. By the second century A.D., the three subordinate towns all bore colonial titles: "colonia Veneria Rusicade," "colonia Sarnia Milev," "colonia Minervia Chullu." The epithets in their titles probably date back to their initial foundations as *pagi*, as suggested by an inscription that refers to "statio Veneria Rusicade." At any rate, it is clear that the epithets reflect the interests not of Caesar but of Sittius and his followers. "Sarnia," for example, is an unambiguous reference to the Sarnus, an important river of Campania which passed near Nuceria. Likewise, the nearby cape that

[14] Coins: M. Grant, *From Imperium to Auctoritas* (Cambridge 1946) 275–279; that with the inscription CIVE is now assigned to Knossos, and the abbreviation is thought to refer to a magistrate: R. H. J. Ashton, "Some Knossian Coins of Augustus," *BSA* 70 (1975) 7–9; see in general A. Burnett, A. Amandry, and P. Ripollès (eds.), *Roman Provincial Coinage* 1: *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 B.C.–A.D. 69)* (London and Paris 1992) 289.

extends out into the sea towards Capri was known in Roman times as the *promuntorium Minervae* because of an ancient temple of Athena situated there. Given the Campanian references of the other two epithets, then, we might well expect the same for "Veneria." Although there is no obvious geographical feature of Campania from which the name might have been borrowed, it is likely enough that Sittius and his followers had in mind the old and popular cult of Venus in that area. In short, even though "Veneria Rusicade" was founded at roughly the same time as Urso, the background and significance of its epithet are completely different and very likely had nothing to do with Caesar or his cult.[15]

The other case is that of Sicca Veneria. In origin a Libyan settlement, the town was by the mid-third century B.C. under Carthaginian control. As noted above, it was apparently made a colony by Augustus, who in a later inscription is described as *conditor*. Although its title appears in no less than eight different forms, the majority include the epithet "Veneria," while "Sicca Veneria" was the form favored by ancient writers. Unlike Rusicade, which provides no evidence for an actual cult of Venus, that in Sicca was well known in antiquity and is richly attested in the epigraphic record. Two fragmentary inscriptions perhaps mention male *sacerdotes Veneris*, while others attest to *servi* and *liberti Veneris* and a *deae Veneris actor* who were presumably attached to the temple. In another inscription, dating no earlier than to the mid-third century, a group of "Venerii" erect a statue in honor of a local benefactor who had restored the *simulacrum* of the goddess.[16] The cult of Venus was clearly one of the most important *sacra publica* in Sicca. Equally clear, however, is the fact that this goddess was not Venus Genetrix. Not only is that epithet never used, but there is explicit evidence that the cult had a pre-Roman origin. According to Valerius Maximus, Punic women used to practice temple prostitution in the temple of Venus at Sicca. If Valerius used "Punic" to mean "Carthaginian," the cult must have existed by the second century B.C. at least. But even if Valerius used the term in a more general sense, the fact that the cult attracted specifically Punic women indicates that it was not a Roman import. Moreover, the

[15]For a full discussion of Sittius and the foundation of the Cirtean confederation, see L. Teutsch, *Das römische Städtewesen in Nordafrika* (Berlin 1962) 65–77. The colonial titles of all three towns appear in *ILS* 6863 and 6863a; see further Galsterer-Kröll 100–105, nos. 14, 32, and 83. "Statio Veneria Rusicade": *ILAlg* II.8. Promuntorium Minervae: Pliny *HN* 3.62; Livy 42.20.3; cf. App. *BCiv.* 1.42; the temple of Athena is mentioned by Strabo 1.2.12 and 5.4.8. On the epithets in general, see J. Gascou, *La Politique municipale de l'Empire romain en Afrique proconsulaire de Trajan à Septime-Sévère* (Rome 1972) 113–115.

