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THE CULT OF VENUS IN ROMAN BRITAIN

By

Margaret Birney

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ABSTRACT

THE CULT OF VENUS IN ROMAN BRITAIN

By

Margaret Birney

While Venus was one of the most commonly depicted Classical deities in Roman Britain, the nature of her role there has not been thoroughly examined. In this thesis the iconography, context and morphology of representations of Venus in clay, bronze, stone sculpture, mosaics, jet and lead are studied to the end of gaining a fuller understanding of the goddess' significance in Britain. It will be shown that, while Celtic impact is evident in the artistic expression of the goddess' image and that certain characteristics may have been enhanced in Roman Britain, Venus' essential nature remained intact. In Britain, as in the Mediterranean area, Venus' influence went beyond the sphere of personal religion into the civic and military realms; the span and nature of her functions accorded well with both Roman and native attitudes toward deity.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the significance of Venus in Roman Britain must commence with an examination of her nature in the Mediterranean area. The route to understanding is, however, full of hazards. Though recent scholarship has made some inroads in correcting misapprehensions, the goddess' image has suffered from literary allusions to her role as both an engineer of mortal love affairs and a participant in amorous adventures of her own. Homer and Sappho did much to contribute to the amorist image of the goddess. Other authors in antiquity, however, in mentioning her monuments, temples and sacred precincts provide insight into her more serious nature and reveal that she was indeed the object of worship which, though including the aspect of love goddess, encompassed much more than that. Moreover, the common reference to her as 'the Heavenly Aphrodite' (or Venus) signifies that the goddess was viewed with a reverence which denies that she was generally seen as a mere purveyor of romance.

The visual arts, too, have played a part in misconceptions about the goddess. Her representation from the fourth century B.C. on has suggested to some scholars a decline in serious worship of the goddess and an increasing tendency to view her as a genre figure rather than a divine being. The humanism of her portrayal in the Hellenistic period, however, probably has less to do with a debasement of Aphrodite/Venus than with enhanced and sophisticated methods for portraying the goddess' dual nature which encompassed earthly as well as heavenly aspects.

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Further, we can no longer see the original work in its original context, but are left only with copies, sometimes inadequate or poorly restored, standing in museums among other works attributed to a like period, place or artistic trend. Thus the art history of a figure takes precedence over its original significance.

It is necessary, then, to consider a variety of literary sources and, when possible, to place Venus' representation in a context in order to gain fullest insight into her place in religious belief, in Britain or in Rome. In this study, material evidence forms the basis on which any assessments are made, though comments by ancient authors are also used in the interest of reaching the most complete understanding.

Artifacts in several of the media tend to fall into major chonological groups. Small figures in clay are associated with the first and second centuries A.D., bronze statuettes with the third, and mosaics with the fourth. Outside of this orderly grouping are works of sculpture, both relief and in the round, and a number of small objects which lend themselves to neither chronological nor material categorization. The chapters of this thesis follow as much as possible the chronology of the material evidence. The body of materials to be examined will not include decorative arts, coins, or personal ornament, primarily in the interest of putting some limits on the study.

Identification of an image as Venus poses certain problems. Artisans sometimes borrowed poses and gestures of one deity for the depiction of another. Particularly difficult in identifying Venus is the resemblance between the goddess and figures of nymphs, sometimes so close it is impossible to know who is depicted. This problem of

identification is especially acute in Roman Britain; water deities were prominent in Celtic religion and thus the question of the identity of a nymph-like representation is bound to arise. The dilemma is compounded by the fact that Venus' variety of aspects lends itself to a range of attributes, poses and gestures. It has been necessary, therefore, to adhere to certain criteria in the identification of figures to be included in this study. The unfortunate outcome of such selectivity is that heads or ambiguous figures must be eliminated and doing so not only decreases the total body of representations, but could exclude some artifacts that might enhance understanding. However, the inclusion of uncertain objects would be more detrimental to the pursuit of real insight than this more cautious approach, which by virtue of its reliance on certain iconographical features will provide a sound foundation for any further study of Venus' significance.

Fortunately, some poses, gestures and attributes belong rather specifically to Venus. More often, however, identification of the goddess relies on a combination of these. The following list describes the elements I have used to identify the goddess.

1. Nudity or partial nudity. Most specific to Venus among divinities of the Classical pantheon, though nymphs, the Graces, the Muses, and certain other female figures from mythology such as personifications may also be shown nude.

2. The presence of Cupid, Adonis or Paris; all of these are linked to Venus in mythology or literature.

3. Coiffure. Venus is usually shown with her hair in a chignon at the neck, a top knot, or with tresses falling over the shoulder, and sometimes with a combination of these.

4. Jewelry. Venus is frequently shown wearing a necklace and/or bracelets on her arms or around her ankle.

5. Pose, in order or increasing specificity to Venus: standing, sitting, leaning on a column, crossing the legs, removing a shoe, crouching.

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6. Gesture. Wringing or holding a tress of hair, touching or covering a breast, holding one hand before the breast and one over the pubes, lifting an edge of drapery.

7. Attributes. Numerous attributes are associated with Venus, some of the most common are: mussel shell, mirror, apple or pomegranate, myrtle, dolphin, column, and in the guise of Venus Victrix, a staff or wreath. A diadem signifying her status as a divinity may be included in representations but frequently is not.

As will be seen in the following chapters, a few figures have been identified as Venus which incorporate non-traditional features. In each instance, however, auxiliary elements advocate the identification. As mentioned in the opening statement, study of Venus' nature and significance is fraught with hazards, but the great popularity of this goddess in Britain demands her study.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF APHRODITE AND VENUS

Out of the violence of the castration of Uranus was born the beautiful and sweet-smiling goddess of love, Aphrodite. Hesiod described her formation from the sea foam which surrounded the severed genitals of Uranus in his Theogony.[1] Then, borne on a mussel shell, the goddess drifted on the sea until she arrived at Cythera where she stayed but a short time. Resuming her journey she came finally to Cyprus where her cult was established and which remained one of her most important centers of worship. The sites associated with Aphrodite's mythology probably chart with some accuracy the course of her importation from the East to the areas of Hellenic culture. Homer refers to her as Cythera, bowing to tradition, but ascribes her birth to the union of Zeus and the oceanid Dione, an origin which serves to firmly secure Aphrodite's place in the Classical pantheon.[2] Both versions of Aphrodite's birth testify to her antiquity in Greek myth; Homer's because it links Aphrodite to Dione who belongs to the oldest stratum of Greek myth, and Hesiod's because Aphrodite's role as a primordial mother is suggested by her birth from a father only.

As with mother goddesses in particular, but associated to some degree with all female deities, Aphrodite was a goddess of fertility. Like her eastern archetypes, the Sumerian Inanna, the Akkadian Ishtar and the Phoenician Astarte, Aphrodite sometimes expressed her fertility function through promiscuous sexuality. Aphrodite also inherited

military aspects from Ishtar and Inanna. It is Astarte, however, to whom the strongest evidence for Aphrodite's eastern origin can be traced. In the visual arts Astarte is commonly depicted nude, her hair is worn long, sometimes in tresses, and she may hold or be shown with doves. All of these characteristics were incorporated into representations of Aphrodite.

By the time the shadows of prehistory clear in the eighth century, transition from the eastern Astarte to the Hellenic Aphrodite was complete, as the full descriptions of her nature and activities in Homer confirm. But while her appearance and character are developed in the literature of this period, the generally non-figural style in the visual arts have provided us with no representations which can be associated with Aphrodite. It is not until the Archaic period that sculptural images appear portraying a draped goddess holding an attribute such as a dove, apple or pomegranate, or pressing one hand against a breast and lifting an edge of her garment with the other hand. Such figures are usually described as korai, but all of the attributes and gestures continue in the iconography of Aphrodite/Venus throughout the papan era.

In literature of the Archaic period, Sappho developed the image of Aphrodite as a goddess involved in the love affiars of mortals, a trait which the goddess had already manifested in Homer's epics. It is also Sappho's works which provide the first evidence for the incorporation of Adonis into the mythology of Aphrodite. Thus, while Aphrodite is a goddess to be petitioned for help in amorous affairs, the association with Adonis, incorporates a maternal and more particularly an eschatological element.

Aphrodite in addition served, as did some of her Eastern antecedents, as a civic deity in a number of places, and at Thebes, Sparta

Smyrna and a number of other cities she was depicted as an armed goddess.[3] At Argos she was called 'bringer of victory' and in maritime cities where Aphrodite was quite naturally associated with good fortune at sea, her image was taken on sea voyages to protect the vessels and crew.[4]

In spite of the range of functions cited above, there can be little doubt of Aphrodite's importance as a fertility goddess and the consequent associations with birth, marriage and death. It was this aspect, derived from her eastern archetypes and humanized by the Greeks, which was manifested in her association with love. But while romantic love and fertility or reproduction are logically linked, it was not only passionate or erotic love that the goddess was thought to inspire. Plato's Symposium on love specified the dual nature of love, differentiating between heavenly or intellectual love of the soul associated with the Hesiodic Aphrodite (Aphrodite Ourania) and earthly or venal love which was under the auspices of Aphrodite Pandemos and was associated with Homer's portrayal of the goddess.[5]

The apellation 'Heavenly Aphrodite' was most common and ancient authors normally refer to the goddess in this way, signifying that whatever her role in the lives of men may have been, she was never less than divine. Her reign over the love of mortals was, however, a function of the goddess of earthly love. It is this aspect of Aphrodite which was petitioned in the interest of selecting a desirable partner and subsequently for assuring a rewarding and stable marriage. In this context Aphrodite was known at Delphi as 'the goddess who joins together.'[6] Logically, this sphere of influence sometimes extended to clans; most significantly, in the Troad the worship of Aphrodite was linked to Aeneas

and Farnell notes the frequency of Aphrodite worship at locations with names derived from Aeneas, such as Aeneia.[7] This association was, of course, to play an important role in the Roman view of Aphrodite.

The generally east to west spread of the cult of Aphrodite took her worship to Greek Sicily, where Greeks had settled since the eighth century B.C. Farnell traces Aphrodite worship there to the Troad where, as already mentioned, her cult was linked to Aeneas.[8] Robert Schilling agrees that the cult had Trojan origin.[9] The possibility exists that some Roman contact with Sicily occurred in the early period of Greek settlement and through contact, exposure to the cult of Aphrodite. Greek influence, however, is most certainly established as a result of Etruscan contact from the sixth century onwards, by which time the Aeneas legend was also known in Etruria.[10] More direct contact with Greek culture and religion developed from the time of the Punic wars and it was during this period that the Romans adopted Aphrodite.

According to legend, Aeneas himself brought the cult statue of Aphrodite from the cult center on Mt. Eryx in Sicily to Lavinium. Here the goddess was worshipped as Venus Fruitus, a conflation of Venus, who was probably a garden numen, and Aphrodite. Fruitus has long been thought to be a corrupted Etruscan word for Aphrodite, but this has recently been disputed and may instead indicate a native Latin goddess.[11] Thus the goddess worshipped at Lavinium may have been a triple conflation, ie. of Venus, Fruitus and the Greek Aphrodite. Although the conflation of deities doesn't necessarily indicate absolutely parallel natures, the common element in this case seems to be fertility.

On April 23, 295 B.C., the first Roman temple to Venus was dedicated. In 282 B.C., the Aeneas dogma was given official status, and the

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following year another temple to the goddess was built. This temple was dedicated to Venus Erycina, acknowledging the link to the cult center at Mt. Eryx, and by extension, to the Trojan legend. Aeneas' legendary association with the foundation of Rome through his descendant Romulus was to link the Trojan hero, and naturally his mother Venus, to the destiny of Rome and eventually to the imperial house. So although increased contacts between Romans and Greeks served to further Hellenize the traits and attributes of the Roman Venus, the goddess was to have a significance in Rome not found in Greek legend.

By the late third century B.C., Venus was so completely a part of the Roman pantheon, as were other Greek deities, that she was included in the lectisterna of 217 B.C. But even more significant was the dedication of a temple to the goddess in 214 B.C. on the capitol, a site reserved for the temples of national cults.

Though the aforementioned temples honored Venus primarily for her fertility aspect, she became linked with Roman victory at the defeat of Carthage in 146 B.C. Sulla (138-78 B.C.) worshipped Venus in this capacity as Venus Felix, an epithet which duplicates Sulla's adopted surname, Felix (felicitas). It was this regal Venus who was worshipped at Pompeii where veterans of Sulla's campaigns were settled. Pompey (106-48 B.C.) further acknowledged the association of Venus with victory by dedicating a temple to Venus Victrix in 55 B.C. Thus when Julius Caesar claimed descent from Venus through the line of Aeneas, he capitalized on a well established association between the goddess and Roman ascendancy. The temple he dedicated to Venus Genetrix in 46 B.C. can be seen in a propagandistic light, but notably it at the same time recalled Venus' maternal or fertility aspects.

Not surprisingly, representations of Venus at Rome often referred to the nature of Venus Ourania from which stem both the Victrix and Genetrix aspects. At the same time, however, she continued to be revered in her capacity as a fertility goddess concerned with the rites of marriage, the rearing of children and, as Venus Libitina, with death. In the visual arts, Venus continued to be shown with traditional attributes, the dove, apple and pomegranate symbolizing her fertility. As Venus Victrix the goddess would be depicted with a palm branch, wreath, staff or other symbols of victory. The Genetrix aspect is less clearly defined, but representations of the goddess in which she is draped, or partially draped, and lifting one edge of the garment as if to pull it over her head to form a veil may be associated with Venus Genetrix.

As will be seen, however, none of the ways of portraying the goddess was exclusive and just as totally separate deities borrowed attributes and gestures from each other, the various iconographical elements of Venus crossed her several natures. It seems to have been essential only to include enough iconographical references to ascertain her identity as Venus. Thus context is frequently the best means of determining which aspect of the goddess is being called upon or worshipped. Further, in many cases, the portrayal may refer to both the heavenly and earthly natures of the goddess. In Britain as well as in Rome, this benevolent deity was seen as responsive to a variety of mortal concerns; an examination of her representation in Roman Britain should elucidate those concerns and add to the understanding of Venus' nature both in that distant province and in the Roman world in general.

NOTES

[1] Hesiod Theogony 188-200.

[2] Homer Iliad 3.374 and 5.370-1.

Pausanias Guide to Greece 1.22.3 and 9.26.3 for Aphrodite's role as a civic deity and 3.17.5, 3.23.1 and 2.4.7 for her function as an armed goddess.

[4] Charles Seltman, The Twelve Olympians (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1952), 84.

[5] Plato Symposium (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 180e-181a.

[6] Lewis Richard Farnell, Cults of the Greek States (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), 2:656.

[7] Ibid, 2:618.

[8] Ibid, 2:639 and 687.

[9] Robert Schilling, La Religion Romaine de Venus (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1954), 234.

[10] G. Karl Galinsky, Aeneas, Sicily and Rome (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 121.

[11] Ibid, 117.

CHAPTER II

THE FIGURES IN PIPECLAY

The largest body of Venus representations in Britain are of white pipe-clay. The great number of these, well over a hundred, makes Venus the most frequently depicted Graeco-Roman deity in this material in Great Britain (see Map I). The manufacture of pipe-clay figurines seems to have been confined to the first and second centuries A.D. and was connected primarily with centers of Samian pottery production in central Gaul, especially in the Allier district, and around Cologne in the Rhineland.

The examples in Britain are comprised in the main of two types described by Dr. Frank Jenkins in "The Cult of the Pseudo-Venus in Kent."[1] The first, associated with the Rhineland industry, is a standing, half-draped figure, the upper body nude and the lower covered by drapery which slips below the hips (see Figure 1a and b for a continental parallel and a fragmentary example from Britain). The goddess wears a bracelet on her left arm and with her left hand grasps an edge of her garment. Tresses of hair fall over each shoulder at the front and back and Venus' right hand holds the lock at her right shoulder. The second, and far more common type in Britain, is nude though the goddess holds a garment which hangs in stylized folds at the side of her left leg (Figures 2 and 3). The arrangement of the hair and position of the right hand are the same as for the first type. Both are frontally oriented though there is a suggestion that the weight is borne

on one leg in a slight hint of a contrapposto stance. The two types found in Britain are variations of Type II (of four) described by Rouvier-Jeanlin in his study of representations of pipe-clay Venuses in Gaul.[2]

These Venuses portray Venus Anadyomene, or Venus rising from the sea, as she wrings the moisture from her hair. This popular motif was painted by Apelles for the holy shrine of Asklepios in Kos and the work was later taken to Rome where Augustus consecrated it in the temple of Venus Genetrix built by Julius Caesar.[3] The Emperor Nero later had the painting copied by Dorotheus because the original had become so damaged through moisture and time that the work was effaced.[4] The image of Venus Anadyomene was further popularized through its reproduction in figurines and in coinage.

The pipe-clay figurines may also show influence of Praxiteles' famous Cnidian Aphrodite which is generally thought to be the first nude portrayal of the goddess in sculpture. In this work, the goddess holds her discarded garment in her left hand, letting it fall over a pitcher at her left side. This sculpture, too, was widely duplicated in small figurines and coins. The Cnidian Aphrodite probably refers to the ritual bath rather than the goddess' birth from the sea, but either provides a reasonable justification for her nude portrayal and from the time of these works in the fourth century the goddess was commonly so represented.

While the majority of the pipe-clay figures of Venus in Britain are of the two types just described there are other singular examples. These, rather than being imported in commercial quantities, were

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probably brought to Britain by immigrating individuals from the continent. One of these, found in London, has been named 'Venus a Gaine' for the stele-like configurations which flank the goddess (Figure 4). The very schematic rendering is marked by stamped rosettes to the left of the goddess and circles at her right. Whether these are solar symbols, funerary signs or simply an instance of horror vacui is uncertain, though it is notable that the two motifs are separated, suggesting a purposeful motif. Such treatment of the symbols may indicate the representation here of the goddess' two natures, Venus Ourania and Venus Pandemos. The right arms is bent to extend across the abdomen, the left hangs free at the side. Though mostly nude, the goddess wears a bandeau marked at the lower edge by a bead design and a necklace encircles her neck. Similar representations of Venus are found on the continent, primarily in western France, but the locale of manufacture is not known.[5] The difference in motif, the less than careful workmanship, and the yellowish-gray color of the clay separate it, however, from the main production centers of central Gaul. Its purpose, like the Anadyomene representations, can be broadly described as votive, though its special designs may indicate a particular focus.

A second unique figure, unfortunately fragmentary, was found at Caerleon, Monmouthshire, the site of a Roman fort; the fragment was, however, found at the associated civilian settlement. Although the remaining portion of the figurine includes only the lower legs and pedestal, it is clear from the arrangement of the drapery that it is a representation of Venus. Here the folds of the drapery are depicted as simple vertical lines and the feet of the goddess are summarily executed.

