

The Four Faces of the Roman Goddess:

A New Theory for Categorizing the Divine Feminine in Roman Mythology

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by

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ABSTRACT

The Four Faces of the Roman Goddess: A New Theory for Categorizing the Divine Feminine in Roman Mythology

A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies

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The divine feminine manifests in Roman mythology through four categories: Celestial, Chthonic, Urban, and Untamed. The majority of data for this study originates in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. with Ovid, Virgil, Catullus, and others. The origins of this data, however, present several difficulties. Firstly, due the influences of Etruscans, Phoenicians, and other cultures, separating out the specific *mythoi* of Rome from those of imported narratives is problematic. Secondly, few of the cultures in question left clear data of their myths. This problem compounds with the third, and most difficult, to overcome; typical research into mythology privileges the influence of Greece. Because the Hellenic culture left a strong mythological tradition, mythographers often treat other mythologies as inferior. Such an attitude, however, belies the originality of Roman myth.

This new categorization seeks to form a more objective mythographic theory. Analysis of major mythological material takes into account not only Hellenic influences, but other

contributing cultures such as the Etruscans, Phoenicians, and others. Five goddesses, Juno, Minerva, Proserpina, Diana, and Venus, form the core of this analysis. These divinities offer the greatest wealth of mythological data, underwent extensive Hellenization, and provide non-Grecian mythological material with which to contrast. This comparative mythographic approach forms the basis of the new categories presented.

From consideration of the mythological data, four categories emerge. These identifying *mythoi* distinguish Roman goddesses and aid in the understanding of Rome's mythology as unique. The Celestial goddess embodies the most authoritative incarnations of female divinity. The Chthonic goddess has the strongest connection to humanity and is the most feminine. The Urban goddess embodies the city, distinguishing Roman civilization from the barbarians. The Untamed goddess, in contrast, embodies everything of the wilderness, even the specter of death. Unlike typical interpretations of the various goddesses' *cognomina*, these categories do not limit the divine feminine in Roman myth, but rather help to understand its generalized, animistic nature.

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Chapter I

Introduction

How does Roman mythology portray its goddesses? Any attempt to answer this question results, as so often occurs in such scholarly pursuits, in a cascade of preemptive inquiries. How do we distinguish the traits of goddesses in Roman myth from gods, heroes, abstract concepts, and other manifestations of divinity? How do we differentiate the goddesses of Rome from their counterparts in other mythologies? To what degree are Roman myths a product of Greek influence versus those of other contributing Mediterranean cultures? Has scholarly bias altered the answers to any of these questions? Our attempt to identify and understand the divine feminine in Roman myth should navigate all these supporting inquiries, taking into account all of the available mythological data before presenting a possible conclusion as to just how the Romans presented and understood their goddesses within the context of myth.¹

What do we mean in using the term “the divine feminine?” This question, in fact, lies at the heart of our analysis. Roman goddesses are not single, individualized entities, best understood by a name or distinct iconography. Rather, goddesses within Roman mythology are mutable presentations of a generalized concept of divinity. Rome originally developed from

¹ From the outset, we should probably take a moment to address the topic of gender in myth. The theories we investigate herein focus exclusively on goddesses with only passing mention of male divinity. The role of gender in society; the interplay of the genders, mythologically, socially, religiously, and historically; whether or not the theories we investigate apply to male divinity; all of these topics lie outside the scope of this investigation. Herein we are only concerning ourselves with the mythological portrayal of Roman goddesses.



Fig. 1.1: Marble statue of Minerva from the 2nd century B.C.E., displaying both Greek and Roman themes.

an agrarian society, with a strongly animistic mythology. The gods of this ancient culture were not specific deities, but rather spirits that possessed the world around them, living in the hills, rivers, sea, and open sky (Michels, 25-7). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil refers to this tradition when Aeneas reaches Italy. In thanksgiving for the apparent end of their journey, the hero has his people pay homage first to the indwelling spirit of the land and to the Earth herself (7.159-65). As the Romans absorbed the myths of their surrounding cultures, their understanding of the gods adapted. Anthropomorphized representations of the sky and the fertile earth found their way into the Roman world. This blending of cultures did not result in the end of animism,

however, but rather in an amalgamation of mythographic concepts. Minerva is not just the daughter of Jupiter, for example, wearing the aegis and riding forth to battle giants in defense of Olympus. As Ovid describes her in the *Fasti*, she is also the skillful hands of the master artisan, the brilliant mind of the mathematician, and the courage of the legionnaire (3.5-7 and 3.813-34, cf. Fig. 1.1). In order to understand Roman goddesses, we should foremost understand that when a writer or artist invokes a particular incarnation of the divine feminine, it is not with the thought of a fixed personality, but with a library of *mythoi* deriving from disparate cultures and periods. Roman goddesses represent a generalized supernatural power that the Romans understood as present in their world, each made manifest through a variety of incarnations that we might collectively call the divine feminine. Our task is to try to understand how the myths of Rome present this manifestation of divinity.

Roman myth offers many examples of goddesses, each with potentially dozens of *cognomina*. Virgil, Ovid, and other Latin writers all have strong representations of the divine feminine within their bodies of works. In his *Aeneid*, Virgil presents Juno as the all-powerful queen of Heaven (1.12-6 and 4.124-46), and contemporary artistic representation supported his depiction of the mighty Juno *Regina* (cf. Fig. I.2). Despite this synchronicity, the writer offers contrasting views of Venus, evoking the adulterous patroness of Paris in his *Eclogues* (2.60) and yet presenting a dedicated mother and protector in his *Aeneid* (1.269-303).² This seeming inconsistency of divine presentation is commonplace in Roman myth. While Ovid seemingly presents Juno only as the jealous wife of Jupiter in his *Metamorphoses* (1.589-779 and 2.836-75),³ in his *Fasti*, the queen of the gods receives his reverential respect (6.17-63). These mythological manifestations of Roman goddesses can vary in their apparent representation or purpose not only from one author to another, but also from one appearance to another within multiple works by the same writer.



Fig. I.2: Juno *Regina*, bronze statuette from 1st century.

² This interpretation of Virgil's use of myth in his poetry is only one interpretation. In the key lines, he draws a contrast between the bucolic scene of Dardanian Paris and the fortresses of Minerva. The only significant interaction between these two occurs in Paris' Judgement and the subsequent infidelity of Helen via Aphrodite's patronage of Paris.

³ Io and Europa are just two of examples among many the tales that Ovid presents of Jupiter's philandering.

An additional difficulty obstructs the categorization of Rome's goddesses: that scholarship tends to identify Roman mythology as little more than a development of Greek myth. Any investigation into the culturally distinctive identity of a Roman goddess must first reconcile its multiple cultural influences. While the hybridized myths of Rome certainly reflect their Greek contributions, in order to understand the Latin goddesses as having an independent mythology, we need to factor in the mythographic contributions of Rome's other predecessors, from the Etruscans to the Oscans and other distinct native cultures. Rather than trying to ignore these



Fig. I.3: Venus/Aphrodite from Southern Italy, 3rd century B.C.E.

influences on later myth, or treating Roman mythology as a direct adaptation of Greek myth, close examination of Latin goddesses may yield a more complete understanding of the themes indicative of Roman mythology.