[16]Sicca under Carthaginian control: Polyb. 1.66.6 and 10. The evidence for its title is collected by Galsterer-Kröll 102, no. 38; see, e.g., *ILS* 5505 and *ILS* 6783. Augustus as "conditor": *ILS* 6773; cf. Teutsch (above, n. 15) 173–174. *Sacerdotes*: *CIL* VIII 15879 and 15882; *libertus*: 27580; *servus*: 15946; *actor*: 15894; Venerii: *ILS* 5505.

practice of temple prostitution strongly suggests that the cult was Semitic in origin, or at least subject to great Semitic influence. Solinus (27.5) in fact says that it was introduced from Eryx. Although we may doubt his evidence, dedications to Venus Erycina have been found elsewhere in Africa, and the system of temple slaves and freedmen attested at Sicca, somewhat unusual for a Roman cult, is also attested for the cult at Eryx. Taking the evidence together, we can be fairly certain that the epithet "Veneria" in the name of Sicca refers not to the Caesarian deity, but to the celebrated local goddess whose cult probably extended back into the Punic period.[17]

Thus none of the three examples that Weinstock cites as parallels for the situation in Urso actually fall into that pattern. It is possible to broaden the inquiry somewhat. We may first note that there are a few other towns of possibly similar date that bear the epithet "Veneria." One, according to Pliny, was the town of Nabrissa in Spain. Since a number of the other local epithets noted by Pliny clearly refer to Caesar, it is possible that "Veneria" also has a Caesarian reference. Nabrissa was not a colony, however, and probably assumed this epithet on its own initiative in the wake of Munda.[18] Another example is the little town of Abellinum in Campania, which in an inscription dating to A.D. 240 has the name *colonia Veneria Livia Augusta Alexandriana Abellinatium*. Although this title suggests some involvement by Augustus in the foundation of the town, there is no reason to connect the epithet "Veneria" with the Caesarian cult. Since the cult of Venus had a long history in Campania, it is more likely that the title of Abellinum, as that of Pompeii, referred to a traditional local cult.[19]

[17]Val. Max. 2.6.15: *Cui gloriae Punicarum feminarum, ut ex conparatione turpius appareat, dedecus subnectam: Siccae enim fanum est Veneris, in quod se matronae conferebant atque inde procedentes ad quaestum, dotis corporis iniuria contrahebant, honesta nimirum tam inhonesto vinculo coniugia iuncturae.* Aelian (*NA* 4.2 and *VH* 1.15) and Athenaeus (9.394e–395a) mention festivals celebrated at Eryx to mark the departure of the goddess to and her return from Libya; some scholars link this story to the cult at Sicca, but I see little connection. Dedications to Venus Erycina are found in Carthage (*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* 1.3776; *CIL* VIII 24528) and Thibilis (*ILAlg* II.4649). Temple slaves of Venus at Eryx: Cic. *Verr.* 4.32 and 104, and *Div. Caec.* 55–58. See further S. Moscati, "Sulla diffusione del culto di Astarte Ericina," *Oriens Antiquus* 7 (1968) 91–94.

[18]Pliny *HN* 3.11: "oppidum Nabrissa cognomine Veneria"; in the same region we find "Osset quod cognominatur Iulia Constantia," "Vergentum quod Iuli Genius," and "Asido quae Caesarina"; as evidence of Pliny's reliability, we may note that his reference to Ossigi "quod cognominatur Latonium" is corroborated by an inscription that mentions the "plebs Latoniensis" (*CIL* II 3351); he also describes Urso as "Genetiva Urbanorum" (3.12). On these Spanish towns, see Brunt 584–588.

[19]*CIL* X 1117; the Liber Coloniarum (*Gromatici Veteres* I.229 Lachmann) says that the town was founded *lege Sempronia*. In Hadria in Picenum, a freed public slave carries the nomen "Venerius" which, as in Pompeii and other towns, may indicate that "Veneria" formed part of its official title: *CIL* IX 5020; L. Keppie, *Colonisation and*

We might also approach the matter from a different angle, and look not at towns with the epithet "Veneria" but at other foundations of Caesar. The two most famous are Carthage and Corinth. Although our information regarding Carthage is not so good as we would like, we do have some knowledge of its public cults. There is no evidence at all that Venus Genetrix played a role in these; there is in fact very little evidence for the worship of Venus in general.[20] The situation in Corinth, on the other hand, was similar to that of Sicca. The city had in classical and Hellenistic times been famous for its cult of Aphrodite, who had a major temple on the Acrocorinth as well as others both in Corinth itself and in its ports. When the Roman colony was founded, the cult was also revived, just as in Carthage the cult of Tanit was eventually revived under the name of Caelestis.[21] These two examples alone provide sufficient indication that there was no general pattern for Caesarian colonies to have a public cult of Venus established by Caesar.