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Similar renderings are found in both Gaul and the Rhineland. The drapery links this figure with the half-nude type described by Jenkins, a link that suggests Rhineland manufacture. A possible parallel from the Rhineland can be seen in Figure 5 which, like most British examples, depicts Venus Anadyomene.

Apparently without continental parallel is an unprovenanced fragment, now in private hands, which was brought to the Borough Museum in Scunthorpe, Humberside for evaluation (Figure 6). This tiny head and shoulders fragment is, like all the foregoing figures, made of pipe-clay, but is so different in appearance that its identification as Venus has not been certain. In favor, however, of such an identification is the bracelet on the left arm, and even more suggestive is the position of the arm raised to the goddess' head. This gesture recalls the iconography of Venus Anadyomene or possibly the Mourning Venus on Mt. Lebanon described by Macrobius.[6] The latter, which is located in an area associated with the cult of Adonis, depicts the goddess resting her head on her left hand and wearing an expression so sad that it was believed that the statue shed tears when one looked upon it. (Another Romano-British representation of the Mourning Venus will be discussed in Chapter 6). Normally, however, the Mourning Venus is veiled and this pipe-clay figurine lacks that characteristic feature. The drapery worn by the Scunthorpe Venus is unusual in pipe-clay depictions of Venus Anadyomene, but not unknown in other media such as stone relief, exemplified by the Ludovisi throne.

If the identification of this piece as Venus is at least probable, the determination of its place of manufacture is entirely uncertain.

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Because of the lack of continental parallels, it is the best candidate for local production, though no real evidence for this exists. Until more information is unearthed or another example discovered, its background remains a mystery.

A happy example of the resolution of a similar enigma, is the Venus and Cupid figurine from Colchester (Figure 7). Again this statuette, in terra cotta rather than pipe-clay, was unprovenanced and originally owned by an individual. The headless statuette depicts Venus with her right hand laid across her chest to touch or cover her left breast. Her left hand reaches down to grasp the mirror held aloft by the small Cupid standing by the left leg of the goddess. The hand on the breast may be a sign of fertility, grief or less likely, a gesture of modesty associated with Venus Pudica. While no other example exists in Britain, parallels do exist on the continent, specifically, an example in the Rheinisches Landmuseum in Trier, Germany (Figure 8). This figure wears a torque around the neck, a feature which may, or may not, have been included on the Colchester example which lacks the neck and head. Both figurines are variants of a motif that was distributed throughout the Rhine area, and in southern Germany and eastern Belgium in the latter half of the second century A.D. Its appearance in Colchester can be explained by this port city's close contacts with the Rhineland. That is not to suggest, however, that this figure was anything other than a personal possession transported to Britain by an incoming individual. It should be noted that the possibility also exists that this figure was found originally on the continent and brought to England by a collector.

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In Britain, as in Gaul, the pipe-clay figurines are most often found on the sites of villas, in graves, and on sites which seem to be areas where cult worship was practiced. The latter might well be a watery setting rather than a temple. Pipe-clay Venuses have been found in conjunction with baths, wells, in the River Eden in Carlisle, and above a water channel at Vindolanda.[7] While it is the Celts who are particularly known to have attached spiritual significance to virtually every body of water, worshippers in the Classical world also attributed sacred powers to water. Thus Turnus, in preparation for battle, " - riverward - took his way and from the surface drew pure lustral water, then he heaped his vows plenteously on heaven."[8] Specifically pertaining to the worship of Venus, there were springs at the site of her temples near Hermione, at Acrocorinth, and at Bassae.[9] There were, in addition, numerous monuments to Aphrodite associated with the sea in her role as Venus Marina.

In Britain it is at the Romano-Celtic temple at Springhead in Kent where the clearest evidence of an association between a watery site, a cult center and the worship of Venus can be seen. Here, the base of a figurine of Venus was found in a drainage ditch where material from the temple had accumulated. The nature and number of the objects found in the ditch suggest a great deal of religious activity at the site. A second figurine of Venus was found in the cella of the temple, a singular example of an association of Venus with a Romano-Celtic temple cella Britain, though Venus figurines in such a context were not uncommon on the continent.[10] The name Springhead implies, of course, that there was at one time a spring associated with the temple, a suggestion supported by the marshy ground on which it was built.

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Interestingly, excavators at Springhead found carbonized seeds of the plant Atriplex Patula, a discovery which Jenkins suggested could be associated with worship of Venus at the spring festival of Vinalia Rustica. He further postulated that the plant might have medicinal properties and would thus be additional evidence for a connection with the restorative or healing characteristics associated with springs.[11] If the medicinal quality of Atriplex Patula does, in fact, exist, this too might be related to Venus' role in the Classical world where the goddess was often associated with temples frequented for their health-giving properties, as, for instance, the sanctuary of Asklepios for which Apelles painted the representation of Venus Anadyomene.[12] Venus' sometime title 'Turner Away of Evil' might also refer to this power.[13]

While Springhead constitutes the best evidence, outside of Woodeaton, Oxon. which will be discussed in Chapter six, for the public worship of Venus, numerous finds of pipe-clay figures on habitation sites testify to the popularity of the goddess in the domestic realm. As on the continent, these figurines would usually have been placed in small domestic shrines of pipe-clay (Figure 9). The shrines are obviously designed for the housing of a single deity, unlike the larger household shrines which held the household gods or penates.

In this context, Venus may have been especially worshipped in her role as a deity who influenced relationships, primarily that between the sexes. Marriage, in particular, was the province of Venus and following the initial propitiation to secure an appropriate partner, her subsequent worship would ensure the continued happiness and well-being of the married couple and their household. Related to this is Venus' close

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alliance with the rearing of children. On Cyprus Aphrodite was called 'cherisher of children' and at Paphos, as late as the second century A.D., children were consecrated to her care.[14] While it would seem appropriate for Venus to be called upon in the event of childbirth, neither ancient literary sources nor archaeological material offer strong evidence that this was the case.

If the foregoing facts seem to suggest that in the domestic sphere the worship of Venus had a particularly feminine cast, it should be remembered that in Roman culture the family was seen as a unit around which a strong nation was built. The nature of Venus Genetrix exemplifies the attitude; the goddess was in this aspect both ancestress of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and mother of the Roman people and their empire. In addition, even at her most elemental level, that is, as a progenitor and preserver of relationships, the goddess served male as well as female interests in the maintenance of a happy domestic scene.

The third context in which pipe-clay Venuses are regularly found is in conjunction with burials.[15] Whether these finds indicate the deceased's especial affinity with Venus during his or her lifetime, or whether the figurines refer to Venus' eschatological nature is unclear. Certainly the goddess' association with ideas of the afterlife is evident, not only in the use of her representation on funerary monuments, but also in the normal linking of fertility deities with the principle of regeneration and rebirth.

Among the pipe-clay figures, the Venus a Gaine is the best candidate for overt expression of eschatological notions. Jenkins points to the similarity of symbols incised on the piece with designs of funeral

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stelae in the valleys of the Pyrenees.[16] The stelae configuration on the Venus a Gaine could themselves be a reference to such funerary monuments or could, alternatively, be seen as a schematic representation of the scenae frons. The latter is to be found frequently on sarcophagi, Greek funeral stelae and, in at least one instance, (the rotunda of St. George in Thessalonika) in Early Christian mosaic depicting what is probably the resurrection of souls. In Britain, however, it is the Venus Anadyomene representations which have been found at burial sites, and thus their relationship to eschatological ideas are inferred primarily through context rather than iconographical or symbolic detail. Worth consideration, however, is Venus' characteristic gesture of grasping a lock of hair which is usually understood as wringing the moisture from it after her birth from the sea, but which may have a second meaning. While hair of the head was in many cultures imbued with special significance relating to the personality or soul of an individual, in the Classical world the best documentation of its significance relates to funerary ritual. Thus at Dido's death:

> ---Proserpina
> Had not yet plucked from her the golden hair,
> Delivering her to Orcus of the Styx.
> So humid Iris through bright heaven flew
> On saffron-yellow wings, and in her train
> A thousand hues shimmered before the sun.
> At Dido's head she came to rest.
> "This token sacred to Dis I bear away as bidden
> And free you from your body."
> Saying this, she cut a lock of hair. Along with it
> Her body's warmth fell into dissolution,
> And out into the winds her life withdrew.[17]

And Bion in his Dirge for Adonis sings:

> Shorn locks they cast upon Adonis' bier;
> One casts the arrow down, the plume, the bow;
> And one the quiver; one would draw anear,
> For loosening of his sandel there below.[18]

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In addition, the practice of cutting a lock of hair at death is referred to in Euripedes' Alcestis when Death appears with his sword to cut a lock from Alcestis' hair and thereby dedicate her to the gods of the Underworld.[19]

Cutting a lock of hair from the head of the deceased and Venus' known eschatological nature combine to make her hair-wringing gesture suggestive. As will be seen in later chapters, a dual significance in the goddess' iconography can be read into a number of traditional motifs associated with Venus. For the pipe-clay figures of Venus, this understanding makes more explicable their presence in burial contexts. Figurines of Venus in any medium seem not to appear in graves after the termination of the manufacture of pipe-clay figures at the end of the second century A.D. The approximately simultaneous general transition from cremation to interment suggests a relationship, but whether the changes are causal or coincidental is uncertain.

The end of the second century A.D. was marked by Germanic invasions on the continent and with these the Samian pottery industry appears to have been devastated. Thus few pipe-clay figurines of Venus appear in third or fourth century contexts, though exceptions do exist; these, however, are doubtless survivors of the earlier period.[20]

Distribution of finds is never absolutely conclusive since a new excavation can change supposed patterns. At any rate, images of Venus are found so widely across Britain that it is probably safe to say that her worship is to be found in all areas of Roman presence. The primary clusters of pipe-clay representations are from London, with Colchester and Wroxeter also yielding many examples. It is probably coincidental that it was in the lands of the Cantiani and the Catuvellauni that the

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pipe-clay Venuses were most popular (followed by the lands of the Atrebates and Regnenses); all of these regions are located in south east England and correspond to the most Romanized area of Britain, especially in the early occupation period of the first and second centuries A.D. This is, as has been seen, also the time during which pipe-clay figures were manufactured and enjoyed their greatest popularity. Thus no real interpretation of the significance of Venus to these Celtic groups can be inferred from the relatively greater concentration of figurines in these areas.

The use of pipe-clay or terracotta has several points of significance. First, clay is an inexpensive material, appropriate for use in burials or for votive figures. It should probably also be seen, because of its cheapness, as a material perhaps not exclusive to the poorer classes, but at least accessible to them; it may also reflect a less than wealthy economy, and it is notable that in the more prosperous third century, bronze replaced pipe-clay as the preferred medium for votive objects. In addition, pipe-clay is a material apparently particularly preferred for the representation of divine figures and has been found frequently in contexts of religious significance.[21] Valerie Hutchinson has, as a result, postulated a religious connotation in the material itself. Finally, pipe-clay is a fine-textured, hard clay which lends itself to clear molding and is very durable, so technical reasons for choosing pipe-clay as a medium would alone be sufficient to explain the popularity of the material for votive objects.

The obvious suitability of clay in the production of votive figures makes the cessation of their manufacture in this material an enigma. Neither on the continent nor in Britain was their production resumed

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after the Germanic invasions. This phenomenon seems not to be related to changing religious views since small bronze votive figures served a similar function. It is, therefore, most likely that the cost of reconstruction of the centers of production or a generally more prosperous economy, perhaps both, explain the abandonment of the manufacture of figures in clay. It is an unfortunate loss because the durability of pipe-clay and the impossibility of that material for reuse accounts for the large numbers of these figurines, and it is large numbers which allow a pattern of use to emerge, information not available from the small bronzes.

A great deal of discussion has been directed to the true nature of pipe-clay Venuses, the apellation "Pseudo-Venus" used by Dr. Frank Jenkins reflecting the uncertainty surrounding these figures. While it is clear that the artistic prototype for the statuettes was the Classical Venus, the lack of a "love goddess" in Celtic religion has led to speculation that the figures may have represented a nymph or a conflation of Venus with a nymph or Celtic water divinity. In fact, Venus' nature and iconography had been nymph-like from earliest Greek mythology; her birth from the sea itself being a manifestation of the character. In addition, while Venus was formed from the foam surrounding the severed genitals of Uranus, nymphs arose from the drops of blood spilled from the castration.[22] Further, Venus and the nymphs shared certain characteristics such as the gift of prophecy, eschatological associations and powers of healing and fertility. The iconography of both is similar as well, notably in the representation of a mussel shell and other objects connected with water or marshy areas, such as reeds. Nudity or partial nudity is, of course, another shared representational convention: Venus'

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connection with bodies of water has already been discussed. Thus there are, in many cases, no obvious means of determining whether a figure represents a nymph or Venus. Moreover, in the realm of personal religion at least, both evoke many of the same connotations or notions.

Understanding of Celtic views toward water divinities suffers from the same dearth of information that marks Celtic religion in general. It is known, however, that bodies of water were imbued with sacred significance and that certain deities were associated with watery sites; whether the natures of these Celtic deities were as well defined as those of the Classical world is uncertain. Nevertheless, since Venus was characterized by a nymph-like nature, little or no adjustment should have been necessary in order for her to be accepted by the Celts. There is no real evidence, contextual or iconographic, to suggest that the goddess' essence was altered to conform to non-Classical views.

If there was no religious conflation at work in these figures, the same cannot be said for the artistic rendering. All of the examples discussed are based on Classical iconography and form, but are superimposed with Celtic imprint in the detail. The stylization of hair, the large ovoid eyes within an enclosing line, sometimes double, and the rendering of drapery as a series of rhythmic lines rather than naturalistic folds are all hallmarks of Celtic art. In addition, the decidedly non-Classical proportions of the body emphasize the hips, abdomen and legs which swell from a narrow upper torso and waist. The hieratic rigidity that marks the clay figurines reveals a disinterest in naturalism, suggesting that a figure need only manifest certain identifying features in order to represent, in the fullest sense of the word, a given deity.

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While all the statuettes fit the general description above, there is among them a considerable range of the details of execution. This, along with differences in clay color, offers information about locale of manufacture and individual styles of artisans. Certain potters have been identified through a definitive piece bearing their signature but many more remain anonymous. Painstaking study of stylistic detail, size and color would be likely to yield a great deal more information about these figures than is currently known.

The clay figurines represent the earliest stage in Britain's adoption of Roman divinities and their artistic depiction. They were, however, examples of continental rather than insular art, for there is no evidence that an attempt was ever made to produce them in Britain. By the time manufacture of the figurines ceased in the late second century, the concept of representing divinities in anthropomorphic form was well established in Britain. The apparently unabated demand for small figures of Venus and other divinities was now met largely by their production in bronze.[23] To what degree this reflects a development in attitude is uncertain, but it is clear that the simple clay figures of the early occupation period were superseded by more varied and expressive creations in bronze.

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[1] Frank Jenkins, "The Cult of the Pseudo-Venus in Kent," Archaeologia Cantiana 72 (1958), 60.

[2] Micheline Rouvier-Jeanlin, Les Figurines Gallo-Romaines en Terre Cuite sur Musee des Antiquities Nationales, Gallia Supplement 24 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientific, 1972), 45.

[3] Pliny Natural History 35.36.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Frank Jenkins, "Some Interesting Types of Clay Statuettes of the Roman Period Found in London," in Collectanea Londiniensia, ed. Joanna Bird, Hugh Chapman and John Clark, Special Paper 2, (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1978), 152.

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[9] Pausanias Guide to Greece Hermione, 2.32.7, Acrocorinth, 2.4.7, at Bassae 8.41.10.

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[10] William S. Penn, "Springhead: The Temple Ditch Site," Archaeologia Cantiana 79 (1965), 173.

[11] Frank Jenkins, "The Romano-British Settlement at Springhead," Appendix to "Springhead:," Penn, 57.

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[14] Lewis Richard Farnell, Cults of the Greek States, 655.

[15] Jenkins, "The Cult of the Pseudo-Venus, 73, No. 52; Nina Crummy, "Roman Small Finds from Excavations in Colchester 1971-79," Appendix 2, Colchester Archaeologica Report 24, (Colchester, Essex: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd., 1983), 141; T. Wilson, "Romano-Gaulish Statuette Found in Carlisle," Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 15 (1899), 504.

[16] Jenkins, "Some Interesting Types of Clay Statuettes," 152.

[17] Virgil Aeneid 4.965-978.

[18] Bion Dirge for Adonis 122-5, trans. H.H. Chamberlain, Last Flowers. A Translation of Moschus and Bion, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937)).

[19] Euripedes Alcestis 72-76.

[20] W. Neville Terry, "A Pipeclay Statuette of Venus," Archaeologia Cantiana 63 (1956), 155; Wilson, 452.

[21] Valerie Hutchinson, Bacchus in Roman Britain: The Evidence for His Cult, British Archaeological Report 104, (Oxford: 1982), 31.

[22] Hesiod Theogony 3.188-200.

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[23] An attempt may have been made to replicate the pipe-clay figures in shale. A small (44 mm. long) fragment found at South Shields Roman Fort in Tyne and Wear depicts the nude thighs and buttocks of a female figure; its resemblance to the pipe-clay figures is striking. However, much uncertainty surrounds this artifact as it was among a group of objects found ca. 1879 of which a number were declared suspect near the time of their discovery. No recent reassessment of the group has amended or clarified the original view nor has any subsequent discovery called for such a review. The figure has been published by R.E. Hoopell, "Notes on Certain Articles Recently Found at South Shields on the Site of the Roman Station," Journal of the British Archaeological Association 35 (1979), 100-108 and by Roger Miket and Lindsay Allason-Jones, The Catalogue of Small Finds from South Shields Roman Fort, Monograph Series II of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, ed. John Philipson, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1984), 318, No. 7.163.

CHAPTER III

THE FIGURES IN BRONZE

The bronze figurines of Venus present some difficulty in the attempt to trace and understand the cult in Britain. First, when one eliminates heads and full length figurines which are ambiguous, there are only fourteen extant examples whose attribute, gesture or pose allow positive identification as Venus. The small body of bronze statuettes is due, most probably, not to the lack of original production, but to the usefulness of bronze as a recyclable material; many small and large works were melted down and recast in antiquity. Further, these small objects are easily lost and instances of this having happened are recorded.[1] A second problem results from the lack of provenance for many of the figurines. A number have been found in fields, evidently turned up by plowing; others may have come to Britain from the continent through collectors. Moreover, evidence for the manufacture of bronzes in Britain tends to circumstantial or scanty, though bronze production centers in Britain are known to have existed. None of the Venus figurines, therefore, can be traced with certainty to local manufacture. Thirdly, dating bronze figurines is very difficult. When not melted down, these objects have a long life, are not subject to wear patterns, and do not manifest a discernible stylistic development. Thus, even when the context is known, it can only provide a terminus ante quem.