Scholarly analyses of the anthropomorphized Greek myths, from modern treatise into the distant past, have weighted our current understanding of Roman mythology. Roman goddesses, like Roman mythology as a whole, have habitually found themselves co-opted by other cultures. Structuralist mythographers like Joseph Campbell have tried to make Rome a bridge between the ancient and modern world, only crediting it as having transferred Greek ideas into medieval stories. Arguably, the clearest example of this

Western predisposition towards Hellenic *mythoi* appears in the presentation of Venus. Originally a goddess of fertility, purification, and rebirth for the Italians (cf. Fig. I.3), this goddess underwent severe Hellenization. Eventually she became

virtually indistinguishable from Aphrodite as a figure of sexuality (cf. Fig. I.5). This perception of Venus continues through the Middle Ages into the present, with the name of Venus inexorably connected to the *mythoi* of Aphrodite. This habit extends further, with scholars habitually giving greater weight to Greek notions of mythography rather than those of Rome.

Can we discern themes relating to the divine feminine that are distinct to Roman mythology? Taking into account the nature of the universe in Latin myths may offer a foundation of themes upon which to build a general understanding of native *mythoi*. Factoring in the contributing myths of earlier cultures offers a great deal of data and helps to clarify the apparent contradictions in thematic content. Thus, not only do we need to consider cultural contributions, but our examination should also account for the themes that endured. Roman mythographers did not repeat every Greek myth, for example, nor did they repeat select myths verbatim. Imported stories underwent adaptation for Roman audiences, and analysis of those changes may offer further thematic evidence of the Roman goddesses' identities. Finally, through analyzing the presentation of the divine feminine in Latin literature and art, we may extract those themes particular to each specific goddess from one depiction to another.

Through our analysis, *mythoi* emerge that unify the divine feminine within Roman mythology. We can identify four universal themes, original to this analysis and independent of a goddess' specific identity, that represent a primal ordering of the Roman universe. These basic categories: Celestial, Chthonic, Urban, and Feral, contain within them not just a superficial, mythological



Fig. I.4: Capitoline Venus, 4th century Rome.

identity, but also a foundational representation within the world. Through her association in one of these categories, each of which having unique traits that also contributes to the greater identity of the divine feminine, a goddess presents herself and her role in a respective myth. Rather than requiring lengthy explanatory narratives accompanying each appearance of a goddess or inflexible mythological roles, the existence of these four basic categories allowed Roman audiences to appreciate the entire subtle nuance of a goddess' actions and attitudes within the context of each mythological appearance. Conversely, our understanding of these four basic categories provides insight into the Roman mythological perception of the universe.

Chapter II

The Problem: Rome's Unrecognized Independent Mythological Identity

With an inheritance from multiple societies, Roman myth represents an amalgam of ideas. Trying to conduct a mythographic analysis, therefore, presents three fundamental problems that have plagued scholarship for generations. First, as the product of a blending of cultures, scholars habitually amalgamate Roman myths, blurring their meanings in the process. Second, classical scholars often privilege Greek myths over those of Rome. Third, Roman mythology is habitually identified, consciously or not, as a subset or offspring of Greek. Collectively, as these problems form the basis for scholarly investigation, they have the potential to lead mythographers to false conclusions in their analyses. Most importantly, we must appreciate that Roman myth developed from multiple cultures, including the Hellenic, over an extended period.

Sadly, the tendency in academia towards the amalgamating of Roman myth is a long-standing one. It would seem that scholars have been incorrectly assigning these templates very nearly for as long as Roman myth itself has existed. In his analysis of Greek and Roman lyrical verse, Karl Maurer notes almost in passing that, over seven centuries, similar *mythoi* recur in the construction of poetry (45-7, 54-7, and 60-4). Regardless of author, location, or period, the Greeks and Romans shared similar ideas of how to express themselves lyrically, reinforcing the scholarly idea inexorably linking the two mythologies. The close association between the Hellenic and Roman cultures, chronologically, geographically, and culturally, would reasonably



Fig. II.1: Zeus visits a reclining Danae.

lead one to find association between their narrative forms of expression. In her introduction to *The Epic Cosmos*, Louise Cowan states that, “Epic has traditionally been considered so monumental and grand a mode of poetic expression that literary authorities have dared make few official additions over the years to the fixed Homer-Virgil-Milton pantheon” (1). She argues that the traditions begun

by the Greeks and reinforced by the Romans have become such an intrinsic part of Western *mythoi*, with established mythological identities, that even in rejecting such traditions, modern storytellers can only react to the modes established collectively by the classical world (2-4, 6-9, 15-22, and 24-6). The most basic iconography of Greek myth, from Icarus’ doomed flight to the seduction of Danae, have become so ingrained into our idea of how myths function that we can no longer extract them. A shower of gold upon a maiden, for example, regardless of context,

seems inextricably linked to a divine visitation (cf. Fig. II.1-2). Hellenic storytelling, in its various forms, is so foundational to the Western world that even thousands of years later we do not deviate from their patterns. Such a strong emphasis in the literary



Fig. II.2: Danae, reclining, receives the shower of gold.



Fig. II.3: Proserpine. with the forbidden fruit.

community towards connecting Greek and Roman ideas would surely impact the analysis of their myths. Any scholars that are a part of these societies so dependent upon Greek ideas would be as naturally inclined towards them as would any storyteller.

While these strong literary preconceptions could reasonably predispose mythographers towards a

structuralist approach, doing so has serious risks.

Joseph Campbell and C.O. Müller, respected

mythologists of the twentieth and nineteenth centuries respectively, strongly advocated a structuralist approach to mythography (Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, 6-8, 292-3; and Müller 23-37, 209-11, 213-7, 224-8). For example, Joseph Campbell closely associates the myths of Persephone with those of Eve because both have imagery of maidens, fruit, and serpents (9-10, 14-5; cf. Fig.II.3-4). Doing so, however, disregards the social significance of the Expulsion myth within Judeo-Christian cultures, and the



Fig. II.4: Eve with the forbidden fruit.

Abduction myth in Hellenic ones.⁴ In effect, he privileges his specific interpretation of the myths without taking into account the entire social contribution. In his study of classical mythology, Thomas Bulfinch inseparably links the Roman Cupid with the Greek Eros, specifically as the son of the goddess of love, an adolescent archer capable of causing love or removing it in mortals (16). This description, however, only describes the god of love from a fraction of the available material, popularized by Christian notions of a cherubic spirit of love.⁵ Once again, a mythographer privileges his interpretation rather than taking into account all the available data. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod states that Eros is one of the primordial entities that predate the gods, having been born of Chaos and clearly predating Aphrodite (II.112-9).⁶ The myth of Cupid and Psyche, related to us by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* but likely based upon preexisting sources, describes the god of love as being in a sexual affair (II.4.28-6.24). The meaning that the god of love represented to the originating culture fades when he stops being a myth-specific character and becomes an archetypal cherub. In their effort to form a commonality of themes, these various scholars blur the meaning of specific myths.