A close examination of the cults and epithets of Caesarian foundations thus leads to a conclusion that is if anything the opposite of Weinstock's: they were not the result of any religious policy set by Caesar himself, but reflected the particular interests of the local citizens. In some cases, such as Rusicade, they related to the traditional concerns of new settlers, while in others, such as Sicca and Corinth, they derived from old local cults. The situation in Urso, then, seems exceptional rather than paradigmatic. Perhaps the interpretation of the evidence presented above is simply mistaken, and Caesar did not provide for a cult of Venus Genetrix in Urso any more than anywhere else. On the other hand, it may have been an isolated experiment on the part of Caesar, who did after all introduce many innovations. In either case, the evidence from Urso does not allow us to conclude that Caesar established a new precedent for the direct involvement of imperial authorities in the public religion of local communities. Weinstock was thus essentially mistaken in his interpretation of Venus Genetrix outside Rome.

This is not to say that Caesar's cult did not have any impact on the religious life of the empire. It is possible, for example, that the council of

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Veteran Settlement in Italy, 47–14 B.C. (Rome 1983) 18–19 compares this Venerius to C. Venerius Epaphroditus in Pompeii (*CIL* X 1013) and to a Pollentia at Pola (*ILS* 6677), which had "Pollentia" as part of its formal title (*ILS* 6676).

[20]Carthage: the area described as "Venerea" in *Acta Cypriani* 2 may indicate a temple; there is also the dedication of a statue to Venus Erycina: *CIL* VIII 24528; cf. 12495. It was at one time thought that numismatic evidence demonstrated an important cult of Venus in Carthage, but the relevant coins have now been assigned to Karalis in Sardinia: Burnett *et al.* (above, n. 14) 1.163.

[21]Strabo 8.6.20–21; Paus. 2.5.1; see in general E. Will, *Korinthiaka: Recherches sur l'histoire et la civilisation de Corinthe des origines aux guerres médiques* (Paris 1955) 223–233.

Nabrissa adopted the epithet "Veneria" in honor of Caesar's patron deity. She also appears in other cities outside of Rome. For example, in a relief found in Carthage Venus appears along with Mars and a semi-nude man, probably a member of the Julio-Claudian family. This apparently formed part of an elaborate public altar, another panel of which depicted a seated female figure very similar to the famous one on the Ara Pacis. This juxtaposition of images, however, suggests that the altar was used for imperial cult rather than for that of Venus Genetrix.[22] Similarly, there survives from Cumae a substantial portion of a *feriale*, a list of public festivals, drawn up between A.D. 4 and 14. The next-to-the-last entry is fragmentary, but was some sort of sacrifice for Mars Ultor and Venus; although the stone is broken at this point, the latter is almost certainly Genetrix. The date is also missing, but probably falls in June or July. It is worth noting that it was not the date in the Roman calendar on which sacrifice was offered either to Venus Genetrix or to Mars Ultor. Mommsen suggested that it marked the birthday of Julius Caesar on July 12, which is plausible enough. But whatever the significance of this sacrifice, it seems to have been peculiar to Cumae. No evidence indicates that there was ever a corresponding sacrifice in Rome.[23]

The evidence from Carthage and Cumae is the only evidence for public cult of Venus Genetrix outside Rome. It thus seems that when local councils, who were responsible for the *sacra publica* of their towns, instituted this cult, they did not simply copy the Roman cult but adapted and combined various elements of it according to their own inclination. Apart from these instances, I have been able to locate only nine dedications to Venus Genetrix from Italy and the provinces, all of which were apparently made in a private context.[24] The majority of these are so laconic as to yield very little information, but two suggest that private expressions of the cult dis-

[22]Mars Ultor panel: S. Gsell, "Les Statues du temple de Mars Ultor à Rome," *Rev-Arch* 34 (1899) 37–43; cf. P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor 1988) 196–197 and 357 with fig. 151; most recently, D. Fishwick, "The Statue of Julius Caesar in the Pantheon," *Latomus* 51 (1992) 329–336, at 335–336. Pax panel: S. Weinstock, "Pax and the 'Ara Pacis'," *JRS* 50 (1960) 44–58, at 54–55; cf. Zanker 314 with fig. 246.