In spite of the difficulty of dating, bronze figurines seem to be primarily a product of the third century. That is, when the context is known, it is generally not of the first or second century and not past the middle of the fourth century. If one assumes a certain length of time when the figurines are actively "used" by their owners, then it must also be assumed that any of the objects from a fourth century context would have been manufactured some time before they were deposited. The exception would, of course, be in the instances when it is associated with a cult center where purchase and subsequent deposit would occur very quickly. The long period of activity at known cult centers such as Woodeaton prohibits, however, close dating of bronze figures found in this context.

The Romano-British Venuses in bronze follow Greco-Roman archetypes, most of them closely, but a few in slightly modified form. As in pipe-clay, the Venus Anadyomene motif is popular in small bronzes. In the latter medium, however, a variant, Venus at her toilette, was very popular. This motif depicts the goddess looking into a hand-held mirror and sometimes wringing one lock of hair. According to Bernoulli, this scene portrays a moment just after Venus has wrung the water from her hair following her birth from the sea.[2] The reference to a passing moment is a Hellenistic development appearing in sculpture in the last half of the third century B.C. and became, not surprisingly, a popular theme in small figurines. Romano-British bronzes portraying Venus Anadyomen include the figures from Bokerly Dyke (Figure 10), Silchester (Figure 11), London (Figure 12), and Colchester (Figure 13).

The second, and most common, theme of the bronzes is that of Venus Pudica, usually considered a derivation of Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite of ca. 350 B.C. The Pudica motif became, however, fully developed in the Hellenistic Capitoline and Medici Venuses, both of which depict the goddess holding her hands before the breasts and pubes in a gesture suggesting modesty (Figures 14 and 15). In Britain the motif is demonstrated most precisely in the figures of Venus from Wroxeter (Figure 16), Ely (Figure 17), and Southwark. The latter, for which no photo was available, lacks the right arm and left leg; the left arm is extended downward to shield the pubes. The work is of mediocre quality. Reflecting a more provincial interpretation are the figures from Malton (Figure 18), York (Figure 19), and Southbrooms, Devizes (Figure 20). In these examples, the arm position has been altered to bend across the abdomen in a gesture common to mother goddesses from the Cyclades to the northern reaches of Europe and perhaps refers to pregnancy and childbirth. The York Venus shows further non-Classical influence in the treatment of the supporting object at her right on which she rests her right hand. This may be a column, or possibly an extremely stylized rendering of drapery. Whichever it may be, it is a feature in which design takes precedence over naturalism and recalls the twists and turns of Celtic abstract La Tene motifs. The Venus from Southbrooms, too, is a provincial interpretation. This figure has been identified as Venus on the basis of hairstyle and the placement of the arms, which suggest the gesture of Venus Pudica.[3] Another figure, perhaps related to the Venus Pudica motif is the seated Venus from Woodeaton, Oxon. (Figure 21).

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Found at the site of a Romano-Celtic temple and fairground, this figure too is depicted with arms bent across the abdomen and at one time may have held an attribute. While seated Venuses are known in the Mediterranean area, the attempt to fuse the Pudica gesture, if that is what it is, with a seated pose would have to be seen as a provincial innovation. The closest parallel in the Classical world to such imaginative fusion of two poses is seen in the crouching Venus Pudica by the late third century B.C. sculptor, Doidalsas, or the crouching Venus Anadyomene of the second century B.C.

While the Venus Pudica figurines deviate somewhat from their Mediterranean archetypes, the theme of Venus removing her sandal relies on a purely Classical model. The only example of this motif in Britain is the Venus from Branch Road, St. Albans (Figure 22). Like both the Pudica theme and Venus at her toilette, this motif began to be exploited in sculpture in the Hellenistic period. The raised left arm of Venus in the "sandalbinder" pose suggests that the original incorporated a column which helped to support and balance the figure of Venus.[4] This pose is not exclusive to Venus; Nike is depicted removing her shoe in a relief from the temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis in Athens and both Hermes and Dionysus are also associated with the motif. Broadly, it is a gesture which symbolizes the discarding of a lower nature.[5] In representations of Venus/Aphrodite it is usually seen as referring to the ritual bath, probably specifically that taken prior to marriage. It is, however, a gesture of eschatological significance and its incorporation into Venus' iconography should be understood as a reference to the goddess' eschagological aspect in addition to the usual interpretation.[6]

Three final Romano-British Venuses in bronze recall a pre-Praxitelean conception of the goddess. Iconographically these figures resemble the korai of archaic Greece. From Colchester comes an unprovenanced bronze depicting the goddess nude, wearing a diadem, and holding an apple or pomegranate in her left hand; her right hand is extended with the hand shown palm up (Figure 23). While Venus' nudity and her naturalistic form rely on fourth and fifth century B.C. developments (respectively), the feeling here is of an earlier hieratic figure. The statuette expresses in a most forthright way the goddess' essential fertility nature and eschews the more complex interpretations of Hellenistic works.

Similarly, Figure 24, this from St. Albans, while heavily imprinted with Hellenistic elements, also manifests Venus' most basic aspect. Here too, the goddess holds an apple or pomegranate in her left hand and extends the right, palm up. Though the figure is essentially conservative, the Hellenistic features are not to be ignored. The half-draped rendering is derived from a now lost Hellenistic archetype of which Venus of Arles is the earliest known example. Here the treatment is enlivened by depicting the garment as billowing away from Venus' legs as if agitated by breezes. The garment is held together by a modified Isis knot placed strategically before the pelvis. The Isis knot is of Egyptian origin and was associated, from pre-Ptolemaic times, with mourning for the dead. The incorporation of this motif speaks to a late Hellenistic source.[7] This most decorative in appearance of all the figures of Venus found in

Britain was discovered with a bronze pitcher inside a feature that could have been either a plank lined pit or a strong box which was located in a late third century celler.[8] Its context suggests that the statuette of Venus was, in fact, no mere decoration, but an object of religious significance. Parallels to this work are found in Augst and Trier; Figure 25 depicts an example from the Rhineland.[9] Toynbee attributes the St. Albans Venus to a Romanized South Gaulish workshop.[10]

The third of the bronzes of conservative iconography is lamentably no longer extant, or at least its location is not known. This is a bronze found at Blyford, Suffolk; Venus is described as nude, about six inches high and holding a dove in the right hand.[11] Like so many Romano-British bronzes, it was found in a field and thus lacks a context. The description reveals enough to know that the goddess was here depicted in a manner that has antecedents reaching far back into antiquity when she was frequently depicted with a dove. The loss of this piece is highly unfortunate as it was a singular Romano-British example of Venus in bronze shown with one of her most customary attributes.

As previously mentioned, many of the Romano-British bronzes are unprovenanced. Several, however, do come from known contexts and these may provide enough information to gain some insight into the role these small figurines played in the cult of Venus. The probable religious significance of the bronze discovered in a celler at St. Albans has already been noted; it is likely that this work was placed in a domestic shrine or on an altar in the home. Other bronzes which were probably used in a domestic setting are the Malton and Southbrooms

Venuses. Neither of these comes from an original context, but their small size would be appropriate for a domestic setting. More indicative of their probable household context, however, is a peg which each has attached to its base suggesting that they were at one time attached to some object. While one should not exclude the possibility that these were decorative attachments for a vessel or furniture, it is equally possible that they were placed in small domestic shrines. At any rate, even as attachments to household items, they would probably have been apotropaic as well as decorative.[12]

Two of the bronzes, the Branch Road, St. Albans Venus and that from Wroxeter, were found in association with bath houses. Too small to have served as decoration in such a setting, these probably had a votive purpose. The healing and restorative powers of water, including baths, and Venus' connection with watery settings has already been discussed in the preceding chapter.

Both the Woodeaton Venus and the Venus Anadyomene from Colchester came from a site connected with temples. The Colchester figure was found in the vicinity of an apsidal temple located outside of the town near a stream. Along with this statuette were several pipe-clay Venuses and a seated mother goddess figure, itself sometimes identified as Venus.[13] Better studied is the Woodeaton temple site from which the seated Woodeaton Venus was excavated. At this location, thought to have been a religious site before the Roman occupation, a Romano-Celtic temple had been built ca. 65 A.D. and religious activity appears to have continued here until the end of the Roman period. A large number of coins present at the site suggest that it was used as a market or

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fairground and that the many votive objects found there may have been sold on the spot to worshippers. It is also possible that the votive bronzes were manufactured at the site. Only two of the bronzes from Woodeaton are of anthropomorphic form, the Venus and a mother goddess, apparently Celtic, who wears a skirt but whose upper body is bare. Joanne Kirk has postulated that the presence of these two female deities and the large amount of votive jewelery at Woodeaton suggest the worship there of a deity whose province particularly involved females.[14] Whether this is the case or not, it is quite certain that the figurine of Venus had a votive function. The Celtic character of the votive objects found at Woodeaton, models for instance, and its pre-Roman history suggest that this site was frequented by many Britons who were not entirely Romanized. The unusual conception of the Woodeaton Venus, then, may be seen as a local interpretation.

Certain other bronze Venuses, such as the one from Bokerly Dyke and that from London, are provenanced but their find spots are probably not original, thus the context offers no information about their function. These, however, like most or all of the small bronzes, may have been votive. Alternatively, they could have served their owners in an apotropaic way, or have been carried as a charm as Toynbee suggests in the case of the Bokerly Dyke Venus.[15] Pliny attests to the practice of carrying small figurines about in his Natural History, and the small size of the statuettes supports this sort of use.[16]

In contrast to the pipe-clay Venuses, no bronzes have been found in Britain in a burial context, although on the continent they have been found as grave goods in Hungary, Bulgaria, Gaul and the Rhineland.[17]

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How significant this is in manifesting religious belief in Britain is uncertain; the number and range of distribution of Venus figurines seems always to have been greater on the continent than in Britain. Still, the lack of bronzes in burial sites does reflect an apparent change in practice after the second century, however unclear the reasons for this may be. In spite of the change, representations in other media attest to the goddess' continued eschatological associations in Britain.

The bronzes are marked by a much freer form and a greater variety of poses than the pipe-clay Venuses. This is due, of course, to the greater possibilities of the material, particularly its greater strength which allows more open forms to be exploited. Thus the diversity of poses is far greater in this versatile medium, and the expressiveness correspondingly more important.

Bronze producing workshops seem to have existed in Wroxeter, St. Albans, Malton, York, Silchester and a number of other places in Britain, either in conjunction with major population centers or temple sites.[18] This, along with the known pre-Roman proficiency in bronze casting suggests that Romano-British bronzes could have been made locally rather than imported. The general tendency is to assume that the greater the skillfulness which went into the fashioning of a figurine, the more likely it is to have been brought from the continent. It is probably not inappropriate to assign many of the less carefully executed bronzes to local manufacture due to the fact that objects made for votive purposes do not necessarily require a diligently finished figure. The statuette need only correctly represent major

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features of a deity to be appropriate as a votive object and the short period between purchase and separation of the object from its owner makes elegance or beauty of the figure unnecessary. In addition, the less time spent on the finishing cold working of a piece, the less costly it is and therefore more widely affordable. Both votive figures and those simply made for a less than wealthy clientele would thus be likely to be of insular manufacture. This, nevertheless, does not preclude the possibility that skilled artisans were working in Britain and that some of the more skillfully rendered bronzes could have been local products. While immigrant artisans could account for a certain amount of this work, it is incredible to assume that by the third century Britons, whose art history included a bronze-working tradition, could not have gained the requisite skills to produce anthropomorphic figurines. Even the very best of Romano-British bronzes should not have been beyond their capability. Moreover, the same range of skilled to hastily created works is to be found on the continent.

Models for Romano-British figures would have been accessible in the form of imported art works, coinage and Samian ware. The figures of Venus adhere, in most cases very closely, to Greco-Roman representations. Even those that deviate, such as the Woodeaton Venus, are essentially Classical in form. To what degree this reflects a correlating adherence to Classical religious attitudes to Venus is speculative, but the continued representations of apparently Celtic figures such as the mother goddess from Woodeaton or the Deae Matres seen so often in relief, suggest that where Venus' nature did not satisfy

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Celtic religious views, a local deity served in her place rather than conflating with the Roman goddess. This is assuming, to be sure, that those female figures not identifiable as Venus were, in fact, a non-conflated local deity; it takes only a little imagination to see the Woodeaton mother goddess or the "Venus" from Colchester as a native interpretation of the Classical Venus. As was noted in the preceding chapter, however, Venus' nature did not have to be altered to a significant degree to conform to native attitudes, at least insofar as her normal sphere of influence was concerned.

The Celtic artistic propensity for patterning and design is not as evident in the bronze figurines as in pipe-clay. This is due in part to the corrosion of the surface so that whatever detail that once may have existed is in many cases lost. But it may also indicate a failure to execute time consuming details in their original production due to the intended function of the piece as a votive object, or low cost product. A most significant departure from Classical form lies in the proportions of the figure. Most representations de-emphasize the upper body; the chest is narrow, the breasts small and the torso elongated, while the hips, abdomen and thighs are swelling and fleshy. This system of proportions varies in degree from the fairly naturalistic to truly distorted.

It is illustrative in considering the degree of Celtic artistic influence on these figures to divide England into three regions. The first lies within a curved line taking in an area of south eastern England which includes the cities of Colchester, St. Albans, and London (see Map I). The second region incorporates Ely, Woodeaton, and

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Silchester. The third marks the western limits of Roman occupation, encompassing Southbrooms, Devizes, Bokerly Dyke and Wroxeter in the western area of Britain and York and Malton in the north. In the first area with its highly Romanized cities, the figurines of Venus adhere very closely to Classical models both in iconography and in the proportions of the figures, which remain naturalistic in spite of some deviation from Classical canons. The second and third regions have produced both Classicized and Celticized interpretations of Venus, the Classicized examples coming from Romanized centers of population such as Silchester in the second region and Wroxeter in the third. The Venus figures from the second region which are associated with areas outside of urban centers, the Ely and Woodeaton examples, exhibit obvious Celtic artistic influence, though they are essentially Classical in form. In the third area, the most marked departure from Classical models is the Southbrooms Venus; the northern examples from Malton and York, however, also manifest deviation from Classical archetypes in the gesture of the arm across the abdomen. Most significant is that even those figures from large urban, Romanized centers of population, the Wroxeter and especially the York figure, are considerably less Classicized than any statuette from the first region.

The pattern of decreasing Classical influence in areas distant from the highly Romanized south east confirms in bronze the generally held opinion that the northern and western parts of England remained more Celtic in outlook. Keeping this in mind, however, it is notable that the differences in the representations are minimal; a change in the position of the arms, a degree of patternization, and modification

of the proportions are all that separate these figures from their Classical archetypes. Nothing in these representations suggests conflation with a native divinity. It is further noteworthy that no other evidence exists which would support such a fusion.

The relatively traditional manner of Venus' representation in Romano-British bronzes may reflect the confinement of works in this material to the upper, more Romanized classes who may have eschewed insular deities in their enthusiasm for Classical culture.[19] Martin Henig suggests alternatively that religious leaders may have offerred advice on the most appropriate ways of depicting Roman divinities.[20] Whether it is for either of these reasons or simply that Venus in her Classical mode was acceptable to native cult members, the bronzes retain a highly Classical flavor.

Like the pipe-clay Venuses, those in bronze belong to the sphere of personal religion. No examples of Venus Victrix or Genetrix have been found in this medium. The tendency to employ traditional motifs in small British bronzes suggests that they retained a traditional symbolic meaning. The Pudica pose, Venus Anadyomene and its variation of Venus at her toilette, and Venus removing her shoe all refer to the goddess' fertility aspect in the sophisticated Hellenistic manner; the more traditional motif depicting Venus with flowers and/or fruit manifests, of course, the same quality. The Hellenistic motifs display with greater esprit long standing perceptions of fertility divinities. Thus, the fourth century B.C. Pudica stance, while suggesting modesty, effectively emphasizes those parts of the female body associated with fecundity. Those motifs popularized later, Venus at her toilette and

Venus removing her shoe, incorporate, visually, eschatological aspects normally associated with fertility gods and goddesses. Venus gazing into her mirror would naturally refer to vanity and feminine beauty and the part these play in coupling and reproduction and the mirror was, in addition, considered a symbol of love and fertility.[21] But the mirror was also imbued with prophetic powers and further had a particular association with prophesying death.[22] This motif, then, depicts several of the goddess' aspects. The significance of removing the shoe and its symbolic connection to both marriage and death has already been discussed and it only needs to be said here that this too expresses a dual meaning, evidently a very appealing artistic device in the Hellenistic and later periods.

In Roman Britain these multi-symbolic portrayals of the goddess would certainly have been understood in the same way as they must have been elsewhere in the Roman world. This would hold true for native Britons embracing Classical religion as well as Romanized continental immigrants and any Romans living in Britain. The possibility exists that for the Celtic population, familiar with the developed Celtic view of the afterlife, these representations of Venus may have had an even greater significance than for many Romans.

NOTES

[1] The Blyford Venus, for instance. See Victoria Co. History, the Co. of Suffolk, I, ed. William Page, (London: Constable and Company, 1911), 301 and George Payne, "The Roman Villa at Darenth," Archaeologia Cantiana 22 (1897), 77.

[2] J.J. Bernoulli, Aphrodite. Ein Baustein zur Griechischen Kunstmythologie, (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1873), 15.

[3] Claire Lundgren, Classical Art Forms and Celtic Mutations, (Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes Press, 1978), 79, No. 43. It should be noted in regard to this figure that, unlike the other bronzes with which it was found, it bears virtually no relationship to the drawing made near the time of their discovery, see Figure 26. Given the tendency of nineteenth century antiquarians to beautify their drawings of artifacts, this would not cause especial concern were it not for the comment by James Waylen in Chronicles of the Devizes, (London: 1839), 280, that the Venus was "of excellent design" and records its height as 6½". This seems not to be the same figure currently identified as Venus and none of the figures in the drawing conform to this bronze. The figure has been included in this study because the weight of expert opinion seems to accept its identification as Venus, and it is paralleled by a similarly clad figure in relief, also identified as Venus.

[4] Dericksen Morgan Brinkerhoff, Hellenistic Statues of Aphrodite, (New York: Garland Publishing, In., 1978), 79.

[5] G.N. Gaskell, Dictionary of the Sacred Language of All Scriptures and Myths, (New York: The Julian Press In., 1960), s.v. "shoes put off."

[6] Bion Dirge for Adonis 128 and Virgil Aeneid 4.715-720.

[7] Brinkerhoff, 61.