Even the Romans themselves offered dubious connections between their own myths and those of other cultures. Caesar made parallels between Roman gods and those of the Gallic

⁴ The Expulsion is one of the foundational myths of Judeo-Christian thought since, arguably, it formed the basis of humanity's flawed nature (House and Mitchell, 17-8). The Abduction forms a key to not only the gods' relationship with humanity, but also in the presentation of several laws such as treatment of guests, marriage, courtesy to strangers, funerals, etc. (Tripp, 463-4).

⁵ An examination of literary and artistic depictions of Cupid, outside the scope of this article, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the Renaissance, demonstrate a notable de-aging of the god of love. A constant artistic theme becomes the representation of a winged baby to communicate the presence of love. Augustus often has a cherub to mark his relationship with Venus, romantic scenes often have cherubs present, etc. Even today, Valentine's Day is marked with our modern conception of Cupid.

⁶ It may be worth noting that, even here, the translator cannot resist inserting a structuralist footnote. When Eros first appears in the text, long before the Olympians or even the Titans, Hine notes of his name "Love, Cupid in Latin, son of Aphrodite."

cultures he encountered (II.6.17-8).⁷ Seeing a goddess of craftsmanship, he states that the Gauls worship Minerva who grants the gifts of craft and skill (II.6.17.3). While we can debate his intentions in labeling foreign gods with Latin names, the result would appear clear, the ongoing amalgamation of myth in the Roman world. Cicero offers a detailed argument of the commonality of all myths (*On the Nature of the Gods*, II.2.24-7). He contended that the names with which one labeled divinity were irrelevant, as were the myths associated with such labels. Because of the popularity of these authors with medieval and later scholars, the notion of amalgamating Roman myth could not help but continue with the passage of time. This process, although eroding the original meaning of a myth, provides us with cultural insight. If we include the origin myth as well as the changes over time, we may discern what aspects of a goddess and her myths were of importance to a particular culture at particular periods.

The amalgamation of Athena with Menra to produce Minerva, for example, highlights some cultural values of Rome. The goddess' integration into the Roman pantheon erodes the cultural importance of the Etruscan Menra but provides us with insight into Roman Minerva. Our limited knowledge of the pre-Hellenic goddess of the Etruscan people points strongly against her virginity. When the Romans absorbed Etruscan culture, they also absorbed that mythology. Mythographers typically only observe the myths of Athena in trying to understand Minerva, however, which privileges the Hellenic traditions among the mythography of the goddess. Menra

⁷ Caesar actually uses the word, *simulacra*, in his description, indicating that he was describing images, icons, etc., rather than specific Roman deities. Here and after, unless otherwise noted, the author made his own translations of original texts, comparing them to available, pre-existing translations. In any case wherein the author makes a point of original language, his translation and interpretation of a relevant text is used in favor of a preexisting one and such instances shall have accompaniment with a footnote.



Fig. II.5: A pre-Hellenic Minerva, winged, lacking armor, and wearing feminine garb, but with Athena's owl.

to say nothing of any other contributing myths.

The default for current academia has been to identify Roman mythology as an offspring of Greek. Somewhat analogous to the development of Christianity as a separate religion developed from Judaism, the consensus among scholars seems to be that Roman myth evolved directly from the Hellenic world. Both casual and scholarly approaches to mythography, as typified by Edward Tripp and Edith Hamilton, inseparably link Roman goddesses to specific Hellenic counterparts (Hamilton 44-7, and Tripp 57). While the danger of such associations in less academically inclined publications such as in *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology* is minimal, they are still



Fig. II.6: Menra in a romantic embrace with Hercle (center).



Fig. II.7: Roman Diana.

generally misleading. Worse, in purely academic works the preconception also exists that native Italian myths were abandoned in favor of Greek (Bremmer and Horsfall 120).⁸ All too often, mythographers misidentify Roman myth as a subset of Hellenic. As a default, scholars habitually assign the gods of Rome epithets such as “the Roman equivalent of the Greek...”⁹ These descriptions often correspond to Hellenic divinities of only approximate attributes in a specific period of Hellenic culture. For example, Tripp identifies Diana, with the Greek Artemis, a virgin goddess. Given the similar iconography of these two goddesses, this association would seem reasonable (cf. Fig. II.7-8). Tripp goes on, however, to point out, without explanation, that some Roman myths name Diana the consort to the god Virbius (200).¹⁰ By presenting contradictory material with little or no context, these sources can do more harm to mythography than good. In an analysis of any particular goddess, a mythographer can reach false conclusions because of a faulty premise, that is, the association of disparate or only loosely connected myths.

⁸ In fairness, these mythographers make a compelling investigation of pre-Hellenic, Italian myth in their work, trying very hard to trace cultic practice through myth. Still, the bias is present in their analyses and conclusions. Further, Stanley Lombardo, in the introduction of his 2005 translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, admits that he came to Virgil through Homer, comparing much of the *Aeneid*’s style to Homeric epic (xv, xvii, xix-xxv). While dismissing or even making light of the Homeric influence upon Virgil’s epic would seem foolish, we should simultaneously take into account native Italic contributions. Aeneas myths predate Virgil, for example, and likely contributed to the *Aeneid*’s final form.

⁹ Arguably the most curious, and egregious, example of this habit is from the most recent edition of the Oxford Latin Dictionary, the 2nd, published in 2012. As a reference theoretically dedicated exclusively to Latin literature and language, the O.L.D. includes this descriptor for several Roman goddesses including Ceres, Diana, Juno, Minerva, Proserpina, Venus, and Vesta.

¹⁰ Virbius is an early Italian god, typically linked to forests, fertility, and male virility.

Admittedly, Greek culture had an enormous impact upon the Ancient Mediterranean world. While we must include all the mythological data from Rome's contributing cultures, we should also give proper weight to Greek ideas. Ample evidence remains of its impact upon Italian myth in Etruria and Latium, dating from the fifth century B.C.E. and even earlier. One needs look only to the importation of the Greek alphabet around the seventh century to appreciate the Hellenic influence in early Italy. Mythographers, however, cannot easily measure the footprint left upon the inheritors of Greek culture due to the absence of extensive literary remains in Italy; nonetheless, those sources that do remain to us point to a strong Hellenic tradition in Latin literature. From Plautus' plays incorporating Greek plots, dramatic concepts, and even locations and characters, to the fragments of Ennius making mention of well-established Greek myths, the Hellenic presence in Roman myth seems irrefutable.¹¹ Taking these facts, along with the weight of so much scholarly momentum, one understands the temptation in conceding that Roman myth is little more than



Fig. II.8: Greek Artemis.

an offshoot of Greek. Doing so, however, would place an overwhelming priority on the

¹¹ In the case of Plautus, many, perhaps most, of his characters had Greek names significant to their characters, Cleomachus for a soldier, Eragasilus for a fool, Theotimus for a priest, etc. In furtherance of this, the playwright also utilized characterizations of Greek New Comedy such as the clever slave, the foolish noble, the lustful old man (Seanman 116-7). While most of our knowledge of Ennius comes from later sources citing him, enough fragments do remain, along with the citations themselves, of his plays indicating his strong preference for Hellenic topics such as Achilles' confrontation with the ambassadors (Ennius, "Achilles," ll.1-19).

importance of Greek myth. Our struggle here must be to find the correct balance of Hellenic myth with the other contributing cultures of Rome.