[23]*ILS* 108 = Degrassi no. 44: "[. . .]i, Marti Ultori, Veneri [Genetrici]." The date fell between May 24 and August 18; for the suggestion of July 12, see Mommsen at *CIL* I^2, p. 321 and cf. the note of Degrassi *ad loc.*

[24]A dedication from the African town of Sufetela (*AE* 1911, 11) was made by a *duovir*, but does not seem to belong to a public cult. There is a statue from Deva in Britain (*AE* 1978, 445), while the other evidence consists of simple dedications, probably small altars: *ILS* 3172 (Italy, Praeneste): "Veneri Genetrici, Fortun[ae] R[educi?]; Vivia Secund[. . .]"; *ILS* 3171a (Italy, Beneventum): "Deae Veneri Genetrici sacrum"; *CIL* IX 2199 (Italy, Telesia): "Veneri Genetrici"; *AE* 1987, 704e (Spain, Valencia): "Veneri Genetrici"; there is also a very fragmentary inscription from Aequum in Dalmatia: *CIL* III 9756; see also Wissowa 293, n. 3.

played even more variation than public expressions. One interesting example comes from the town of Eresos on Lesbos. Twin statue bases inscribed in both Greek and Latin have been discovered there, one dedicated to Julia, apparently the daughter of Augustus, and the other to Venus Genetrix. Nowhere else was Venus Genetrix linked to a specific member of the family in this way, and the collocation seems all the more odd when one considers that at the time Julia could not have been more than twelve or thirteen years old.[25] The other comes from the town of Castulo in Baetica, where at some point a procurator of Baetica, apparently the scion of a local family, was responsible for extensive public benefactions, including statues of Venus Genetrix and Cupid in the theater. Again, such an association is found nowhere else, and recalls the wit of Ovid more than the solemnity of the Roman cult.[26]

The cult of Venus Genetrix did exist outside Rome, then, but on a limited scale and in occasionally idiosyncratic forms. The evidence for public cults is sparse, although we may reasonably assume that other Italian towns had sacrifices such as that noted in the calendar of Cumae, and that colonies in addition to Carthage adopted her cult image in their public monuments. But the impetus behind these developments was local. The councils of *coloniae* and *municipia* may have looked to Rome for models, but they adapted them in various ways to meet their particular needs. We may also assume that individuals other than those whose offerings have chanced to survive took an interest in the cult. In the case of Venus Genetrix, the deity most closely associated with the most powerful man in the Roman world, there were obvious reasons why people would have taken such an interest. We might think of these as coldly political: to demonstrate devotion to the cult most favored by Caesar was to demonstrate at a respectful remove one's loyalty to Caesar himself. On the other hand, any deity whose protégé had reached such dizzying heights must have been considered particularly effective. But again, the interest was their own and they adapted the material of the Roman cult to suit their own requirements. It is for this reason that we get such unusual expressions of the cult as the joint statues of Julia and Venus Genetrix from Eresos.

The cult of Venus Genetrix thus provides a useful example of what is often termed an "official" cult. In Rome itself, the cult was obviously official, in that it was formally established by the proper authorities, but outside Rome its status is much less clear. Since there is no good reason to believe that Caesar introduced an element of central control into the

[25] *ILS* 3171 and 127; Julia was born in 39 B.C., and the statues cannot have been erected much after 27 B.C., because Julia is described as *Caesaris filia* rather than *Augusti filia*.

[26] *ILS* 5513; see further R. P. Duncan-Jones, "The Procurator as Civic Benefactor," *JRS* 64 (1974) 79–85, who suggests a date sometime between A.D. 20 and 160.

established system of autonomous local cults, the cult of Venus Genetrix could not have been official in the sense of having any structural links to the government of the empire. Rather, it can be described as "official" only in the sense that its symbolic association with imperial power, i.e., Caesar and the Julian house, was widely acknowledged, and that this association was due originally to Caesar himself. Once he had established the cult in Rome, however, people throughout the empire could adopt elements of it at will and elaborate them according to their own tastes and interests. The existence of "official" cults in the Roman empire, such as that of Venus Genetrix, was thus due not to any active involvement by the central government, as Weinstock suggests, but to the co-operation of the central government and the local inhabitants, particularly the local elites.[27] Certainly, models set in Rome could have a significant impact on local developments. Thus, Caesar's devotion to his Venus could well have made old local cults of the goddess more fashionable, as was possible in the case of Sulla and Pompeii. But the system was based on consensus between the local elites and the ruling power, not on centralized control. As long as this consensus remained stable, neither Caesar nor any of his successors had any need actually to establish particular cults outside Rome.

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[27] S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984) provides an excellent analysis of imperial cult along these lines; see also R. Gordon, "The Veil of Power" and "Religion in the Roman Empire," in M. Beard and J. North (eds.), *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1990) 201–231 and 233–255.