[8] S.S. Frere, "Excavations at Verulamium 1959, Fifth Interim Report," The Antiquaries Journal 40 (1960), 10.

[9] Heinz Menzel, Die Romanischen Bronzen aus Deutschland II Trier, (Mainz: Romanisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, 1966), 38.

[10] J.M.C. Toynbee, Art in Britain Under the Romans, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 85.

[11] V.C.H. The Co. of Suffolk, I, 301.

[12] Two small bronze busts, one from Cirencester and one from Lincolnshire, depict a nude female, probably Venus. These are clearly attachments for vessels or furniture and would have been apotropaic as well as decorative. See T.M. Ambrose, "A Roman Bronze Bust from South Lincolnshire," Lincolnshire History and Archaeology 15 (1980), 85-86 and Toynbee, "Bronze Bust," pp. 176-77 in K.M. Richardson, "Excavations in Parsonnage Field, Cirencester," The Antiquaries Journal 42 (1962), 160-182.

[13] Miranda Green, A Corpus of Religious Material from the Civilian Areas of Britain, British Archaeological Report 24 (Oxford: 1976), 216, Pl.XIIId. Green places a question mark with this identification.

[14] Joanne Kirk, "Bronzes from Woodeaton, Oxon.," Oxoniensia 14 (1949), 5.

[15] Toynbee, "The Bronze Figurine of Venus," Archaeological Journal 98 (1961), 87.

[16] Pliny N.H. 34.18.

[17] Menzel, "Roman Bronzes," in Master Bronzes From the Classical World , David Mitten and Suzanne F. Doeringer, (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1967), 231.

[18] Lynn Pitts, Roman Bronze Figurines from the Civitates of the Catuvellauni and Tinovantes, B.A.R. 60, p.20.

[19] Stephanie Boucher in Recherches sur les Bronzes Figures de Gaule Pre-romaine et Romaine, Ecole Francaise de Rome, as cited by Martin Henig in Religion in Roman Britain, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984), 66.

[20] Henig, 66.

21 Mircea Eliade, ed. The Encyclopedia of Religion, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "mirror."

[22] Pausanias Guide to Greece 7.21.5. and James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, Vol. 3, Part 2, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914), 94.

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CHAPTER IV

SCULPTURE IN RELIEF AND IN THE ROUND

In Britain, as elsewhere, it is sculpture, and especially relief sculpture, which is the preferred medium outside of architecture for the expression of state religion. Not surprisingly, then, insular representations of Venus in relief include depictions referring to the goddess' link with the state. In this study, any civic or military monument will be considered a manifestation of Venus' role as a state deity since, by definition, any public monument is outside the sphere of personal religion, and therefore whatever aspect of Venus is depicted can be seen as expressing state ideology. British representations of Venus Victrix do not normally incorporate the usual iconography associated with this aspect of the goddess, that is, draped and wearing a diadem and holding a staff, palm branch or wreath. She is instead portrayed as Venus Anadyomene. Venus' role as mother of the Imperial house is oddly missing from Romano-British reliefs; the importance of this aspect of the goddess through the mid-second century A.D., at least, is attested by Hadrian's temple to Venus and Roma which proclaims Venus' ancestral role in the history of Rome. In Celtic areas, however, the Genetrix nature seems to have been superseded by her position as a planetary deity, which along with the Victrix aspect, comprises her usual representation on public monuments. However much this suggests a decline from the reverence paid Venus

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during the first and second centuries B.C., it is not without significance in the Roman provinces.

The practice of associating a day of the week with a deity was originally an eastern concept, developing, it is thought, during the second century B.C.[1] The system was based on the astrological idea that the seven planets influenced the events of the world and its human population. The planets, or rather the deities associated with them, express a paradigm of morality and symbolize the range of ideal human behavior. The mythological roles, then, of these deities was subsumed by the abstraction of their natures. By the time of Augustus, the practice had gained a foothold at Rome, and the Classical planetary deities were installed as the deities of the week. Sol or Apollo represented the sun (Sunday), Luna the moon (Monday), followed by Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Jupiter (Thursday), Venus (Friday), and Saturn (Saturday). The eight day week of the Roman calendar required the addition of an eighth deity, usually Fortuna or Bonus Eventus.

It should be remembered when considering ths significance of this practice that astrology in this period was taken very seriously. Hadrian himself was an astrologer and doubtless made this quasi-religious system even more important than it had been under Augustus. Further, the second century A.D. promulgation of Pythagorean ideas linked the planetary system with the passage of the soul after death on its return to its celestial "home."[2] Thus, the seven planets were seen as not only governing the earthly life of Roman citizens, but as playing a role in the transference of the soul to an afterlife in the heavenly sphere. The representation of these beliefs on public monuments in the form of the deities of the week can be seen as a reminder

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of the moral order necessary for the maintainance of a sound state. Interestingly, the portrayal of the Wochengöttin on monuments is seen primarily in eastern Gaul, western Germany, and Britain rather than in Rome.

The most magnificent of the monuments depicting the deities of the week is undoubtedly the London arch. Stones from the arch had been reused in the building of a fourth century wall along the riverbank at Blackfriars. The arch, which was at least eight to nine meters high and over seven and a half meters wide, was large enough to have spanned a street, but whether it did so in fact is uncertain. It may have instead marked the entrance to a religious precinct, and the many depictions of deities on the arch perhaps favor this hypothesis. Minerva and Hercules were among the divinities who flanked the arch portals front and back. One of the fragments from the portal depicted a third god with a staff, but no portion of the fourth god has been found. Above the portal ran a frieze containing the busts of a series of deities thought to represent the days of the week. Block 23 from the frieze contains the fragmentary head of Venus and block 24 the goddess' left shoulder (Figures 27 and 28a and b). She is shown wearing a simple diadem which is embellished by a semi-circular loop hanging above the right ear; the left side of Venus' face is missing but a matching loop would probably have hung above the opposite ear. The goddess' hair, once painted yellow, is centrally parted and combed out from the part to form waves at the sides of her head. The rather fierce eyes are fully modeled with the pupils marked by incision.

Ralph Merrifield has suggested that the carving, which has been dated to the late second or early third century A.D., may have done by

a school of sculptors based in London whose work reflects a Rhineland influence.[3] The relief lacks certain of the characteristics usually associated with Celtic art; the eyes are neither lentoid nor bulging, and they are not enclosed by incised lines. What remains of the face and head seems to be well-modeled though somewhat lacking in reference to bone structure, a characteristic of Roman sculpture of this period and not exclusive to provincial works. The hair treatment, however, is rather schematized and the Celtic feel for patternization manifests itself here. For the most part, however, the sculptors were working in a Classical mode appropriate for an important monument in a highly Romanized city.

The deities of the week are also depicted on a stone slab which comes from the fort at Old Penrith in Cumbria. Here the figures are full length and shown standing in a niche flanked by pilasters (Figure 29). Each deity is shown with an appropriate attribute; Venus holds aloft a mirror in her right hand, and with the left grasps an end of the drapery which wraps around her right leg and passes behind her back. The goddess' otherwise nude body is well proportioned and full modeled. Like the other deities depicted, Venus stands in a well executed contrapposto stance.[4] This relief is known to have been erected by the Twenty-second Legion (Primigenia), a legion first sent to Britain by Hadrian ca. 119 A.D.[5] It may have been part of an altar, but its original use has not been identified with certainty. The very Classical rendering of the figures suggests the work of an artisan who understood this mode very well, and was undoubtedly attached to the legion. The lettering of the relief places the work within the second century A.D., a dating that is supported by the Classicism of the figures.[6]

From the fort at Great Chesterford in Essex comes a fragment of a large, octagonal monument thought to be a so-called Jupiter column (Figure 30). The stone depicts in relief the head and torso of several deities interpreted as another days of the week series. Mercury with his caduceus and Venus with her mirror are easily identified. Between these two is the naked torso of a god who may be Jupiter and a fourth god has been tentatively identified as Mars.[7] If the deities were originally depicted full length, at least three more courses would have been required to complete the figures. The Wochengöttin theme is commonly found on continental Jupiter columns, which like the days of the week series itself, seems to be primarily a provincial device. It is particularly important in the case of these monuments to the father of the gods to remember that the planetary deities are not mere symbols for the days of the week, but deities whose influence was believed to have affected all the days of man's life.[8]

Also from a fort site but departing from the scheme of the planetary deities is a relief from Maryport, Cumbria at the western extremity of Hadrian's Wall. Here Venus is shown standing within an arch at the extreme left of a stone (Figure 31).[9] While the original publisher of the relief, J.B. Bailey, described Venus as '--nearly in the attitude of Venus Pudica', the goddess here adheres more closely to the iconography of Venus Anadyomene.[10] Her right hand is raised to her head and her left, rather than shielding her body modestly, is simply held at the left side of her body. The arch in which Venus stands is part of a scenae frons which extends along the face of the stone at the goddess' left. The architectural scheme might refer to a

temple or alternatively to a triumphal arch, but may be nothing more than a compositional device. It is clear, however, that the relief was part of a larger scheme as the off-center placement of Venus' figure demands a balancing element. Neither the function of this relief nor the format of the whole is known, but a brief, tantalizingly suggestive description in Bailey's article refers to a '-draped female(?) figure-' whose head and legs were missing, but who held a '-mirror(?) in the left hand.' The passage raises interesting questions about the theme of this work which are, lamentably, unanswerable.

A relief from Croy Hill, near the Antonine Wall, is better understood as it is inscribed by the erecting body, Legio VI (Victrix). See Figure 32. The stone is thought to commemorate the legions's work on the wall, or alternatively, may be a distance marker.[11] In this relief, Venus is flanked by two Corinthian columns, the innermost one supporting an arch marking the center of carving. Venus, whose left leg crosses over the right, appears to be walking toward the left edge of the slab but looks back toward the center. Instead of walking, however, the goddess may simply have her legs crossed, a not unusual pose in Venus' iconography. Drapery falling from her right hand passes between her legs, but the goddess is otherwise nude. With her left hand she grasps a tress of hair in the usual gesture of Venus Anadyomene. In the interest of symmetry, there was probably a corresponding figure on the right side of the stone, now broken away. At the center of the relief, a wreath, supported from below by Cupid, contains what remains of the inscription which has been reconstructed to read: LEG(IO)/ VI VIC(TRIX/ P(IA) F(IDELIS) F(ECIT).[12] As can be seen from the illustration, only the V can be clearly seen. A vertical line following the V caused some

confusion in the initial reading of this relief by the Rev. John Skinner who identified the figure as Victory, based in part on the inscription; another scholar, George MacDonald later correctly determined that the goddess portrayed here was Venus.[13] While the iconography is that of Venus Anadyomene, the wreath and the military context indicate that it is Venus Victrix who is depicted here. Thus, as suggested by Augustus' use of Apelles' Venus Anadyomene as Venus Genetrix and the Croy Hill relief's use of the same iconography to represent Venus Victrix, the Anadyomene aspect seems to have been considered appropriate for the goddess' depiction in several of her manifestations.

All of the preceding reliefs were executed in a strongly Classical mode. A final example of relief from a military context is, in contrast, imbued with a more Celtic spirit. This work, from High Rochester in Northumberland, is made of local stone and dated to the third or fourth century. It was found reused in a water tank and coincidentally, or not, depicts a crouching Venus Anadyomene (Figure 33). Like so many motifs popular in the Roman period, this pose, a fusion of the Crouching Venus of Doidalsas and Venus Anadyomene, was a late Hellenistic development. An example in sculpture in the round is known from Rhodes (Figure 34). The High Rochester relief is the single British example of this pose but the clarity of its execution suggests that a good model was available for the sculptor to follow. Although more rigid than the Rhodian work, the artisan has handled the twist of the body in a believable, if not naturalistic way. It is quite obvious that this is the work of a provincial craftsman who has given it Celtic flavor by reducing the body to its simplest form and executed

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the facial features in a typically provincial fashion. The proportions of the bodies, too, are those seen repeatedly in artifacts of Celtic craftsmanship.

Venus is flanked by two nymphs, the one at the goddess' right carrying a crescent shaped attribute, perhaps a garland, and the other, at Venus' left, holding an urn and mimicking Venus' gesture of holding or wringing her hair. The gesture carries with it a suggestion that this figure might be another manifestation of Venus herself. If this is so, it is intriguingly suggestive of the replication of deities common in Celtic art, seen especially in the triplication of the Deae Matres and Cucullati. It should be noted, however, that such duplication is not unknown in the Mediterranean world.[14] Nevertheless, the smaller size of the flanking figures makes their identification as nymphs plausible and the borrowed hair wringing gesture is entirely appropriate for Venus' attendants.

As in the case of the bronzes, the fusion of Celtic and Classical can be seen in the High Rochester relief. But, also like the bronzes, the iconography remains unchanged; not only are Venus and her nymphs represented nude and with traditional gestures, but the arch within which they are placed and the urns, flowing water, and flora of the relief all have Mediterranean parallels.

In addition to Venus' representation in relief on civic and military monuments, the medium was exploited for her depiction in the realm of personal religion. In this sphere, the goddess' eschatological nature dominates as here representation is linked exclusively to funerary monuments. Only two of these can with any certainty be identified as depictions of Venus. The first of these is a relief from

Hungate, Lincoln in Lincolnshire (Figure 35). The 33.5 cm W. x 35 cm H. relief is of local limestone and was found in 1986 in the destruction debris of a late Roman building. Venus and a winged figure are shown seated together on a couch, both figures frontally oriented. Venus wears a sleeveless tunic and a mantle which is draped over the left shoulder then falls across her torso to the waist at the right and is brought up behind her arm to the right shoulder. At the lower edge, the mantle falls between her knees in a point from which a tassel dangles. A third garment, indicated by a fold below the lower edge of the mantle, reaches to the goddess' ankles. The authors of an article published in The Antiquaries Journal identify this clothing as a type worn in the northwestern provinces of the Roman Empire and sometimes seen in depictions of the Deae Matres.[15] Venus also wears a diadem, confirming her status as a divinity. In her lap she holds, in her left hand, an object which appears to be a container. With her right hand, the goddess reaches out to hold her companion's chin. He responds to the loving gesture by holding her extended arm at the wrist and elbow. This very ancient means of denoting lovers is paralleled, though in reverse, on an oinochoe from Crete dated 675-640 B.C. (Figure 36).

The wing seen behind the male figure on the left suggests Venus' son Cupid, or either Sleep or Death, both portrayed as winged males. The authors, however, have cited depictions of Venus and Adonis seated together or side by side in adjacent chairs as evidence for the identification as Adonis. The loving gesture previously discussed supports this conclusion. Further, the attribute held by Venus has been tentatively identified as an Adonis Garden.[16] These objects, in the form of a basket or vase, were placed on rooftops in Greece during the annual

festival of Aphrodite and Adonis and would thus be an appropriate attribute in works depicting the lovers. Figure 37 shows a Greek work in which Venus carries an attribute much like that of the Lincoln relief.

The unusual attribute of Venus, her mode of dress, and the apparent conlfation of Adonis and Cupid or Sleep/Death makes this a highly unusual work. Its Celtic influence is evident particularly in the rendering of Venus' garments which are so entirely of native inspiration that without the accompanying figure and the embrace between the two, identification of the goddess as Venus would hardly be possible. Otherwise, however, the figures are Classically conceived and the iconography, as has been demonstrated, relies largely on Mediterranean archetypes. The relief has been tentatively dated to sometime between the early second and mid-third centuries A.D.; the broad brackets are due to the want of an original context which could provide a date, and to the lack of conclusive stylistic evidence.

The second funerary relief, originally from Caerleon, Monmouthshire, but no longer extant, was much more Classical in its appearance. This artifact, dubbed "Mensa Dolenda" by George C. Boon who published it in 1975 (see Note 17) is a convex, circular stone, twenty-seven inches in diameter and at its greatest thickness ca. six inches (Figure 38a and b). It is known through published articles of the early nineteenth century. The authors of these early writings did not mention whether the material was marble or local stone, but otherwise provided good descriptions of the piece.

Both the upper and lower surfaces are carved, though the convex, or lower, surface bears only a simple circular molding around the

perimeter; a ten inch area in the center of the lower surface was left free of carving, suggesting that it was here attached to a pedestal or some other kind of mounting device. The upper, flat surface is entirely covered with relief carving. A border of myrtle leaves forms the border, and in the center, Venus is shown seated. Her left hand is held downward and in her extended right hand she holds a small dolphin. Slightly off center towards the lower side of the relief, a hole was bored completely through the stone.

The original context of the work is unknown so its purpose had to be determined wholly through parallels. Boon's research led him to reject the possibility that this piece might have been used in a bath house or private setting. He found, rather, that elsewhere in the Roman Empire tables such as this one were used in funerary banquets. Tubing, through which libations for the dead were poured, would have been fixed in the off-center hole. Boon's conclusions are supported by an inscription found in Mainz referring to '-a repast sorrowful for the buried one and a table which must be grieved over-.'[17] Venus' connection to the tradition of providing libations to the dead is mentioned by Plutarch and Farnell notes like practices in Argos, Thespiae, Corinth and other centers of Aphrodite's cult.[18] At Caerleon, where a number of pipe-burials are known, the use of a "Mensa Dolenda" would not have been unusual.

The "Mensa Dolenda" relief may have stood by itself marking the burial, or could have been part of a large monument, though Boon prefers the former possibility. Based on the style of the foliate border, Boon dates this work to the second or possible early third century A.D. The representation of Venus herself appears rather crude, but is, of course,

only known through the drawings, and it is possible that the relief was quite worn when it was drawn. It appears, however, that the relief showed understanding of three-dimensional, ie., Classical, form since Venus' body is clearly indicated by the arrangement of the drapery. The iconographic details, the dolphin, myrtle, and the half-draped rendering of Venus herself, are all entirely traditional.

Caerleon, in Wales, though far west of the most Romanized areas of Britain, was a major Roman military site. As will be seen in a later chapter, other artifacts depicting Venus have been found at this fort, though these are clearly connected with the military. Nevertheless, this area was heavily influenced by the Roman presence, and perhaps because of the military nature of that presence, somewhat conservative.