What eventually became the corpus of Roman literature and artwork evolved from a diverse collection of disparate cultures. The Latins, Etruscans, Phoenicians, Gauls, and Greeks, among others all contributed to Roman mythology. The powerful Juno of Virgil's *Aeneid*, who dominates that epic and exerts her influence over gods and mortals alike, demonstrates an amalgamation of traits from the powerful goddesses of the Phoenicians, Etruscans, and Latins, arguably more so than the Greeks. In the *Aeneid*, Juno is the wife of Jupiter, but she is not subservient to her husband (4.132-46). She commands the god of the winds, analogous to the Egyptian Kedeset, lady of heaven and mistress of all the gods (1.81-97, Schmitt, 207-11, and Campbell, *Goddesses* 22). Also like the warlike Astarte of Phoenician myth, Juno has weapons and participates in battle (2.718-21, and Schmitt 218-20). Virgil himself points out the dominance of Juno in Italy and Carthage prior to the arrival of the Hellenized Trojans, a prominence substantiated by the prevalence of temples, votives, statuary, and other archaeological evidence all representative of the prevalence of Juno's pre-Hellenic cult (1.546-7 and 3.505-13, Cornell 312, Dumezil 481-2). Ovid confirms this queenly status in his *Fasti*, pointing to the queen of Heaven as the oldest of Saturn's children and *princeps* among goddesses (6.25-33), the others being concubines in contrast to her status as a wife (2.496-507).¹² Juno illustrates the multicultural nature of Roman myth and the fact that the goddesses of Rome inherited more than just Hellenic traits.

¹² Ovid stresses the importance of a wife over a concubine, the importance of this appearing again in relation to Juno in his *Metamorphoses*. While the original, Hellenic myths have Hera angered over Zeus' infidelity, Ovid's Juno grows angry at the possibility of a concubine gaining great status as a constellation, threatening her own status as queen of heaven and Jupiter's wife.

Nor is Juno alone in her inheritance. While Aphrodite is primarily a goddess of love in the Greek world, Venus draws upon a greater diversity for her mythic personality. From the Etruscan Turan, the Roman goddess of love is a mother, nurturing and compassionate, caring for her descendants, and maintaining her ladylike visage and fertility. Minerva draws from Athena's multitasking capabilities, but also from the status enjoyed by her Celtic and Etruscan counterparts, sitting among the Capitoline Triumvirate as Jupiter's chief councilor. Each of these goddesses and countless more join together, drawing from the diverse cultures that merged to form Roman mythology. While the Hellenic world was an integral part of that process, it was not the sole contributor and we should not treat it as such. Thus for our new analysis of Roman myth to be successful, we must factor in all of the available data of Roman myth, not just the preponderance of Hellenic influence.

Chapter III

The Theory: The Basic Division of the Roman Universe

The Romans understood their world as being compartmentalized. Beyond basic notions such as Olympus or the Underworld, a fundamental belief exists within the mythology of Rome wherein the universe orders itself along logical, systemic lines. As we shall see in the following analysis of Roman cosmology, the people of Rome organized their mythological cosmos upon a coherent, predictable, and logical framework. Rather than moving immediately into a close analysis of the individual myths of this goddess or that, our first step shall be to understand how the divine feminine fits within the organized scheme that comprises Rome's mythological universe. By doing so, we may better understand not only the identities of the individual Roman goddesses, but better appreciate that they actually gain their identity from fulfilling specific roles within the mythological universe, not as characters adhering to particular narrative frameworks.

The first, most important concept we should understand is the tendency in Roman mythology towards a segmented universe.¹³ Their mythology goes beyond the basic separation present within other mythologies that evolved from the Indo-Europeans, splitting the world

¹³ For the sake of clarity, we should note that this structuralist tendency appears in Roman *myth*, not necessarily Roman religion and/or cult. While one can make the argument that cult and mythology are indistinguishable, we are approaching the original theories presented here from the perspective that, while cultic practice and religious belief can derive from myth, a culture's mythology may exist independently from its cultic practice. Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* is arguably the best ancient source discussing this idea. In book one, for example, he discusses the form of the gods, and how worship should/could be directed towards that form. In his discussion, he refers to both the Venus of Cos statue and the myth of Europa, offering a variety of possible viewpoints (1.27 and 1.28) and their versatility to the populace as a focus of worship, regardless of any individual's interpretation of myth.



Fig. III.1: The Piacenza Liver

between the higher realm of the gods, the natural, living world, and the realm beyond death.¹⁴

Both the Greeks and Etruscans, for example, divided their mythological universe into specific regions, each area of the

heavens and earth having very particular qualities either good or bad.¹⁵ The Piacenza Liver (cf. Fig. III.1), an Etruscan artifact thought to have been a tool in educating haruspices, clearly illustrates how the Twelve People viewed this division of their heavens, with each god having dominion over a particular area of the sky, the earth, and the human body (de Grummond 48-9). The Romans continued this mythological idea, as Martianus Capella illustrates in his fifth century C.E. tale, *On the Marriage of Mercury and Philology*. In it, Capella describes in detail how the gods gather for a wedding, taking up specific places in the heavens, in a particular order, for important reasons.¹⁶ Juno, for example, as sponsor of marriage, sits to the immediate left of Jupiter. Immediately in front of Juno are Concord, Faith, and Modesty (1.147). This imagery creates a connection whereby we understand that justice derives from divinely ordained marriage, which,

¹⁴ Even the most cursory examination of the mythologies derived from the Indo-Europeans reveals a commonality of this separation of the universe. The Nordic cultures had Yggdrasil, which separated the universe into the worlds above, populated by gods and other supernatural beings, the middle world of humans, and the dark worlds below. The Celtic cultures had the heavenly wheel containing the divine heavens of the gods, the mundane world of humans, and the chthonic Otherworld. The Hellenic cultures had the Olympians, the mortal world, and the Underworld (Bonnesfoy 67-9, Larrington 43-72, and Mac Mathuna 11-3).

¹⁵ Each culture did have differences in their respective cosmologies, however. The Greeks, for example, divided their heavens into eight regions while the Etruscans had sixteen (de Grummond 44-5).

¹⁶ Martianus Capella almost certainly based his work on an earlier, Etruscan one, though we have little direct evidence. Equally certain, however, is his influence by both Greek and Roman sources (Shanzer 48-52, 121-3, and 202-8).

in turn, derives from specific virtues, each of which have specific placement in the heavens. Unlike the vague delineation of regions seen in other mythologies such as the Nordic or Babylonian, the Romans seemed to have clear assignments for the regions of their universe.

Roman myth shares with other cultures in a similar separation of the divine realm, the mundane, and the realm of the dead. Latin literature, for example, often explores the concept of the soul and afterlife in detail.¹⁷ The people of Italy, perhaps even more so than



Fig. III.2: Etruscan tomb painting of a spirit guiding a hero to the afterlife.

other Mediterranean cultures, possessed a highly developed sense of death and the transitory process of the afterlife. The Romans engaged in detailed speculation on what might lay beyond death, with extensive burial remains and evidence of the veneration for the dead.¹⁸ The Etruscans, for example, strong cultural contributors to Roman mythology, left a detailed pictorial tradition of death as journey to a wondrous realm beyond the mundane world (Krauskopf 67-70, and cf. Fig. III.2). For the Etruscans, death was not a single, cause-and-effect moment but rather the beginning of an adventure. The Latin cultures of central Italy regularly opened a pit dedicated

¹⁷ Cicero, *Soul*, ll. 198-202; Holford-Stevens 2-8, Mack 12-9, 44-51, and 121-41; and Virgil, *Aeneid* 6, to name but a few.