As already mentioned, only the two funerary monuments above have been with certainty identified as depicting Venus. There are, however, a number of tombstones alluding to the goddess through her attributes such as the dove or a mussel shell. These motifs became more or less generic symbols of death and the afterlife probably through the influence of the goddess. More unusual and highly suggestive is a tombstone from the fort at Ilkley, Yorkshire where it was found in 1884 rebuilt into a wall at the site. The stone is inscribed DIS MANIBUS/ VE[...]IC[...] RICONIS FILIA/ ANNORUM XXX C(IVITATE) CORNOVIA/ H(IC) S(ITU) E(ST). The deceased's name has been reconstructed as Velvica or Velnica, either of which contains the Vel- beginning frequently found in Celtic names.[19] A female, presumably the decedent, is shown seated above the inscription in a high backed chair within a gabled niche (Figure 39). She is wearing a garment rendered much like that worn by Venus in the Lincoln relief. The similarity is particularly close in

the pointed fold falling between the knees. It can be assumed that this, like the torque she wears around her neck, were articles much, or exactly, like those worn by the decedent during her life. The long tresses that fall over each shoulder may also depict her actual hair-style as these, too, reflect local style. The most significant feature of this portrait-like depiction is that the decedent grasps the tress hanging over her left shoulder in her right hand. Unless the "portrait" is so exacting as to portray a gesture associated with the decedent's habits during her lifetime, this can probably be understood as a gesture of some salience. Because the gesture is so inextricably associated with Venus, because the goddess has a known eschatological nature, and because her image on funerary monuments has Classical precedents (see Figure 40), the portrayal on the Ilkley tombstone can perhaps be seen as a reference to Venus. If this is, in fact, an allusion to the goddess, it would be notable as evidence for the deep incursion of Roman practice into Celtic culture.

Like most of the works discussed to this point, this last example of stone relief is connected with a military site. So frequent is this association that whether the work is in the personal or military sphere, it appears to be a by-product of the Roman military presence. Since the art of stone carving arrived in Britain via the military through artisans attached to the units, its relation to military sites is unsurprising. The skillfulness and imagination with which it was incorporated into a Celtic interpretation makes this medium, as Toynbee points out, the most distinctive means of expression of insular artisans.[20]

In comparison to relief carving, stone sculpture in the round representing Venus are few in number in Britain, and only one of the extant examples is in close to complete form. That is the oolite statue found during construction at the Market Place in Dover, Kent in 1897 (see Figure 41). The figure is approximately four feet tall in its present condition; the feet are broken off at the ankles. Both arms are also broken away, thus any attributes are lost and the gestures uncertain. The goddess' left leg crosses in front of her right, around which drapery is wrapped from just above her knee; the figure is otherwise nude. The pronounced forward tilt of the figure is paralleled in depictions of Venus Pudica from Cyrene (the Maliciosa) and a late Hellenistic bronze rendering of the Cnidian Aphrodite in New York (Figure 42).[21] In the Dover work, however, the crossed legs render the statue so unstable in appearance that a supporting column at the goddess' left would seem essential in order to balance the work. The depiction of Venus in the Aldobrandini Wedding provides a parallel to such a treatment as do numerous small figurines from the Mediterranean area.

The Market Place in Dover is also the site of the Painted House discovered in 1970. The house, thought to have been built ca. 200 A.D., stood just outside the north gate of the naval fort of Classis Britannica and may have been a hotel for transient guests. Perhaps associated with the Painted House are gardens also excavated in the 1970-71 seasons. The proximity of the Venus sculpture and this building and gardens is suggestive, though the nature of the statue's discovery precludes a true understanding of any relationship between them.

The figure is large enough to have been placed in a public setting such as a shrine, but could just as easily belong to the building just described or the residence of a wealthy citizen. In any case, the work would have been associated with a certain prosperity which in the important port city of Dover would be not unexpected. The very Classical form of the oolite Venus may reflect the wealth and high status of its commissioner who in seeking a Romanized environment eschewed work in the native tradition. The use of oolite which is native, though not exclusively, to Britain does suggest that the work could have been sculpted locally. The artisan, whatever his nationality may have been, was well-versed in the precepts of Classical form; only the somewhat elongated torso indicates anything other than a purely Classical mode.

Also of oolitic limestone, but far different in appearance, is the small (ca. 12" H.) statue from Froxfield, Wiltshire (Figure 43). Only the upper body of the figure remains and the arms are broken just below shoulder level. Little indication of breasts can be seen on the nude torso, but the figure can be identified as Venus through the bracelet on the upper right arm, and the arrangement of the hair in a chignon at the nape of the neck, a top-knot, and the two tresses falling onto the shoulders.

Although much smaller than the figure from Dover, this work too might have been placed in either a domestic or public setting. It is, of course, larger than the small figurines usually associated with household shrines; it would have been more than twice its present height when complete. If it did belong to a household, it would have been one of considerable wealth.

Though the Froxfield Venus is quite weathered and the details obscured, its naive interpretation of proportions is revealed in the very narrow, almost columnar, torso and the somewhat oversize head. The uneven height of the shoulders indicate that the figure was not rigidly frontal and that a naturalistic pose was sought, even if not perfectly attained. Further, the waves of the hair were not treated stylistically, so these too indicate an attempt at naturalism. Over all, this figure suggests the work of a less than skilled craftsman more than a fusion of Classical and non-Classical styles.[22]

The last, and most fragmentary, sculpture of Venus is from Hinxworth, Hertfordshire where it was discovered ca. 1911. It is of white marble and all that remains is the torso with a portion of the drapery which would have covered the lower body. In its present condition it is twenty-six inches high indicating that it was originally somewhat more than life size. Thus, like the other British examples of Venus sculpted in the round, it is likely to have been set in a public place, or owned by a person of great wealth. Once again, the work is unprovenanced; it was being used as a plow weight when it was discovered. Toynbee attributed this sculpture to a Mediterranean source.[23]

The association of all the foregoing works with settings of wealth and prestige is unsurprising; sculpture in the round is an elite art form. It is, perhaps by definition, a form adhering to naturalistic representation, or at least its attempt. Little of the impact of the Celtic artistic tradition is seen in these works and this may indicate the degree to which high status and Romanization were equated. Further, the three examples of Venus in the round were all found in the south east

of England, the most highly Romanized area, and the first to feel the impact of the Classical culture. The combination of these two factors assured the constancy of a Classical mode in the goddess' depictions throughout this, unfortunately limited, body of works.

NOTES

[1] British Museum. Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain in the Department of Ancient and Medieval Antiquities. (London: The British Museum, 1922), 21.

[2] Franz Cumont, Afterlife in Roman Paganism, Lectures delivered at Yale University, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Pressm 1922), 107.

[3] Thomas Blagg, "The Sculptured Stones," in The Roman Riverside Wall and Monumental Arch in London, Special Paper No.3, Charles Hill, Martin Millett, and Thomas Blagg. Ed. Tony Dyson, (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1980), 180; Ralph Merrifield, "The Contribution to our Knowledge of Roman London," in The Roman Riverside Wall, 204.

[4] Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Apollo are extant.

[5] R.G. Collingwood and R.B. Wright, The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), 689.

[6] Ibid.

[7] R.B. Pugh and W.R. Powell eds., Victoria County History, The County of Essex, Vol. 3, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84.

[8] The deities of the week theme was also portrayed on small art objects, seen in Romano-British examples on the bronze forceps in the British Museum which are thought to be associated with the cult of Cybele, and on a fulmen(?) in the Museum of London on which only the heads of Venus and Mars remain.

[9] The stone is described as nearly cubical (18"H. x 18"D. x 12½"W.) in J.B. Bailey's article, "Catalogue of Roman Inscribed and Sculpted Stone, Coins, Earthenware, Etc. Discovered In or Near the Roman Fort of Maryport and Preserved at Netherhall," Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 15 (1913), 141. As can be seen from the illustration, the drawing of the stone does not indicate a cubical shape.

[10] Ibid.

[11] George MacDonald, The Roman Wall in Scotland, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), 402; Joan Pilsbury Alcock, "The Classical Cults in Roman Britain," (Diss. Institute of Archaeology, University of London, 1976), 308.

[12] L.J.F. Keppie and Beverly J. Arnold, Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Great Britain, I, Fasicule 4, Scotland, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.34, No.91.

[13] Rev. John Skinner, "Dissertation on Some Roman Antiquities Discovered on the Line of the Antonine Vallum," Archaeologia 21 (1827), 458; MacDonald, 401.

[14] See G. Karl Galinsky's discussion of the Ara Pacis in Aeneas, Sicily and Rome, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 200-220.

[15] Thomas Blagg and Martin Henig, "Cupid or Adonis? A New Roman Relief Carving from Lincoln," Antiquaries Journal 66 (1986), 362.

[16] Blagg and Henig, 363.

[17] F.G. Buecheler, Anthologia Latina ii: Carmina Latina Epigraphica, (1897), 1010, cited by George C. Boon in "Mensa Dolenda- A Caerleon Discovery of 1774," Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies 25 (1975), 353.

[18] Plutarch Roman Questions 23; Lewis Richard Farnell, Cults of the Greek States II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), 362.

[19] A.M. Woodward, "The Inscriptions and Sculpted Stones," Appendix I to "The Roman Fort at Ilkley," Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 28 (1925), 316.

[20] J.M.C. Toynbee, Art in Britain Under the Romans (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 9.

[21] Dericksen Morgan Brinkerhoff, Hellenistic Statues of Aphrodite (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1978), 105.

[22] This figure has sometimes been identified as Atys.

[23] Toynbee, 82.

CHAPTER V

THE MOSAICS

Representations of Venus in Romano-British mosaics are associated with fourth century contexts, as are figural mosaics in general. While mosaics had been a feature of earlier villas, primarily those of the second century, these were of geometric design. Following a third century decline in the laying of such pavements, mosaics re-emerged in the figural style, many featuring scenes from mythology and literature. Venus is not so well represented in Romano-British mosaics as Bacchus and Cupid, who seem to have dominated in this art form, but at least seven pavements depicting Venus have either been recorded or still survive.

Approximately 50% of extant mosaics in Britain are found in Gloucestershire, Dorset and Somerset; a figure which reflects the concentration of rural villas in this area (see Map III). At least one pavement featuring Venus has been found in each of these counties. Two are located in Dorset, though one of these, at Frampton, is now buried. Its motif is known, fortunately, through the drawings by the excavator of Frampton, Samuel Lysons. The other, from a villa at Hemsworth, is in the British Museum.

The latter is an apsidal pavement, unfortunately quite damaged in the central panel. Enough remains, however, to identify the scene as a representation of Venus' birth from the sea (Figure 44). The

goddess wears only a billowing red cloak, blown away from the body to reveal her nude legs, the only part of the figure not destroyed. Venus stands before, and is framed by, a large, stylized mussel shell of red, gray and white tessarae. Beyond the perimeter of the shell, at about the height of Venus' waist, two stemmed, heart-shaped ivy leaves flank the goddess' body. This central scene was executed against a white ground. Around the main panel lie a series of borders; the innermost featuring wave and guilloche designs, and the final wide border filled with dolphins and other marine creatures, reiterating Venus' association with the sea. Although the colors are somewhat limited, the workmanship of this pavement is generally rather high. D.J. Smith has attributed the Hemsworth mosaic to the Lindinis Group, which was based in Ilchester and was an off-shoot of the Durnovarian School based in southern England.[1]

The single impetus of the Hemsworth mosaic contrasts with the multiplicity of that at Frampton, Dorset (Figure 45). Here Bellerophon killing the Chimera fills the central medallion of a square mosaic. Panels at each corner contain mythological scenes and a border around the whole contains repeated depictions of dolphins, as well as Cupid with water fowl, and a head of Neptune. Below the god of the sea, a Chi-Rho monogram is centered in a rectangular panel; circular designs flank the Christian symbol.

The reference to Venus is in the corner panels, two of which are complete or mostly so, a third is approximately half destroyed, and the fourth is entirely lost. The scene in the lower left hand panel (viewing the mosaic from in front of the Chi-Rho monogram) depicts a nude figure, probably Adonis, who reclines on a cloak, while Venus,

draped and diademed, stands at his left (Figure 46). Her right hand rests on her breast, either signifying grief over the death of Adonis or alluding to Venus Pudica and the fertility aspect. In her left hand she holds a torch pointing downward to symbolize death. Venus has alternatively been identified as Proserpina on the basis of the inverted torch.[2] This is, of course, a plausible alternative as the two goddesses share the presence of Adonis who spends the summer months, season of life and growth, with Venus and the winter months in the underworld with Proserpina.[3] However, the reclining Adonis paired with Venus is so firmly within the iconography of the goddess that the identification of Venus here is probably sound. Further, the panel in the upper left corner seems to represent Venus in another episode from her mythology. In this scene a seated male figure at the left wears a tunic, baggy pants and a Phrygian hat (Figure 47). His right hand rests on a staff and in his left he holds a pan pipe. Clothes and attributes identify him as a shepherd. His attention is directed to the half-draped goddess at his left who gestures to him with her right hand. This is certainly Venus making her ill-fated bargain with the shepherd Paris for the hand of Helen.[4] The half-destroyed panel in the lower right corner shows the lower portion of a seated, draped figure who holds a staff. Standing before the seated person was another figure of whom only the nude calves and feet remain. These are of a small person, apparently a child, and can plausibly be identified as Venus' son Cupid. Portrayals of a seated, draped Venus with Cupid are not terribly common, but are known (see Figure 48 which parallels this motif in a terra cotta from Cyrene). The staff, the drapery, and the seated position belong to the iconography of Venus Genetrix and it may be she who is portrayed here, although the

scanty remains of the panel preclude firm conclusions. The fourth panel, as mentioned, is entirely destroyed, but the apparent theme of scenes from the mythology of Venus is indicated by the other three, and it can be assumed that the fourth depicted yet another episode.

The Chi-Rho monogram in the rectangular panel adjoining the square reveals the Christian persuasion of the villa owner and suggests an allegorical significance for the Bellerophon and Venus scenes. Moreover, certain features of the site of the Frampton mosaic have given rise to the question of whether this was, in fact, a villa or rather a place of worship.[5] It is situated on low ground in a meadow next to the River Frome. This setting and the apparent lack of outbuildings usually found associated with rural villas, while inconclusive, does demand some speculation about the nature of the site.

Excavations of a luxurious country villa at Kingscote, Gloucestershire in 1975 revealed in Room I at the eastern end of the villa, a mosaic pavement on which Venus was depicted in the central medallion. Here the goddess wears on ochre-yellow diadem and a beaded necklace. Her reddish-brown hair waves back at the sides of her head and a tress of hair falls onto the left shoulder (see Figure 49). Portions of the forehead and the right shoulder of the goddess are missing. The medallion is framed by a wreath of red and blue ivy stemming from a flower positioned above Venus' head. A second enframing border contains a grey wave scroll design. David Neal rates the medallion with the bust of Venus as Grade I, while the rest of the mosaic is of second quality.[6] The difference suggests that the master mosaicist was responsible for the important central medallion, which faces the entryway, while his less skilled assistants executed the other

parts of the mosaic. Peter Johnson suggests alternatively that the portrait of Venus may have been pre-fabricated and placed within the pavement executed by local mosaicists, whom Johnson places with the Lindinia officina.[7]

A particularly important aspect of this mosaic is that it may have been part of a larger scheme in which Venus was featured. Fragments of wall plaster found in the room during excavation were determined to be in situ where they had fallen during the building's destruction. Large areas of the plaster have been restored to reveal a large wall painting depicting a number of figures, one of whom may be Venus.[8] The excavators suggest that three walls of the room were painted and that they shared a theme.[9] The fourth wall provided entry to an adjacent room. Room I and the two adjoining rooms all had hypocaust systems mosaic pavements and painted walls. The hypocausts indicate that this complex of rooms may have been a bath suite, one of unusually elaborate decoration.

Also located in a bath suite is the famous Low Ham mosaic from a villa in Somerset (Figure 50a and b). Laid in the cold room before the plunge bath, this elaborate mosaic greeted the visitor as he entered the room. The pavement incorporates two representations of Venus in scenes from the Aeneid of Virgil; one portraying her involvement in the love affair of Dido and Aeneas, and the other comprised of Venus with two renderings of Cupid (Figures 51 and 52). Two rectangular borders flank a tripartite central rectangle, the whole forming a ca. thirteen foot square. Each section of the mosaic is defined by a guilloche border in red, grey and black. Venus' role in the romance of Aeneas and Dido is shown in panel two. Here the goddess is depicted nude except for her diadem, jewelry in the form of a beaded necklace and arm bracelets, and

a back and breast chain. On either side of Venus stand the other characters of the romance; at her immediate right is Cupid disguised as Ascanius on whose shoulder Venus rests a motherly hand. At the right of Cupid/Ascanius stands Aeneas. Dido, at Venus' left, coyly touches her right hand to her cheek. The scene describes the beginning of love between Dido and Aeneas; its fulfillment is portrayed at the opposite end of the central rectangle in panel 4. Panel 5 in the center contains an octagon within which Venus stands between two Cupids. Again, the goddess is nude, but holds in her elevated arms a garment which falls behind her. Notably, while she again wears a diadem, she is without jewelry. The Cupid at Venus' right stands with legs crossed and holds an inverted torch, symbolizing death, while the Cupid at her left runs toward the goddess with torch aloft, alluding vivaciously to life. This central octagon refers, through Cupid, to the duality inherent in the fertility goddess' nature, that is, the generation of life and its regeneration after death.

Both panels depict Venus wearing a diadem, symbol of her divinity. The one the goddess wears as she stands with Dido and Aeneas is, however, quite elaborate, while the one worn in the central panel is extremely simple. In addition, where Venus appears as the goddess of love/fertility with Dido and Aeneas, she is lavishly bedecked in jewelry, probably an acknowledgement of the part such adornment plays in enhancing one's appearance in the interest of attracting a lover. In the central octagon, in contrast, the guise of the goddess is far more stark. Not only is the diadem simplified, but she is without other adornment as well, only holding a mantle which forms a backdrop for her nude figure. Although this is an unusual treatment, raising a mantle edge is a gesture

usually associated with Venus Genetrix. The solemnity of this panel is, of course, reiterated by the life and death postures of Cupid. This scene is normally considered the concluding panel of the mosaic. The difference between the two panels in mood and iconography and their placement in the mosaic scheme suggests that the goddess' two natures are represented here. Venus Pandemos, the earthly goddess of love, fertility and relationships stands with the lovers whose mating she has engineered, while in the center the noble Venus Ourania expresses her reign over life and death.

The pictorial inspiration for this unique mosaic is uncertain. It is generally presumed that copybooks provided models for British mosaicists, but the singularity of this pavement may indicate another source. Toynbee argues the copybook stance, citing a North African parallel to the unusual back and breast chain Venus wears, as well as the style of the horses and the curl in Dido's hair.[10] D.J. Smith, however, suggests that illuminated manuscripts may have been the source.[11]

If the artistic source for this mosaic remains debatable, its basic Classicism is, in contrast, very clear. Not only is it based on a popular and important piece of Classical literature, but its formal style is rooted in Classical three-dimensional, natural form. Like works of Late Antiquity in general, that form is somewhat less than truly life-like and the placement of the figures in space is ambiguous. In the fourth century, this mosaic could as easily be found on the Italian peninsula as in distant Britain. It is testimony to a breakdown in the difference between Mediterranean and provincial art.