¹⁸ Not the least among these traditions was leaving offerings at the tombs of family members, not once but at specific intervals over an extended time. In addition, family members included prayers to the dead as part of the daily worship of the *penates*, the household gods. Moreover, the *Luninaria* was a large part of Roman life, a seasonal ritual in which the head of the household would ritually purify the home and placate any dead relatives that might have been inadvertently angered by the living (Hopkins 7-12, and Toynbee 18-21).

both to Ceres, as goddess of agriculture, and to Proserpina, as queen of the dead, so that the spirits of loved ones could freely move between the living and non-living worlds (Fairbanks 244-8). Additionally, Roman writers seem to share in similar Indo-European notions of separating the realms of the gods from those of humanity (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.25-8, and Varro 5.57-9). Beyond the physical separation of Mount Olympus, myths abound of mortals receiving punishment for infringing on the sovereignty of the gods, from Arachne to Callisto.¹⁹ Thus, any cursory examination of Roman myth reveals the same basic separation of realms one may find in many other mythologies.

What distinguishes Roman myth, however, is the emphasis on sub-dividing and categorizing their universe. Latin writers often begin their cosmologies by stating that life originates from two separate divine beings, Sky and Earth. Varro states that the spirit derives from *Caelum* (Sky), while the body from *Terra* (Earth) (5.16-7). He also identifies the two basic locations of the universe as *loca supra* (upper places) and *loca infera* (lower places), separating the realms by inhabitants, one for the divine, the other the mundane. In this way, Varro continues the mythological notion of the celestial and the chthonic, specifically the separation between those free of death and those tied to it.²⁰ Virgil and Ovid support this bifurcated notion of the universe in their poetry, separating the natural world with the lighter, more perfect forms floating

¹⁹ Ariadne boasted that her weaving skills rivaled those of Athena/Minerva. In a contest between the two, they wove tapestries of relatively equal skill, but while the goddess' work gloried the gods, Ariadne's mocked them. The girl's punishment stemmed as much from her disrespect of the gods as from her boasting. Callisto, wooed by Zeus, was changed into a bear, and eventually raised as a constellation. Juno, in fury that a concubine threatened her place in the Heavens, ordered the ocean to withdraw, never letting her competitor set.

²⁰ This basic separation was nothing new to the Roman world. As far back as Hesiod and Homer, mythographers had believed in a basic separation between those touched by death and those that were not. This connection to mortality extends even to certain chthonic spirits like Persephone/Proserpina, Demeter/Ceres, Hades/Dis, etc., each of whom had a close association with humans and a connection of some kind with both life and death. For a more detailed examination of the close association between the chthonic gods and humanity, see Arthur Fairbanks' article, "The Chthonic Gods of Greek Religion."

upwards toward the heavens and the grosser elements sinking down to the earth (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.26-30, and Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.724-7). This fundamental separation lies at the heart of Roman myth, with a clear delineation of roles.

No Italian myth, however, leaves the partitioning of their universe in such simplistic terms as two, or even three, categories. Etruscan myth abounds with examples of separations in not only the divine realm, but in the mortal one as well. Tinia, as perhaps the best example, is the king of the gods and also the god of boundaries. Whereas in the Greek pantheon Zeus is the ruler of Olympus and god of strangers, guests, and the laws protecting such relationships, in Etruria, the ruler of the universe preserves the boundaries of that universe (de Grummond 55). Based upon Etruscan belief and practice, the Romans identified signs in the heavens based largely upon where in the sky an event such as bird flight or lightning occurred (Cicero, *Divination* 1.15, 1.33, and 1.41). Jean Turfa's translation of the Etruscan Brontoscopic Calendar illustrates this, with detailed forecasts of the future based almost entirely upon the presence of heavenly omens (87-101). Thunder on March 4th, for example, promised of boundless prosperity but the same omen a week later, on March 11th, warned of locusts (98). The origins of these signs derive from the placement of specific gods and spirits, good or bad, in certain places of the sky, as mentioned previously. The Roman system of haruspex, central to a large part of daily life, could not function without the structured partitioning of their cosmos (de Grummond 17). The ordering of the universe clearly has a priority in Roman thought and thus, we should consider it in our analysis of Roman mythology; the people of that civilization seemed to have a strong predilection towards the partitioning and categorization of their world.

We can find multiple examples of this emphasis on the importance of separation in Roman mythology. Virgil expands upon the Homeric description of the Underworld, with

hundreds of lines dedicated to identifying various sections of Pluto's kingdom (*Aeneid* 6.298-337, 384-416, 426-534, 548-627, and 637-78). In Virgil's Underworld, in contrast to Homer's, the spirits of the dead do not share a universal afterlife, but one more specialized, based upon their respective lives or deaths. Even on a subject as mundane as the identification of fields, the Romans felt compelled to assign gradations of identity and status, specifically the titles: Roman, Sabine, *Peregrine*, *Hosticus*, and *Incertus* (Varro 5.33). These labels identified, in decreasing order, the "Romanness" of an area. The Romans apparently had a strong cultural inclination towards, not just a partitioning of their universe, but also an ordering of it, oriented towards the familiarity or strangeness of the world, with specific roles assigned to each part. For the purposes of our analysis, this predisposition towards a compartmentalized universe means that any identity of the Roman goddesses should derive from categories recognizable within the natural world and all centrally relative to the Roman experience.

Having established a basic understanding of the Roman mythological cosmos, we should next turn our attention to the process of identification in Latin myth. An extreme fluidity exists in the usage of names in Roman myth. Identifying a goddess as "Juno," for example, would appear to do little to identify her. The same goddess can alternatively have identification as *Ops*, *Tellus*, *Luna*, and others (Livy 22.9-10, Ovid, *Fasti* 3.657, and Varro 5.65). *Cognomina* provide an additional complication to discerning the identity of the Roman goddesses, with many of the major deities potentially having dozens, changing based upon geography, occasion, worshipper, or any number of other factors (Cornell 109-12, 295-8, and 386-7). Adding to this multiple personality confusion, Roman myths seem content to adjust a goddess' name not only from one myth to another, but also within the same story. Catullus' "Hymn to Diana" (c.34), offers evidence of this, in which the poet refers to the goddess not only by her most recognizable name,

but also as Juno and Trivia. From all this, we should therefore conclude that any name assigned to a goddess is not the primary means of her identification.

What, then, *is* the primary means of identifying a Roman goddess? Mythographers typically argue in support of analyzing myths based upon the metaphors they present.²¹ The myth of Actaeon, for example, is less a story of preserving the virginity of Artemis/Diana as it is a greater metaphor for an unprepared mortal foolishly striving for divine knowledge or power for which he is unprepared.²² If we are to follow this logical process, then identifying a Roman goddess should focus upon neither her identities nor the overt stories in her individual narratives, but in the metaphors her collective myths present. The fact that specific names appear highly variable would be of less import than the extraction of persistent *mythoi* within Roman mythology.