From an extensive villa excavated in 1823 comes a depiction of Venus as one of the planetary deities associated with the days of the week. The villa, located at Bramdean, Hampshire, included a large (16' x 20') room which contained the mosaic. The presence of the mosaic and the large size of the room indicate that this was an especially prominent area of the villa. The central circle of the pavement featured the head of Medusa; from this, radiated eight panels and the whole was captured within a square border. In the six extant panels, heads of Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus form a days of the week series, with Saturn and an eighth deity, perhaps Fortuna or Bonus Eventus, missing.[12] See Figure 53.

Venus is shown wearing a garment which falls in folds across her torso but leaves her right shoulder bare. The goddess' mirror is shown in an upright position before the shoulder. She wears a necklace but no diadem and her centrally parted hair falls in tresses to her shoulders. This portrayal of Venus is unique in Romano-British mosaics, in part because she is shown draped, but also because this is the only instance of a days of the week series in mosaic.

Another unique mosaic is that found at Littlecote Park, Wiltshire (Figure 54). Here Venus is one of several goddesses portrayed on a mosaic known as the Orpheus pavement. Orpheus himself occupies the round central panel; this, in turn, is surrounded by a circle which is divided into four panels outlined by guilloche bands. The larger circle is inscribed in a square, also bordered by a guilloche and this scheme is incorporated into a series of pavements laid in a two-room complex (Figure 55). Each quadrant of the central medallion contains a depiction of a goddess carrying an appropriate attribute and riding on the back of

a running animal. Venus, shown half-draped, is mounted on a stag and carries her mirror. The other goddesses, all semi-nude, are Nemesis, who carries Zeus in the form a swan and rides a panther; Demeter on a bull; and Proserpina riding a goat and waving to her mother, Demeter. The cycle may represent the stages of life; Venus as birth, Nemesis as youth, Demeter representing adulthood, and Proserpina symbolizing death. An alternate possibility is that the mosaic depicts a cycle manifesting Orphic belief in a legend recounting a series of transformations undergone by Dionysus in which a goat, stag, panther and bull play a role.[13]

The Littlecote Park site is a villa complex which includes a number of subsidiary buildings. The Orpheus mosaic is found in one of these outbuildings located near a river. A bath suite was connected to the two-room complex containing the mosaics. The nature of the mosaics and the arrangement of the complex suggest that this was a center of Orphic worship. The representation of Venus in connection with the worship of Orpheus is not seen in Britain in other media; both this example and her allegorical role in early Christian mosaic depictions may be seen as a product of the religious syncretism of Late Antiquity.

All of the mosaics discussed to this point are located in the south or southwest of England. There is in the north one example of Venus in mosaic, and this displays the far different spirit one might expect in that less Romanized area. The mosaic from Rudston in Yorkshire was discovered in 1933 as a farmer plowed his field. The pavement belongs to the largest room of House I at a villa which had been occupied from the first through the fourth centuries A.D.; the mosaic is, of course, associated with the late period. I.A. Richmond has suggested that this was a native homestead farm.[14]

The mosaic is a ten foot, six inch square bordered at two ends by rectangular panels (Figure 56a and b). In the center of the square lies a medallion circumscribed by a blue circle outlined in red. The rest of the square is marked off by half and quarter circles bordered by a guilloche band. Venus, accompanied by a triton, occupies the central medallion. The goddess is energetically portrayed in a wide stance, arms flung to the side and hair blowing out to either side of her head. She holds an apple or pomegrante in her right hand and just below her left, a mirror is seemingly suspended in air. The triton below her right arm holds an upright torch. Within the four half circles are a panther, lion, bull and stag, a group of animals which, except for the lion, parallels those of the Orpheus mosaic. Inscriptions, which are inaccurately rendered, identify the bull and lion. At each corner, a quarter circle contains a bird, probably representing a dove or pigeon although the tail feathers are extraordinarily long for either of these birds. In the interstices three male figures, sometimes described as hunters, are shown in agitated poses; a fourth would doubtless have occupied the damaged area at the lower left of the mosaic. Finally, in the rectangular panels adjoining the main square, a foliate motif grows from an amphora at either end and frames a depiction of Mercury.

The overall theme of this mosaic is enigmatic, though its general concern with life and death is clear. The near parallel of the animals to those of the Orpheus mosaic is suggestive, though since the significance of those too is uncertain, no real conclusions can be drawn. The depiction of Venus is, however, less obscure. In spite of the lack of gestures appropriate to Venus Anadyomene, this portrayal of the goddess must, nevertheless, refer to that aspect; the triton and the mirror

confirm this interpretation. But as if to leave nothing out, the goddess also holds the fruit that confirms her fertility nature; it seems that an effort was made to include all the attributes associated with the goddess so that her identity could not be mistaken. The triton's upturned torch reiterates the theme of life and fertility. The notion of death and regeneration, normally incorporated in the concept of fertility, is avoided here, though it may be inferred and further may be symbolized by the auxiliary figures. However, the depiction of Venus by itself seems to suggest nothing of this solemn opposite principle, unless the mirror, so often associated with aspects of death, carries a deeper significance than its disembodied appearance suggests.

The generally cheerful mood of the central medallion's motif is echoed in the liveliness of the style of this portrayal. More exagerrated than usual, the body here follows the Celtic proportions seen in other works reflecting the provincial artistic tradition. That is, hips and abdomen swell from a narrow torso and chest, and the head is somewhat larger than naturalism would dictate. Seemingly paramount here is an expression of dynamism and this is achieved through excited line and shape which eschew naturalistic representation. Adding to the liveliness of the work is the range of colors used. Venus' flesh is rendered in shades of ochre with white highlighting her face. Her hair, already animated, is further enlivened by its red color. The use of color, including shades of red, blue-black, grey, ochre, green and brown, elevates the overall appearance of this mosaic which technically is not of the highest quality.

The craftsmen who laid this pavement appear to have been relatively untrained and probably lacked the proper technical aids that

would have helped to produce a work of higher quality. The inexact circle framing the central scene, the failure of the tesserae to follow forms and inconsistencies in the guilloche all indicate poorly trained mosaicists. Far in the north and unassociated with any known schools, these craftsmen had to rely on only rudimentary skills. The adherence to Classical iconography, however, suggests that a copybook or other form of model was known to them, and once again, the variance in interpretation is only artistic.

That variance is probably most evident in the figure of Venus with its exaggerated proportions. The general tendency, though, to diminution of the upper body and enlargement of the hips and abdomen is constant in works in a variety of media which can be attributed to provincial craftsmen. Thus, while the pavement contrasts rather dramatically with the usual Classicism of Romano-British mosaics, when compared to some examples in small figurines or relief sculptures, the representation can be seen as conforming to a usual type. The proportions of Venus' body, then, should be seen not as a failure of execution, as some other areas must be, but as an interpretation.

As a whole, the Venus mosaics tend to be as Classical in appearance as the medium itself is. The use of copybooks or other Classical models ensured, in most cases, that a naturalistic rendering would be achieved and one can assume that this was the desired end in the areas where a high degree of Romanization existed or was sought. The lone exception to this, the Rudston mosaic, still indicates by its mere existence an interest in the luxury that a Roman way of life embraced. At the same time, these figural mosaics reveal an understanding of, and probably belief in, certain Mediterranean cults. Especially in

the instances of very elaborate depictions incorporating a variety of Classical or Oriental religious symbols, the pavements are certainly much more than merely decorative. As with the depictions of Venus in other media, there is no indication that she was viewed in any other way than the Romans themselves saw the goddess. Whether she is shown with a simple attribute or as part of a more complex scheme, Venus retained her traditional role.[15]

NOTES

[1] D.J. Smith cited by Peter Johnson, Roman British Mosaics (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 1982), 41.

[2] Reinhard Stupperich, "Reconsideration of Some Fourth Century Mosaics," Britannia 2 (1980), 290.

[3] J.J. Bernoulli postulates a conflation between Venus and Proserpina, especially when the hand is laid over the breast. See Bernoulli's Aphrodite. Ein Baustein zur Griechischen Kunstmythologie (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 18972), 63 and 66.

[4] D.J. Smith suggests as an alternative that the male might be Adonis. "Mythological Figures and Scenes in Romano-British Mosaics," in Roman Life and Art in Britain, British Archaeological Report 42 i (Oxford, 1977), 148.

[5] Anne Rainy, Mosaics in Roman Britain (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1977), 77.

[6] David S. Neal, Roman Mosaics in Britain, Britannia Monograph Series I (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1981), 89.

[7] Johnson, 47.

[8] The main figure has also been identified as Achilles disguised as a woman at the court of Lycomedes. R.J. Ling and E.J. Swain in "The Kingscote Wall Paintings," Britannia 12 (1981), 170. Martin Henig,

however, suggests the theme of Venus and Adonis in Religion in Roman Britain, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984), 177. The possibility that the main figure is Venus is quite good. The depiction is of a seated figure, probably female, in three-quarters view. She wears purple drapery and has at her side an oval shield which rests against her chair. Cupid is shown flying above the seated figure and approximately in the center of the painting. Three nimbed females occupy the upper portion of the scene, and in either lower corner are two more figures, the one at the right standing and the other reclining. This latter figure appears to have breasts and holds a bundle of reeds. Several of the elements in this painting fit the iconography of Venus. First, the color purple is associated with love in general and sometimes with Venus in particular. Bion, for instance, refers to the color in his Dirge for Adonis, saying, 'Slumber no more 'neath purple counterpane! Wake Cypris (Aphrodite) to your woe, - ' (lines 3 and 4, trans. Henry Harmon Chamberlain, Last Flowers. A Translation of Moschus and Bion, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1937). The reeds held by the reclining figure also suggest Venus; reeds bound within bouquets of roses were a feature of the celebration of the Vinalia Rustica (see Ovid's Fasti 4.863 , trans. Sir James George Grazer, (Cambridge, Mass.,: Harvard University Press, 1959). Finally, the shield leaning against the chair on which Venus is seated could be the shield of Mars, a not uncommon attribute of Venus. The Kingscote wall painting is, however, in such poor condition that identification of the figures will probably remain speculative.

[9] Ling and Swain, 173.

[10] J.M.C. Toynbee, Art in Britain Under the Romans, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 246.

[11] D.J. Smith, "The Mosaic Pavements," in The Roman Villa in Britain, ed., A.L.F. Rivet, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 91.

[12] Though identified as Jupiter, the figure holds the trident of Neptune.

[13] Anon., "Littlecote," Current Archaeology, #80, VII, 267.

[13] I.A. Richmond, The Roman Pavements from Rudston, (Kingston upon Hull: The City of Kingston upon Hull Art Gallery and Museum, 1963), 1.

[15] The portrait of a goddess on the mosaic from the villa at Bignor, Sussex is not included as a mosaic representing Venus in this study. Though frequently so identified, the goddess lacks any attributes or characteristics which would make the identification certain. The Cupids forming part of the scheme cannot be considered ascertaining features as Cupid's representation is used so widely that his presence does not by itself secure identity of a figure as Venus.

CHAPTER VI

VARIOUS MEDIA

The last body of artifacts to be considered is comprised of four objects which fall outside the major categories covered in the previous chapters. Though few in number, this group incorporates a range of periods, materials, and functions. The diversity of these works is not only intriguing but suggests the variety of ways in which Venus' nature was brought into the lives of those for whom the goddess had special significance.

From Levens Park, Westmoreland comes a small figure in jet, unfortunately fragmentary and showing only the upper portion of the body. Enough remains, however, to make clear the depiction of a mourning, veiled goddess whose left hand is raised to her eyes as if to wipe away tears (Figure 57). The elbow of her left arm rests on what Julian Munby describes as a barrel-like support, but which is more likely to represent a column.[1] The expression of grief is apparent not only in the tear-wiping gesture, but in the slight bow of the head. As Munby points out, Macrobius described a carving of a mourning Venus on Mt. Lebanon which bears some similarity to this figure.[2] In that work, the goddess was veiled and rested her head on her left hand; it was said that when one gazed on the sculpture, tears came to its eyes. The area in which the mourning Venus was located was a center for the worship of Adonis and the portrayal of the goddess in an attitude of grief was doubtless connected to this cult.

The find spot of the jet figure in Levens Park associates it with the earthwork there called Kirkstead which is thought to have once been the site of a temple of Diana. The excavations of the temple have not been extensive but a date of the Roman or sub-Roman period has been suggested.[3] A coin dated 330 A.D., said to have been found with the jet piece, supports this dating. Further, it was during the third and fourth centuries that the jet industry flourished in Yorkshire and objects from the area found as far away as the Rhineland testify to the productivity of the industry. Jet was a desirable material for objects of miniature art and jewelry because of its attractive appearance, but in addition it was thought to possess certain magical properties, perhaps due in part to its electrostatic quality. Pliny says of jet, 'The remarkable thing about jet is that it is ignited by water and quenched by oil.' He adds that its fumes could detect virginity.[4] Not surprisingly, this "magical" material was commonly used for grave goods. The use, then, of jet in the depiction of a mourning figure of Venus is particularly appropriate.

Lead, another material native to Britain, was also imbued with superstitious notions. This material, though seldom used in sculpture, was sometimes employed in the depictions of chthonic deities. Pliny again provides evidence for ancient belief, asserting that lead mines, when left unworked for a period of time, would replenish themselves.[5] Lead's presumed ability to regenerate itself in the same manner as organic materials may have been the basis for its eschatological significance.

Two small shrines of lead have been found in England; one from Wallsend, Co. Durham depicts Mercury and another from Wroxeter,

Shropshire is of Venus Pudica (Figure 58). The figure of the goddess is a lead "cut-out" placed within the cast lead shrine. Due to the condition of the piece, some of the decorative detail is unclear. However, still visible is a series of circular impressions adorning the uppermost part of the shrine. These resemble the stamped circular motif of the "Venus a Gaine" discussed in Chapter II and similarly, whether these are funerary or solar symbols or mere decoration is uncertain.

The shrine of Venus, like that of Mercury, had hinged doors attached to the front. Its very small size (ca. 3") would be appropriate for use as a portable shrine, although it, like the somewhat larger shrines of pipe-clay, may have been used in the home. Lead was an inexpensive commodity in the Roman world and doubtless especially so in Britain since it did not have to be imported. This fact would have made it accessible to even the lower income groups and one might expect, therefore, that these small shrines would have been quite common. The number of extant examples does not, however, support that premise. It is uncertain whether the dearth of the small shrines is due to few of these having been manufactured or their subsequent destruction.

Both of the objects discussed above belong to the sphere of personal religion; associated with the military are two objects from the Roman fort at Caerleon, Monmouthshire, Wales. The first of these is a clay antefix from a building, perhaps a barracks, built in the mid-second century A.D. (Figure 59). The triangular antefix bears the molded imprint of a female wearing a double necklace. The divinity of this figure is indicated by celestial symbols surrounding her. A total of three six-pointed stars are included, one above the head and two flanking the figure just below the level of the ears. At the lower

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right, an orb and crescent are situated under the star. These symbols indicate either a deified personage or a divinity. In this case, since the legion attached to Caerleon was Legio II Augusta, the figure could be either the deified Livia or Venus, ancestress of the Julio-Claudian dynasty or even Livia as Venus. However, a bronze repousse, also from Caerleon, which clearly depicts the goddess bears the same symbols, thus supplying support for the identification of the antefix figure as Venus.

The Venus antefix compares interestingly with others from Caerleon which are notably, and without exception, less Classical in appearance than the one portraying the Roman goddess (Figure 60a-f). The portrayal of Venus, while bearing some provincial characteristics such as bulging eyes, down-turned mouth and wedge-shaped nose, is Classically conceived with full reference to bone structure and three-dimensionality. The singular workmanship of this antefix has not been explained, though its dating to the second century may partially account for the difference. A second antefix, once identified as Venus suggests, however, that such an explanation may be insufficient.[6] This first century antefix depicts a goddess, identified as such by her diadem, represented by a broken line encircling her head (Figure 4c). In the apex of the triangular piece is located an eight-pointed star, and two four-pointed stars are shown in the two lower corners. H.P. Wyndham's identification of this figure as Venus may be correct since this representation, though simpler than the second century version, still does not display the more extreme manifestations of Celticism of the other antefixes. Both antefixes identified as Venus adhere to a greater Classicism appropriate for the Roman goddess, suggesting that the difference was deliberate and related to the goddess' identity.

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On the bronze repousse previously mentioned, Venus is depicted in a central medallion flanked by two figures (Figure 61). At the goddess' right stands Mercury, identifiable by his winged helmet and caduceus. At Venus' left can be seen what remains of a figure whose arm extends into the medallion holding a ewer tipped as if to pour; this figure is surely a nymph. The circle surrounding Venus is formed by a wreath, suggesting that the portrayal is of Venus Victrix. Within the wreath the nude goddess stands frontally, but with her head turned in profile. In each raised hand Venus holds the ends of her drapery which passes over each shoulder and behind her back. This manner of holding the drapery aloft can be compared to that in the central panel of the Low Ham mosaic even though the drapery itself is depicted differently. The connection of such a pose with aspects of the Heavenly Venus has already been discussed. The orb and crescent motif paralleling that on the clay antefix is placed beside Venus' right hip. As already mentioned, this symbol designates the divinity of the goddess. Besides referring to a celestial nature generally, this motif is particularly associated with the feminine principle through the incorporation of the crescent, symbol of the moon. Lunar symbolism has been linked with female deities from the time of Astarte and persisted into the Christian period in the iconography of the Virgin Mary.[7] The combination of orb and crescent could refer to the sun and the moon or the changing phases of the moon alone. In either case, it is clear that Venus' heavenly nature is indicated through these symbols. Interestingly, the motif in association with Venus is found in Britain only at Caerleon.

The proportions of Venus follow the naive form seen so frequently in provincial art. That is, the chest is narrow in comparison to the

lower body, and the head over large. The repousse was found at a level of the fort dated to the Hadrianic period when at Rome Classicism was was enjoying a resurgence in art. The artisan who created the repousse was, however, far away from the mainstream of artistic trends. Probably a provincial soldier attached to the Second Legion, he was obviously well-versed in the iconography of Venus, but portrayed her in the language of a non-Classical craftsman.

This chapter concludes the survey of depictions of Venus in Roman Britain. The group of objects discussed in this last chapter add important evidence in spite of their small number. The use of local materials such as jet and lead confirm the insular production of the goddess' image for those who embraced her cult. Further, these few artifacts date from the early occupation period to the late, confirming the goddess' sustained worship, and additionally are found in contexts associated with both the private and military spheres. They all have in common, however, the testimony they provide for a vernacular tradition in the adherence to, and the representation of, an adopted Roman deity.

NOTES

[1] Julian Munby, "A Figure of Jet From Westmoreland," Britannia 6 (1975), 216.

[2] Macrobius Saturnalia 1.21.5.

[3] D. Sturdy, "The Temple of Diana and the Devils Quoits," in Archaeological Theory and Practice, Essays to W.R. Grimes, ed., D.E. Strong, cited by Munby.

[4] Pliny N.H. 34.34.

[5] Pliny 34.39.

[6] H.P. Wyndham, A Tour in Monmouthshire and Wales, 1781 edition, 14 f., pl. 1 and 2, cited by George Boon in Laterarium Iscanum: The Antefixes, Brick and Tile-Stamps of the Second Augustan Legion, (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1984), 4.

[7] Ad deVries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1974), s.v. "crescent."

[8] An item not included in this study due to its clouded origin and romantic history is the dagger from Kilgerran found sometime before 1716. The ivory handle of the dagger was carved with the images of Venus and Cupid. The dagger is no longer extant, but is known through drawings and publications of the nineteenth century. See Edward Laws, The History of Little England Beyond Wales, (London: George Bell & Sons,

1888), 42. Laws cites Evans' History of the Ancient Britons, trans. Rev. G. Roberts, 92 (no publication information). The dagger was also described by John Fenton in a paper to the Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Speculation about the nature of Venus in Roman Britain has been prompted by the lack of a love goddess in the Celtic pantheon. The assumption seems to be that the absence of a Celtic goddess paralleling Venus' nature would make necessary an alteration of the Roman goddess' character in order to satisfy Celtic spiritual needs. Thus, while the manner of representing Venus may rely on Classical archetypes, the goddess' essence must have been modified in Celtic lands. The term "love goddess" is, however, misleading and interferes with the understanding of Venus' significance in Roman Britain.

First, as has been demonstrated, the description of Venus as a love goddess is wholly inadequate to characterize well the range of functions attributed to the goddess. Moreover, the religious, artistic and even secular changes that have occurred since the era of pagan worship create great difficulties in the attempt to understand any deity of the Roman period, let alone one who has subsequently been represented in such a deceptively superficial manner. A fairer understanding of what the term "love goddess" may have meant to pagan worshippers might be gained by recalling that Christ too was, and is, considered a god of love, and like Venus was imbued with an earthly and a heavenly nature. With accomodation made for the significant change of attitude toward sexuality under Christianity, such a comparison may help to strip away

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some of the distortion attached to Venus' image since she reigned, and make assessing her acceptability to Celtic worshippers more possible.

In fact, there was probably little about Venus that was not somewhat familiar to native Britons. A goddess who had military connotations, who was linked with watery sites and their qualities of fertility and healing, and whose own sexuality symbolized the fertility aspect accords very well with Celtic views toward native female divinities. As Anne Ross says, 'The basic Celtic goddess was at once mother, warrior, hag, virgin, conveyor of fertility, of strong sexual appetite which led her to seek mates among mankind equally with the gods, giver of prosperity to the land, protectress of flocks and herds.'[1] The only one of these characteristics not displayed by Venus is the role of protectress of herds and flocks; she is however, sometimes accompanied by flocks of sparrows and/or doves. This, too is paralleled in Celtic mythology and Ross notes the close link between birds and the sexual act in the case of divine beings.[2]

Venus' eschatological nature, which is well attested in Britain, may actually have been enhanced by native views on life after death. The Celtic afterlife was seen as an exalted extension of mortal life, a paradise closer to that of Christian belief than the underworld of Roman paganism. The association of a lovely and benevolent goddess with such an afterlife is entirely appropriate. Further, it can reasonably be assumed that Venus' dual nature, inherently expressed in much of her iconography and depicted overtly in the Low Ham mosaic, was appreciated by the native Britons, who in their own belief system, espoused dual concepts.[3]

If anything in Venus' nature was outside the Celtic experience, it might have been the goddess' association with Roman destiny, but even this was not entirely foreign to the Celts, as they too were in the habit of tracing a society's foundation to a divine ancestor. Altogether, the similarity between Venus' nature and pre-existing Celtic attitudes toward the divine, and toward female divinities in particular, almost certainly precludes any real alteration of the Roman goddess' character by the native population.

Having considered the lack of reason for altering Venus' nature, there are four portrayals of the goddess in Romano-British art which demand scrutiny. Three of the bronzes, those from Malton, York, and Woodeaton, and the Lincoln relief all display a degree of Celticization in the goddess' representation. The question is whether the degree is so great as to suggest conflation or are the differences stylistic only?

The Lincoln relief portrays the goddess in Celtic clothing, and she holds an attribute which may be an Adonis Garden, but which cannot be identified with absolute certainty. If the attribute could be shown to be a non-Classical object it would provide some evidence for conflation, but lacking that information, it can only be said that this possibility must be held in reserve. The native clothing effectively presents the goddess in Celtic guise, certainly testimony to her adoption by Britons. This feature, however, when weighed against the depiction as a whole, lacks strength as evidence for conflation. The loving gesture between the figures, the eschatological meaning and the pairing of Venus with an individual who may be a Cupid/Adonis conflation or Sleep or Death all adhere to Classical conceptions.

The three bronzes are equally suggestive of Celtic interpretation. Here, the position of the arm(s) have been altered from the usual gestures associated with Venus. Again, however, a total view of these figures does not indicate that this is a significant enough change to indicate fusion with a Celtic divinity. Most obviously, these figures are represented nude in the traditionally Classical manner. Further, the York example shows the goddess leaning on a column or holding stylized drapery, again conforming to long standing representational convention in the portrayal of the Roman Venus. Notably, in the north of England, where both the York and Malton figures were found, Celtic nymph goddesses were popular; if Venus had been conflated with a native divinity, surely the nymph goddesses would have been the most logical fusion. No portrayal of these local goddesses, however, were shown with an arm across the abdomen in the manner of the York and Malton Venuses. This gesture, then, is best seen as an adaptation of the Pudica pose, perhaps influenced by representations of mother goddesses shown in such a manner. This gesture and that of the Woodeaton Venus and the native clothing of the Lincoln Venus suggest the degree to which the goddess was embraced by the Celtic population, doubtless due to the extent to which she conformed to native belief, but offer no confirmation of conflation. Together with contextual information from provenanced artifacts, which support the iconographical evidence, Venus can be understood as having virtually the same significance in Roman Britain as she did in Rome itself.

Worship of Venus in the sphere of personal religion continued into the fourth century. Her Victrix nature, in contrast, is prevalent only in the early occupation period, perhaps reflecting the vigor of the

military presence during that time. Not unexpectedly, representations of Venus Victrix are associated with frontier zones. As Britain settled into its place in the Roman Empire, the Victrix aspect seems to have declined in importance. Her subsequent depiction on civic monuments portrayed her in the role of planetary deity, thus emphsizing her part in the scheme of divine influence on mortal life. Missing from the range of traditional roles of the goddess is any real evidence for worship of the goddess as Venus Genetrix, mother of the Roman Empire. The absence of this aspect of her nature is particularly curious since Britain could have been viewed as the final resolution of the Aeneas dogma. Material evidence of the first and second centuries A.D. on the continent indicates that the Aeneas cult was known there, but with the single, thus inconclusive, exception of the Low Ham mosaic, this evidence is missing from Britain. Venus' nature in Roman Britain wants only this missing piece to confirm her virtually complete transferal from the Mediterranean area to the Empire's distant outpost.

NOTES

[1] Anne Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 233.

[2] Ross, 254.

[3] Miranda Green, A Corpus of Religious Materials from the Civilian Areas of Britain, British Archaeological Report 24, (Oxford: 1976), 8.

Map I

Distribution of pipe-clay Venus figurines

Figure 1a. Rhineland figure.

Figure 1b. Fragment from Springhead.

Figure 2. Pipe-clay Venus.

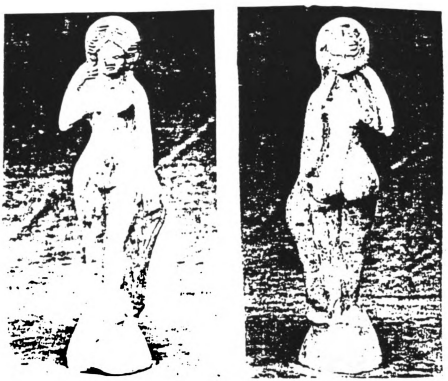

Figure 3. Pipe-clay Venus.

Figure 4. Venus à Gaine.

Figure 5. Venus figure from the Rhineland

Figure 6. Scunthorpe Venus.

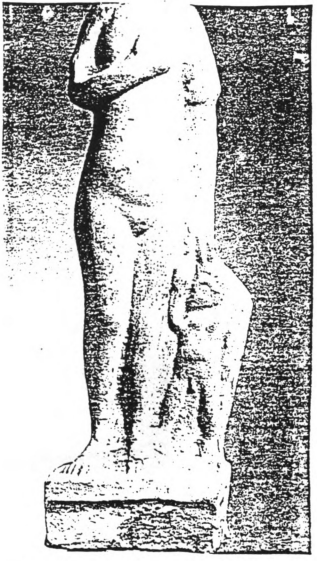

Figure 7. Venus and Cupid from Colchester.

Figure 8. Continental parallel to Colchester Venus and Cupid.

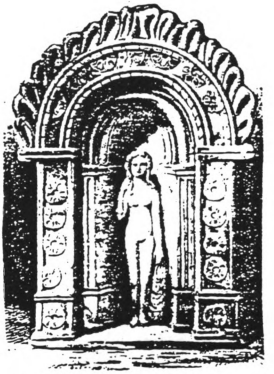

Figure 9. Pipe-clay shrine with Venus.

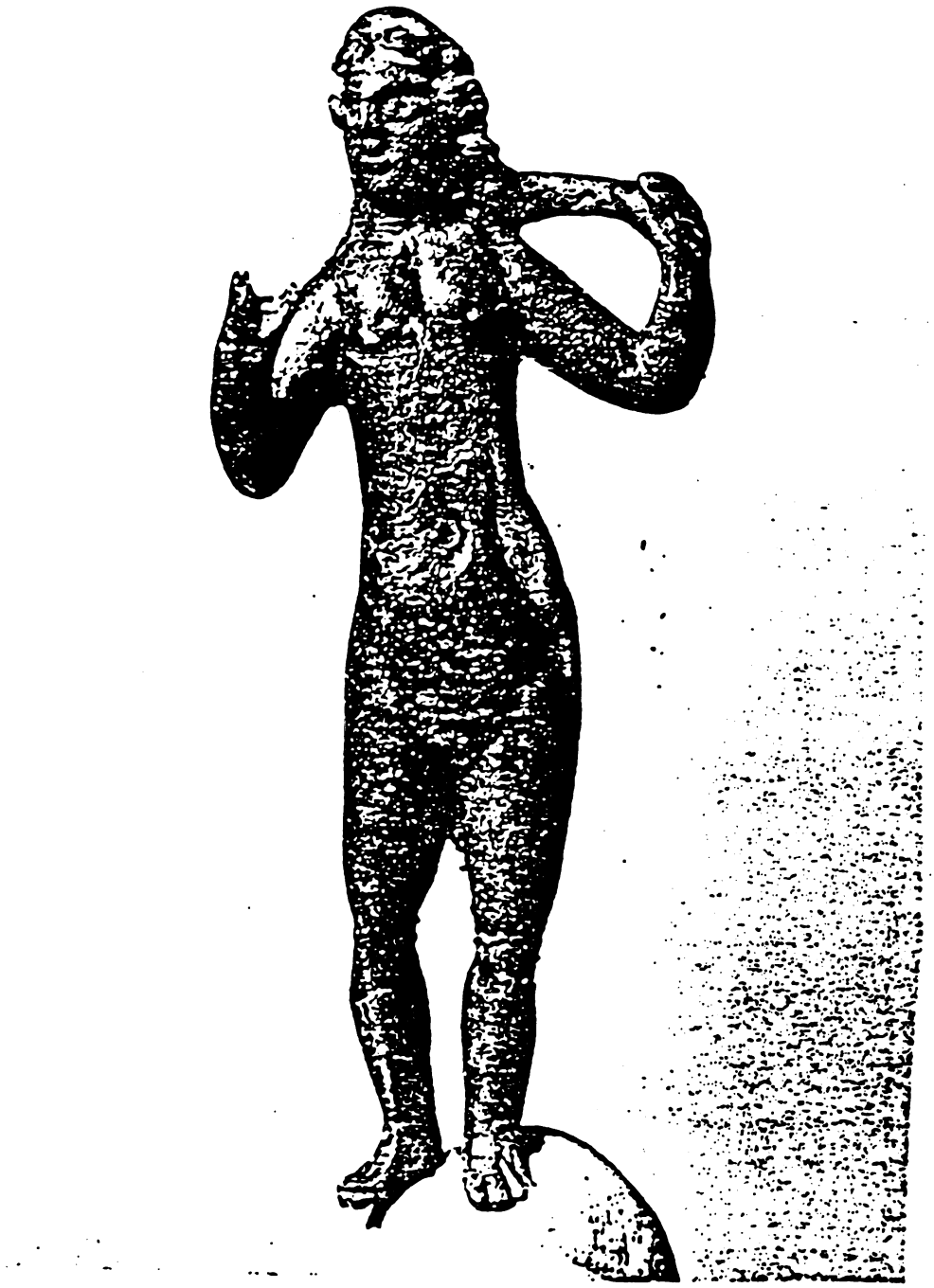

Figure 10. Bokerly Dyke Venus. ca. 5 cm.

Figure 11. Silchester Venus. ca. 7.4 cm.

Figure 12. London Venus. ca. 6.5 cm.

Figure 13. Colchester Venus. ca. 15 cm.

Figure 14. Capitoline Venus.

Figure 15. Medici Venus.

Figure 16. Wroxeter Venus
ca. 7.5 cm.

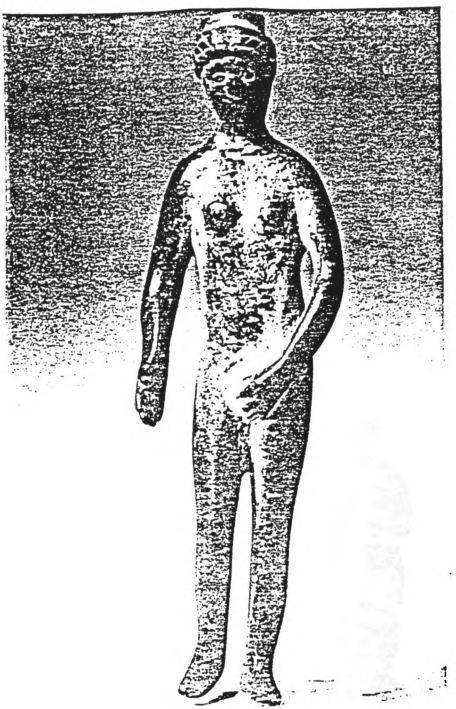

Figure 17. Ely Venus. ca. 10.8 cm.

Figure 18. Malton Venus. ca. 11.5 cm

Figure 19. York Venus. ca. 8 cm.

Figure 20. Southbrooms Venus. ca. 9.5 cm.

Figure 21. Woodeaton Venus. ca. 11.5 cm.

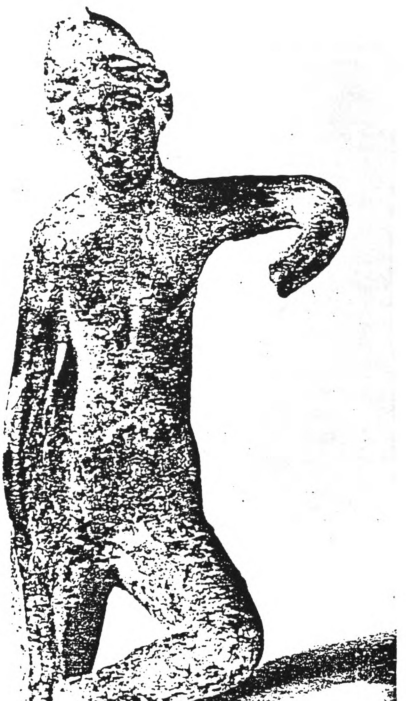

Figure 22. Branch Rd., St. Albans Venus.
ca. 5.5 cm.

Figure 23. Colchester Venus. ca. 9.5 cm.

Figure 24. St. Albans Venus. ca. 20 cm.

Figure 25. Rhineland parallel to figure of Venus from St. Albans.

Map II.


Malton
York
Wroxeter
Ely
Woodcaton
Colchester
St. Albans
London
Devizes
Silchester
Bokerly Dyke

Figure 26. Nineteenth century drawing of the Southbrooms penates.

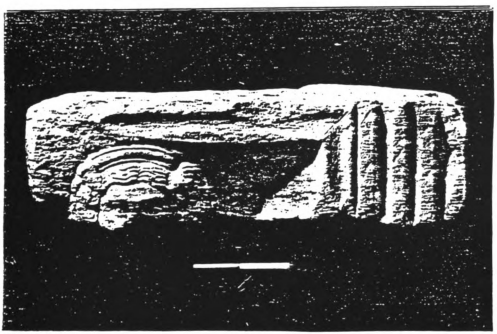

Figure 27. Block 23 from the London Monumental Arch.

Figure 28a.

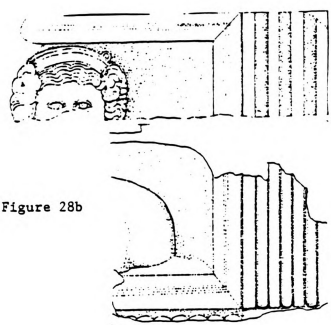

Figure 28b

Drawings of block 23 and 24 showing the head and left shoulder of Venus.

Figure 29. Venus with mirror from days of the week series at Old Penrith, Cumbria.

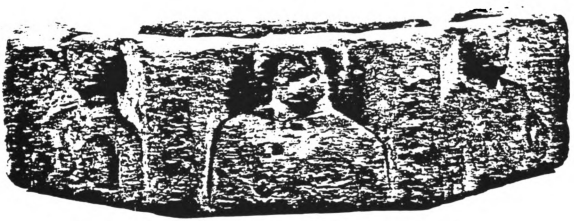

Figure 30a. Relief from Great Chesterford in Essex showing head and torso of Venus (L.), Jupiter? (Center), and Mercury (R.). The relief may have been part of a Jupiter column and probably depicts a days of the week series.

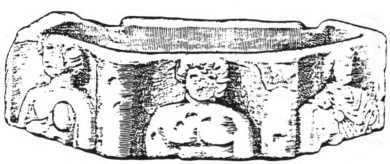

Figure 30b. Drawing of the Great Chesterford relief.

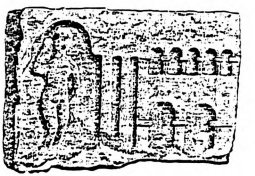

Figure 31 Relief from Maryport, Cumbria.