We have thus far established the importance of categories and theme in combination with name and narrative in Roman myth. These goddesses do not establish their identities through whatever titles the writers assign them, nor through individual appearances in stories. Rather, these divinities appear in the broad *mythoi* that remain constant across multiple periods and authors. Themes such as fertility, marriage, governance, and rebirth shall combine with mythological imagery of maidens, queens, mothers, and warriors. Although names and specific

²¹ Campbell, *Goddess*, pp. 1-2; de Grummond, pp. 6-7; Dumézil, p. 408; Herbert-Brown, pp. 223-4; Lupack, pp. 258-9; Michels, p. 27; Pomery, pp. 2-4; and Small, p. 49, to name just a few. In each case, the mythographer presents an argument in support of identifying deities more by way of their associated *mythoi* rather than a particular name, which can easily change over time.

²² This interpretation is, of course, subject to debate. The idea of mortals suffering for prematurely reaching beyond their ability or station seems prevalent in Mediterranean myth, however. Icarus, Orion, and Sisyphus are just a few more examples.

myths will change, the *mythoi* will remain consistent. Given this, what connective motifs may we extract from the vast library of literature and artwork that comprise Roman mythology?

The task of identifying the overarching themes of the Roman goddesses is not as onerous as we might believe. In fact, previous mythographers have already identified several metaphors present within Roman myths. The key to our understanding and identifying Roman goddesses shall be in first identifying the divine feminine with this particular mythology. In his study of archetypes, Erich Neumann conducted a thorough analysis of many of the themes of which we are in search. The feminine, he argues, is a goddess of time and fate (230-1, and 226-7). Similar to the *Morai* in Greek myth or the *Norns* in Nordic, the Roman goddess will have some mastery over the destinies of humanity. Simultaneously, he adds, she is a symbol of life and death (45). By exerting control over Roman fate, the goddess can control not only the nature of a person's life, but also his or her death. Our analysis, then, should look for those themes that relate to the esoteric powers beyond the control and full understanding of men. Marija Gimbutas agrees with the dualistic perception of the divine feminine, combining binary themes within a singular character. She adds that the goddess represents the fertile life cycle in all of its stages, from seduction and conception through maturity and death (144-6, 148, and 243-4). Like the Phoenician *Astarte*, our goddess shall be intensely feminine and intimately connected with mortal life. Thus, we should look for *mythoi* featuring not only femininity, but also daily life, growth, and humanity. Although the enforcement of law seems to find association with male divinity, metaphors for family and, by extension, the city and all the comforts of civilization center around the goddess (Campbell, *Goddesses* 36, and *Hero* 97-8). Herein we find an important distinction in how to separate the Roman goddess from those of other pantheons. The goddess of Rome may control fate as do the Greek *Morai*, but she also involves herself

intimately in mortal affairs. She can be intensely feminine and sexual like the Phoenician Astarte, but she will also be a personification of the city and all things Roman. Our analysis must take into account the similarities with other cultures' goddesses, but it shall be in those distinctly Roman themes wherein we may identify these distinctly Roman goddesses.

The close analysis of Roman myth through our process reveals four broad categories. Within each of these, metaphors exist for the world and states of life in which the people of Rome could view their lives. In this analysis, we shall focus primarily upon complete, recognizable myths with coherent narratives. For the sake of clarity, our analysis shall further focus its attention upon only a handful of Rome's goddesses, those that not only had prominence in Roman literature and myth, but who also underwent thorough Hellenization. Juno, Proserpina, Minerva, Diana, and Venus, five goddesses all easily recognizable and seemingly with their own distinct *mythoi*, shall undergo our new analysis. If our original theories hold true, however, then we can eventually expand our discoveries into other goddesses, more abstract mythological models, masculine divinity, and perhaps even other mythologies. For now, let us focus our attention on these four categories indefinable within Roman myths. Each of the goddesses present within these narratives, rather than resting solely on their almost arbitrary titles, find more accurate identification through association in these categories.

Chapter IV

The Celestial Goddess: Rome's Heavenly Queen

Our first category of Roman goddesses is Celestial. Within this broad *mythos* falls a number of themes relating both literally and metaphorically to the theme of the sky. In the myths of Rome, the Celestial goddess has power over the heavens and everything contained within it, the stars, weather, birds, even the winds. This power extends symbolically to a grand sovereignty over life itself, with the Celestial goddess reigning over the entire world, with control over every aspect of life, government, fate, and even time. She dictates her will to humanity and the lesser divinities and to her all must pay the highest honor or face her wrath. The Celestial goddess is a force of terrible power and awesome majesty.

Arguably, the myths in which the Celestial goddess' presence is most obvious are those in which she manifests most literally. When, in describing the myth of Jupiter's great flooding of the world, Ovid describes how Iris, an agent of Juno, drew water and nourishment for the clouds, he connects both goddesses directly to imagery of the sky (*Metamorphoses* 1.270-1,



Fig. IV.1: Iris, messenger of Juno.

cf. Fig. IV.1).²³ Clouds, and their accompanying weather, have always been the most direct, accessible method for storytellers and artists to correlate interaction between divinity and mortality.²⁴ Similarly, in his analysis of the Latin language, Varro points out that several Latin cultures connect Juno with the goddess Luna, the personification of the moon (5.67). In both cases, Juno and, through her, lesser goddesses find direct representation through the manifestations of things attached directly to the heavens.

Juno is, in fact, the most obvious example of the Celestial goddess. She holds the highest station as *princeps* among goddesses. As Juno *Lucina*, she is the light-bringer, matriarch of the Roman pantheon, holding the highest status among spirits and divinities (Ovid, *Fasti* 6.49-59). A shining goddess, equated to the moon, Celestial Juno is a timekeeper that marks out the natural advancement of the world while watching over it (Varro 5.18, 5.49, and



Fig. IV.2: Uni at the side of Tinia, king of the gods.

²³ Roman myth often connects Iris to meteorological imagery in both literature and artwork. Besides her role as Juno's messenger, she is the goddess of rainbows. The importance of Juno's vicarious connection to Iris appears quite obvious in Latin. For example, in the following lines from the *Metamorphoses*: *Nuntia Iunonis varios induta colores / concipit Iris aquas alimentaue nubibus adfert*, although Iris is the one that is many-colored and interacts with the clouds, she is foremost an extension of Juno. Her identity, ahead even her own name, is her status as a servant of Juno.

²⁴ One could possibly argue this point, but artwork, poetry, prose, and even modern cinema are replete with connections between weather and divinity across western cultures. A storm appears when the Ark is opened in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the Valkyries ride at the head of a storm in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, clouds surround God and Man in Michelangelo's masterpiece in the Sistine Chapel, Zeus bears the lightning bolt in Greek myth, Ba'al fertilizes the earth with rain in Phoenician myth, etc.

5.60). Uni, her Etruscan counterpart, bore the lightning bolt and sat at the right hand of the king of the gods in council (de Grummond 45 and 47-8), a status that Juno maintained as a member of the Capitoline Triumvirate (cf. Fig. IV.2-3). She demands both respect and fear, insisting that, as first among goddesses, Juno deserves the highest honors all while inflicting horrific punishments upon those that displease her. When her husband elevated the nymph Callisto among the stars, forming her into a constellation, Celestial Juno is outraged (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.508).²⁵ No common mistress should be elevated to the same level as a wife, so the queen of the gods asks that the oceans retreat away from the usurper, never allowing the new constellation to set beneath the waves (2.404-545).²⁶ This myth highlights the majesty of the Celestial goddess, for she has power over all aspects of the universe.

Arguably, the best, most renowned examples of the Celestial goddess occurs in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Within the great Roman epic, both Juno and Venus shed the roles of their Hellenic predecessors in favor of the awesome visage of the Celestial goddess. As



Fig. IV.3: The Capitoline Triumvirate, Juno standing at Jupiter's side.

²⁵ The language that Ovid uses in his version of this myth very particularly evokes the celestial imagery. For example, when she finds out about Callisto's elevation, Juno *intumuit*, she "swells" in a clear lunar reference.

²⁶ This is a particular instance wherein the adaptation from Hellenic to Roman versions of a myth may offer some insight into a culture's particular mores. In the Hellenic version, Hera grows jealous of Zeus' frequent philandering. The Roman differs significantly. Although Ovid refers to Jupiter fearing Juno's jealousy, the queen of the gods only appears once Callisto is elevated into a constellation, and then only because a mistress, "*paelex*," is elevated to a position of status among the heavens. This word, though typically translated as "mistress," carries a strongly negative connotation including "usurper."

Aeneas' nemesis, Juno curses the Trojans for not only the dishonor inflicted upon her in the past, but also for the slights their descendants shall commit in the future.²⁷ Juno renounces fate, manipulates the weather, employs lesser gods and goddesses, and even defies her husband, all to extend the suffering of the Trojans (1.12-43, 2.718-21, 4.108-20, 4.133-46, 5.673-722, 7.347-416, 9.1-14, and 10.73-117). In some ways, Venus works just as hard to protect her son, Aeneas, and ensure his destiny in Italy. She manipulates Dido into love, pleads with Jupiter for the protection of the Trojans, and seeks the help of Neptune and Vulcan for her son in his times of



Fig. IV.4: Hera borrows Aphrodite's magic girdle in order to seduce Zeus.

need (1.271-303, 1.385-514, 1802-41, 4.124-31, 5.888-909, 8.694-715, and 10.18-72.). Unlike these proactive agents, the Greek Hera is often only a peripheral contributor to Homer's epics. In the *Iliad*, the queen of the gods' greatest contribution is her seduction of Zeus, and for that, she requires the aid of Aphrodite's wiles-augmenting girdle (14.153-316, cf. Fig IV.4). Aphrodite, though causing mischief among the mortals, manages to be wounded by one (5.297-430).²⁸ In contrast to the Homeric epics, Virgil's

²⁷ In the Homeric tradition, the queen of the gods fought and maintained a grudge against the Trojans primarily because of Paris' judging against her in favor of Aphrodite for the Golden Apple. Later, Roman tradition held that Juno maintained Carthage as her favored city, wanting that, and not Rome, to be the dominant empire of the Mediterranean. The goddess' persecution of the Trojans was at least partially because of her foreknowledge of their descendants' eventual conquest and destruction of her favored city.

²⁸ Admittedly, Diomedes has the aid of Athena in that the goddess allows the hero to see the gods on the battlefield. Homer seems to make a point, however, that Diomedes himself wounds Aphrodite.

Celestial goddesses are active, undeniable contributors to the narrative. Whereas Grecian Hera uses deceit to try to thwart her husband’s command, Roman Juno openly defies a similar edict (*Iliad* 14.153-353 and *Aeneid* 4.129-34). Whereas Grecian Aphrodite gives aid to Aeneas but retreats from the battlefield the instant she faces injury, Roman Venus stands before the wrath of both Jupiter and Juno in defense of her son (*Iliad* 5.297-430 and *Aeneid* 4.124-311 and 10.16-7). In the *Aeneid*, lesser gods submit to Juno’s vengeful plans in reverence of her sovereignty (1.93-8 and 7.405-28). Venus gives aid to her mortal son, from shielding his approach to Carthage to weaponry for his battle against the Latins (1.508-10 and 8.694-7). Both of these goddesses use their influence over mortals, other divinities, the elements, and themselves, manipulating events



Fig. IV.5: Proserpina enthroned.

to their own will. This is the core of the Celestial goddess, to alter the course of events to suit her will.

Juno and Venus, as well-known as they are, are not the only Celestial goddesses. Proserpina, in her Underworld domain, has the name, “Juno *Inferna*” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.114 and Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.138). Our calling Celestial a goddess with the *cognomen inferna* may initially seem counter-intuitive.²⁹ We should keep in mind, however, that as Juno *Inferna*, the *location* of Proserpina’s dominion is of less importance than the fact that she *has* dominion (cf. Fig. IV.5). In the myth of Aeneas, when the hero travels into the realm of the dead, he must appease the queen of that other world with a specific gift. In order

²⁹ *inferna*, lit. “the lower realms,” or “subterranean.”

to travel safely within the domain of Proserpina, Aeneas must offer that Celestial goddess a golden branch, a symbol of life and royalty (*Aeneid* 6.170-84). Only through respect for the absolute authority of the queen of the deathly realm may even the great Aeneas enter and return. Although Juno may hold sovereignty over the heavens, the world below clearly belongs to Celestial Proserpina. Her will is absolute and her authority unquestioned.

Whether Juno, Venus, Proserpina, or any other deity, the Celestial goddess uses her supreme power to rule over and protect those subject to her authority so long as those under her protection remain faithful. With dominion over time, fate, the sky, and everything living beneath, this goddess exerts her will over the entirety of the world. By whatever name or specific iconography a myth labels her, the Celestial goddess makes herself known through the power that she exerts over the lesser beings surrounding her. For this divinity is the dominant force in her myth. She is the supreme matriarch of the Roman world.

Chapter V

The Chthonic Goddess: Rome's Earth Mother

The Chthonic category allows Roman goddesses to demonstrate their influence over the world and themselves. These goddesses stand in stark contrast to their Celestial counterparts in the expression of their powers, being more inclined towards the development of their traditionally feminine, that is, reproductive and nurturing, qualities, rather than any authoritative ones. This iconography derives essentially from the basic nature of this incarnation of the divine feminine. The Chthonic goddess, as the name implies, connects herself not just with death, but also directly to the earth, with the life cycle of humanity and all the imagery of fertility, life, death, and rebirth. She can be as kind, compassionate, and tender as the most loving mother, and yet as cold, dispassionate, and relentless as death. The power of the Chthonic goddess derives not from her majestic status, as does her Celestial sister, but from her inextricable connection to humanity.