Figure 32. Venus Victrix from Croy Hill, near the Antonine Wall in Scotland.

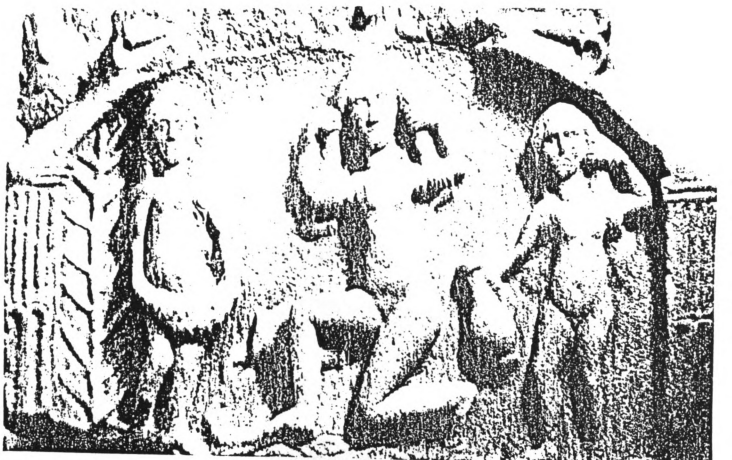

Figure 33. Relief of Venus and nymphs from the fort at High Rochester, Northumberland.

Figure 34. Crouching Venus from Rhodes.

Figure 35. Relief from Lincoln showing Venus with a conflated Cupid/Adonis.

Figure 36. Figures from Greek oinochoe.

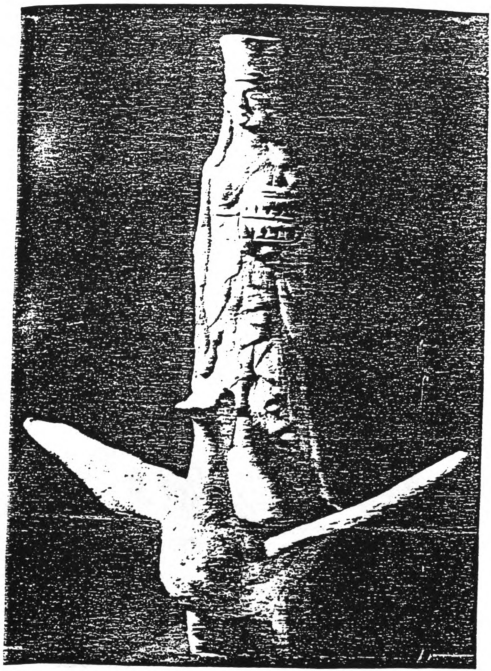

Figure 37. Venus on a goose from Boetia, Greece. Venus is carrying an attribute similar to the one in the relief from Lincoln.

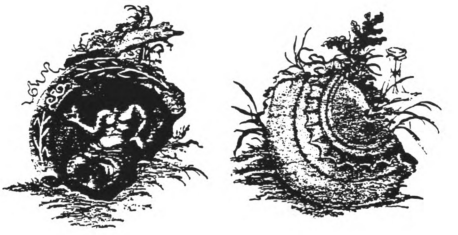

Figure 38a. Drawing of the "Mensa Dolenda" by Edward Donovan. (1804)

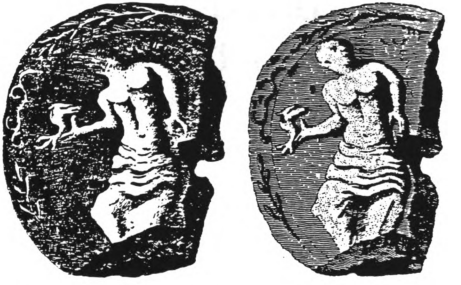

Figure 38b. Drawing of the same table-top by H.P. Wyndham. (1805)

Figure 39. Tombstone from Ilkley, Yorkshire.

Figure 40. Tombstone depicting the deceased as Venus.

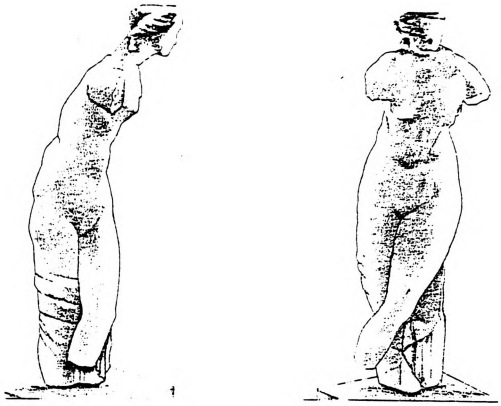

Figure 41. Venus from Dover, Kent, carved in oolite.

Figure 42. Late Hellenistic bronze rendering of the Cnidian Aprhodite.

Figure 43. Venus from Froxfield, Wiltshire, carved in oolite.

Map III.

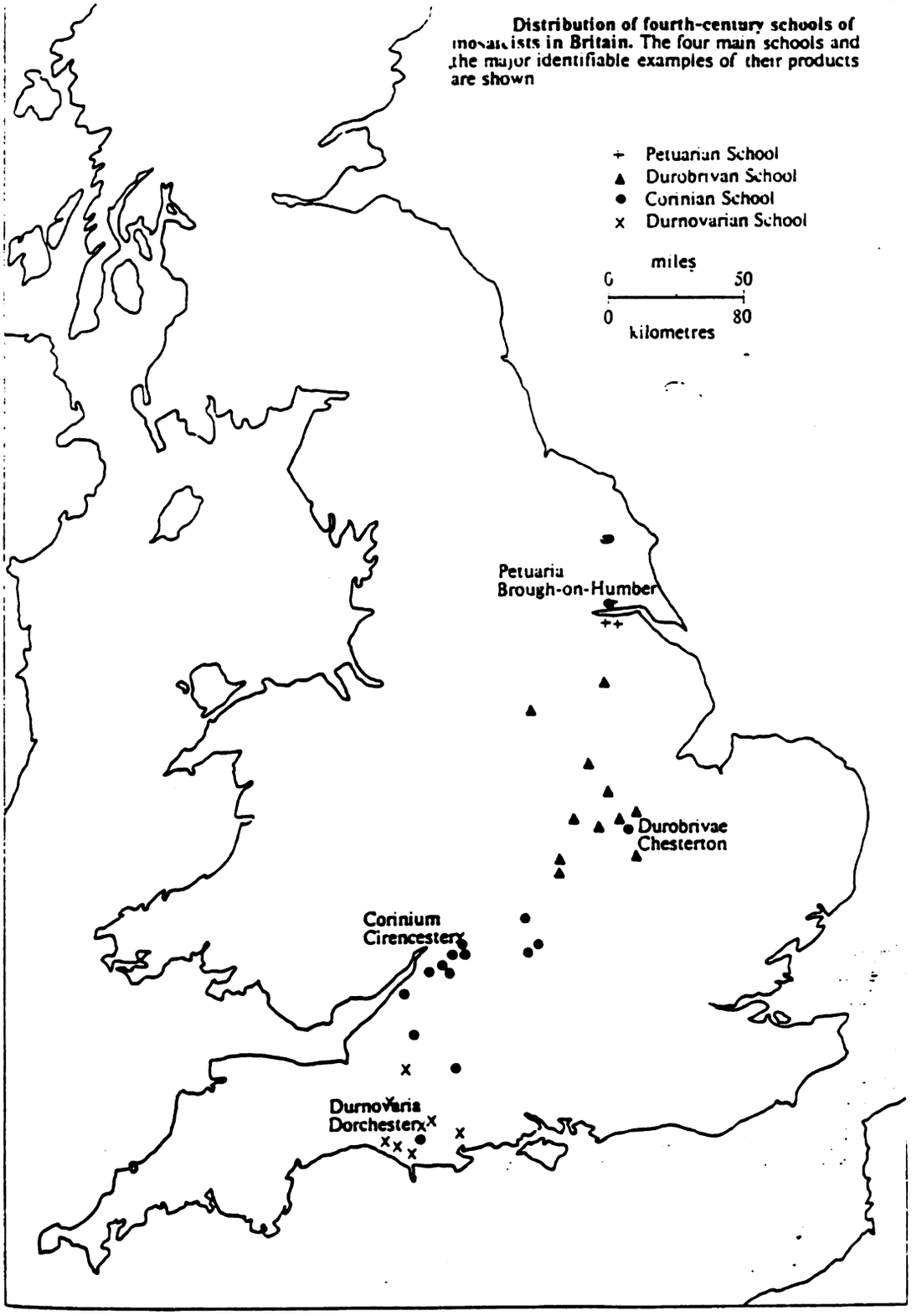
Distribution of fourth-century schools of mosaicists in Britain. The four main schools and the major identifiable examples of their products are shown
Petuarian School
Durobrivan School
Corinian School
Durnovarian School
miles
0
50
0
80
kilometres
Petuaria
Brough-on-Humber
Durobrivae
Chesterton
Corinium
Cirencester
Durnovaria
Dorchester

Figure 44. Mosaic from Hemsworth, Dorset depicting Venus' birth from the sea.

Figure 45. Mosaic from Frampton, Dorset.

Figure 46. Venus and Adonis.Frampton.

Figure 47. Venus and Paris. Frampton.

Figure 48. Venus and Cupid in terracotta from Cyrene.

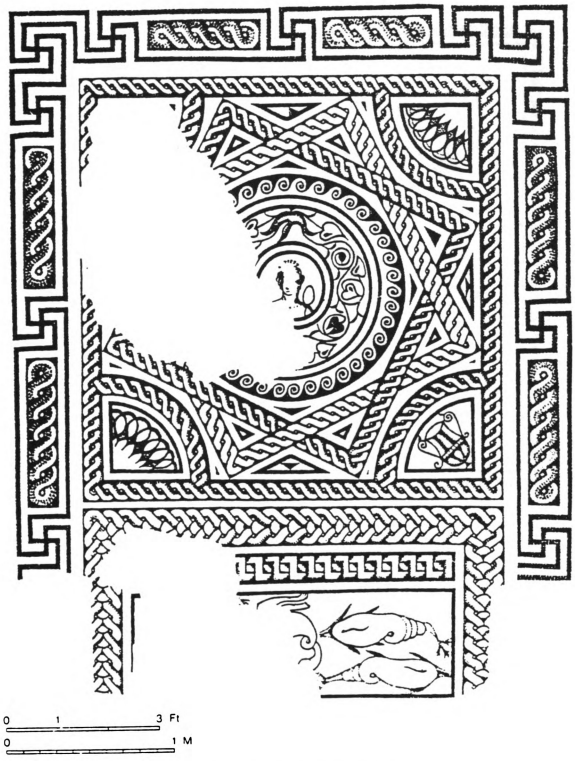

Figure 49. Mosaic from Kingscote, Gloucestershire.

Figure 50a. Mosaic from Low Ham, Somerset.

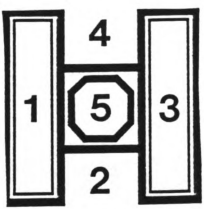

Figure 50b. Key to the mosaic panels.

Figure 51. Detail of Low Ham mosaic, panel 5.

Figure 52. Detail of Low Ham mosaic, panel 2.

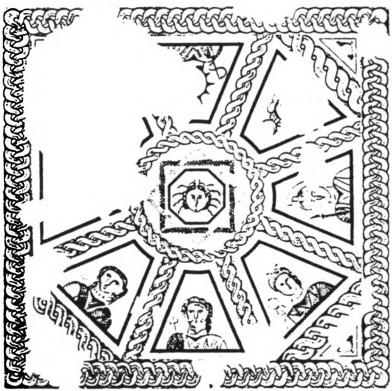

Figure 53. Mosaic from Bramdean, Hampshire.

Figure 54. Mosaic from Littlecote Park.

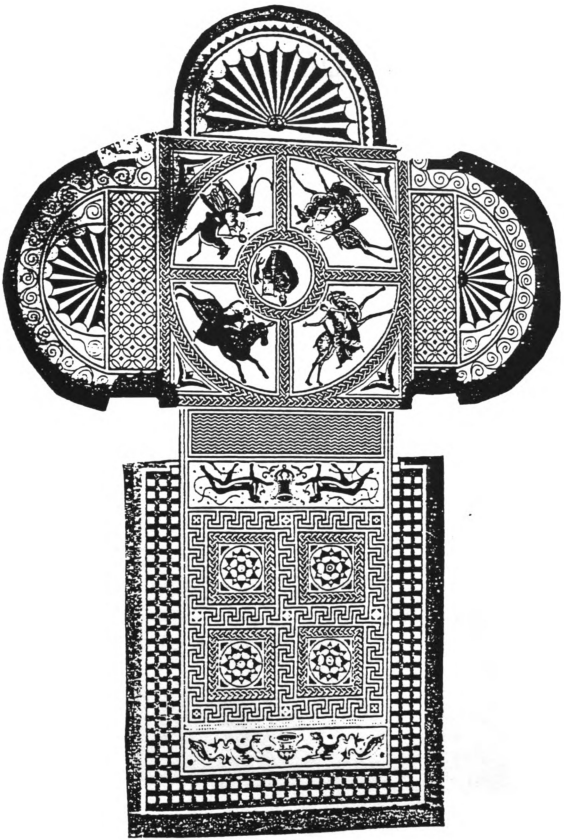

Figure 55. Mosaics from Littlecote Park.

Figure 56a. Venus mosaic from Rudston.

Figure 56b. Central medallion from Venus mosaic at Rudston.

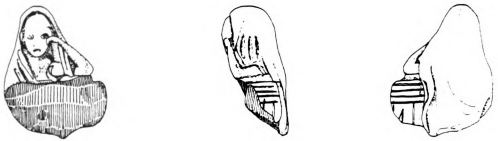

Figure 57. Jet figure from Westmoreland. (2:3)

58. Lead shrine from Wroxeter. (1:1)

Figure 59. Venus antefix from Caerleon.

a

b

c

d

e

f

Figure 60a through f. Clay antefixes from Caerleon.

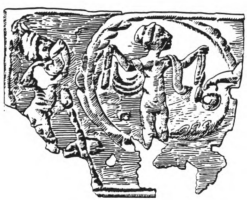

Figure 61. Repousse from Caerleon depicting Venus Victrix.

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APPENDIX

While I was able to visit a number of museums across England in the course of my research, it was naturally not possible to get to all of the museums with Romano-British material. To augment the visits and the research in libraries, I sent a questionnaire to ninety-four museums likely to have Romano-British objects in their collections. Sixty-five questionnaires were returned, many with supplemental material. A list of the responding museums and a copy of the questionnaire follow.

Avon

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol

Roman Bath Museum, Bath

Bedfordshire

Bedford Museum, Bedford

Luton Museum and Art Gallery, Luton

Berkshire

Museum and Art Gallery, Reading

Cambridgeshire

University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

Cheshire

Museum and Art Gallery, Warrington

Cornwall

County Museum and Art Gallery, Truro

Cumbria

Tullie House Museum, Carlisle

Derbyshire

Museum and Art Gallery, Buxton

Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby

Dorset

Dorset County Museum, Dorchester

Colliton Park Roman House, Dorchester

Essex

The Old Cemetary Lodge, Chelmsford

Epping Forest District Museum, Waltham Abbey

Gloucestershire

Chedworth Roman Villa and Museum

Corinium Museum, Cirencester

City Museum and Art Gallery, Cloucester

Manchester Museum, Manchester

Hampshire

God's House Tower Museum, Southampton

Winchester City Museum, Winchester

Hereford and Worcester

Droitwich Heritage Center, Droitwich Spa

Hertfordshire

Letchworth Museum and Art Gallery, Letchworth

Humberside

Goole Museum and Art Gallery, Goole

City of Kingston upon Hull Museum and Art Gallery, Hull

Borough Museum and Art Gallery, Scunthorpe

Kent

Ashford Local History Museum, Ashford

Dartford Borough Museum, Dartford

Kent County Council, Gravesend

Guildhall Museum, Rochester

Lancashire

City Museum, Lancaster

Lincolnshire

City and County Museum, Lincoln

Stamford Museum, Stamford

Norfolk

Lowestoft Museum, Norwich

Nottinghamshire

Newark Museum, Newark on Trent

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock

Shropshire

Rowley's House Museum, Shrewsbury

Wroxeter Roman City, Wroxeter

Somerset

Somerset County Museum, Taunton

The Museum of South Somerset, Yeovil

Staffordshire

City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent

Suffolk

Ipswich Museum and High Street Exhibition Gallery, Ipswich

Surrey

Surrey Heath Museum, Camberly

Surry, continued

The Egham Museum, Egham

Guildford Museum, Guildford

Tyne and Wear

South Shields Roman Fort, South Shields

Warwickshire

Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, Nuneaton

Warwickshire Museum, Warwick

West Midlands

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

Wiltshire

Devizes Museum, Devizes

Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, Salisbury

North Yorkshire

Malton Museum, Malton

Rotunda Museum, Scarborough

South Yorkshire

Clifton Park Museum, Clifton Park, Rotherham

West Yorkshire

Castleford Museum, Castleford

Bradford Art Galleries, Bradford

Manor House Museum and Art Gallery, Ilkley

Leeds City Museum, Leeds

Wakefield Museum, Wakefield

Wales

Roman Legionary Museum, Caerleon, Gwent

Wales, continued

National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

Museum and Art Gallery, Newport, Gwent

Scotland

Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

Three categories of statuettes are listed below, followed by space on the back to list depictions of Venus in other forms. Please fill in the categories as completely as possible, but where information is unknown, simply leave a blank.

A. VENUS ALONE

1. Fragment___Yes___No. If yes, describe_____

   Material_____Measurements_____Date_____

   Find Spot_____Potter's Mark_____

   Place of Manufacture_____

2. Fragment___Yes___No. If yes, describe_____

   Material_____Measurements_____Date_____

   Find Spot_____Potter's Mark_____

   Place of Manufacture_____

3. Fragment___Yes___No. If yes, describe_____

   Material_____Measurements_____Date_____

   Find Spot_____Potter's Mark_____

   Place of Manufacture_____

B. VENUS WITH CUPID

1. Fragment___Yes___No. If yes, describe_____

   Material_____Measurements_____Date_____

   Find Spot_____Potter's Mark_____

   Place of Manufacture_____

C. OTHER: VENUS WITH _____

1. Fragment___Yes___No. If yes, describe_____

   Material_____Measurements_____Date_____

   Find Spot_____Potter's Mark_____

   Place of Manufacture_____

Please Note: If the material is clay, please differentiate between pipe-clay and terra cotta and give color.

Please list any other depictions of Venus in your collection; this may include gems, mosaics, etc. It is not necessary to give a complete description, merely note the form and primary figures.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____