In order to understand the Chthonic goddess, we should first understand how the myths relating to her differ from those of the Celestial goddess. Within Roman mythology, there exists a stark separation in the universe established by mortality. We may divide the primary characters around which individual myths center themselves upon a single factor, their relationship with death. Put most simply, some mythological characters can die, some cannot. In Greek myth, for example, when Cronos swallows his infant children, they do not die, nor do the Titans die when the Olympians eventually overthrow them (Hesiod, *Theogony* 427-41 and 806-7). In Roman

myth, Romulus does not die when attacked by traitorous nobles, but instead transubstantiates into the god Quirinus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.820-30).³⁰ In contrast to this pure immortality, when the hero Hercules (Heracles) suffers a mortal injury and throws himself onto his funeral pyre, his mortal side falls into death while his immortal self ascends into the heavens (9.245-80). Inherited from the Greeks, this most basic division of mythology establishes an essential, binary status among all things whether supernatural or natural.

A mythological character's connection with death carried with it a parallel one with the earth. Certain beings, whom the Greeks called the *ἀθάνατοι*,³¹ exist separate from both humanity and even the earth itself.³² The imagery of Mount Olympus illustrates this separation, as the deathless ones are physically separate from the concerns of mortals, including the concern of death.³³ In contrast to the separation of the *ἀθάνατοι*, another group of supernatural beings exists that have a close connection with mortality. Where Roman mythography differentiates itself from Greek is in the expansion of these ideas. Whereas the Greeks had a strict separation of immortal and mortal, life and death, etc., the Romans integrated the idea of life with chthonic *mythoi*. The Chthonic goddesses of Rome, identifiable primarily of their close association with the earth, often have imagery connected with all of the stages of mortality and life (Fairbanks 242-3). Proserpina is not a Chthonic goddess, for example, just because she is the queen of the Underworld, but also because she has association with the fertility of spring. Her primary icons

³⁰ This being one of the primary etiological myths of Rome, many sources offer slight modifications on it. Ovid provides a straightforward account, with Jupiter decreeing the immortalization of Romulus and that hero's transubstantiation.

³¹ lit. "the deathless" or "immortals", those separate from Thanatos (Death).

³² A clear example of this is in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in which he makes a clear distinction between mortals and immortals. ἦ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει, / σχετλίη: οὔτις τὴν γε φιλεῖ βροτός, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης / ἀθανάτων βουλήσιν Ἔριν τιμῶσι βαρεῖαν (14-6).

³³ In *Theogony*, Hesiod names Olympus as the home of the immortals. ἤχεϊ δὲ κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου / δώματά τ' ἀθανάτων (42-3).

are the pomegranate, the serpent, and the golden branch. The fruit represents fertility and life, the snake since ancient times has association with health and rebirth, and the golden branch is synonymous with the changing of seasons, both spring and



Fig V.1: The Death of Dido.

autumn. By incorporating all of these images and others into her collective *mythos*, Proserpina can embody the entire life cycle from youth, through maturity, to death. Revered heroes, nature spirits, honored ancestors, all of these fall under the idea of chthonic beings (Fairbanks 246-8). Their connection to death alone does not qualify these spirits as chthonic. Rather, it is their association with the iconography of humanity and the mortal, changing world.

Along with this often-unnoticed connection with life, however, Proserpina is still the embodiment of death. As such, this Chthonic goddess has a profound, perhaps supreme, influence over humanity. A brief moment occurs during Dido's sad end in Virgil's *Aeneid*, offering illumination into Proserpina's influence upon the world (cf. Fig V.1).

For since she perished neither by fate nor a death she had earned, but wretchedly before her day, in the heat of a sudden frenzy, Proserpina had not taken the golden lock from her head and sentenced her to Stygian Orcus (4.694-9).

Proserpina seems capable of forestalling death, possibly indefinitely, based upon her determination of a proper end. Dido's death was not earned or fated, so the queen of the Underworld would not allow her to die, instead extending Dido's suffering. Nor is this the only connection we find between Proserpina and power over everlasting life, Ovid tells of a deep pool

called Pergus surrounded by a hidden grove; this preserve is the domain of Proserpina, a paradise where the goddess enjoys eternal springtime. Cicero himself parses the myth of Proserpina's return from the Underworld as a metaphor for the process of spring, thereby putting the rebirth of the earth itself in the hands of this Chthonic goddess. It would seem, therefore, that Proserpina, as a Chthonic goddess, holds considerable influence over Roman myth. Not only does she symbolize spring and purity, but the Chthonic goddess also holds the power of death and rebirth in her gentle hands.

Herein lies the profound contrast between the *mythoi* of the Celestial goddess from those of the Chthonic. The Celestial goddess projects power and authority upon the world, the *mythoi* of her divinity often sublimating her womanly traits in favor of her overwhelming sovereignty. The Chthonic goddess, however, emanates a subtle yet nonetheless profound power upon humanity. Celestial Juno, for example, lights the sky and marks the passage of the months (Ovid, *Fasti* 3.657 and 3.883-4). When associated with the Chthonic, however, Roman goddesses become completely feminine, intimately connected with humanity. Chthonic Juno aids in childbirth and all the other aspects of fertility (Catullus 64.12-20). In discussing the various names for the goddess of the earth, Varro insists that, by whatever name a particular culture calls her, this goddess is still a mother, since, as the earth, she brings forth all the things of life (5.64). Ovid supports this argument in his *Metamorphoses*, stating that the earth produced all the plants and animals in existence, comparing the world to a woman's fertile womb (1.416-21). Within Roman myth, as with so many others, the earth is a living goddess, the perfect embodiment of femininity. In fact, the Romans considered many festivals dedicated to these Chthonic goddesses so deeply connected to the feminine that they prohibited men from participating in them

(Plutarch, *Caesar* 9-10).³⁴ Only women participated in the worship of Fauna (Pliny 10.77), for example, as well as the winter festival to the Bona Dea (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 1.13).³⁵ The Chthonic goddess represents the totality of the feminine in the Roman world. She is simultaneously mother, sister, lover, daughter, and priestess, all in one.

Everything relating to the mundane world and mortal life revolves around the Chthonic goddess, from the literal in fertility and reproduction to the more esoteric seasons. Venus, in her full expression of womanhood, illustrates this versatility. She originated as an agrarian fertility goddess, responsible for the blooming of spring and the beginning of new life in all its forms (Macrobius 1.12). Association with the Hellenic Aphrodite influenced the Roman understanding of Chthonic Venus as a sexual goddess, governing the act of lovemaking (Apuleius 2.8



Fig. V.2: Venus Genetrix.

and 10.30). Beyond these well-known aspects, however, Venus also acted as a goddess of purity, offering rebirth, purification, and comfort in times of need to the Roman people (cf. fig. V.2). In

³⁴ The best example of this is probably the incident involving the politician Clodius Pulcher and the Bona Dea festival. Described in detail by several sources, Clodius Pulcher was brought to trial in 62 B.C.E., accused of intruding on the rites of the Bona Dea. These rites were led by the Vestal Virgins and attended by the most respected matrons of Rome. Aside from the Republican politics of the incident, the presence of a man at these rites caused a great public furor. The Vestals had to cleanse themselves and repeat the rituals. The inquiry forced a public review of the previously secret rites. Clodius Pulcher himself was put on trial for two years and, though eventually acquitted, his reputation suffered greatly.

³⁵ Fauna is often equated with the Bona Dea, especially since their festivals both occur in the winter. Some ancient writers like Pliny link the two goddesses, but Fauna has sexual connections, most notably and obviously with Faunus, that the Bona Dea lacks.

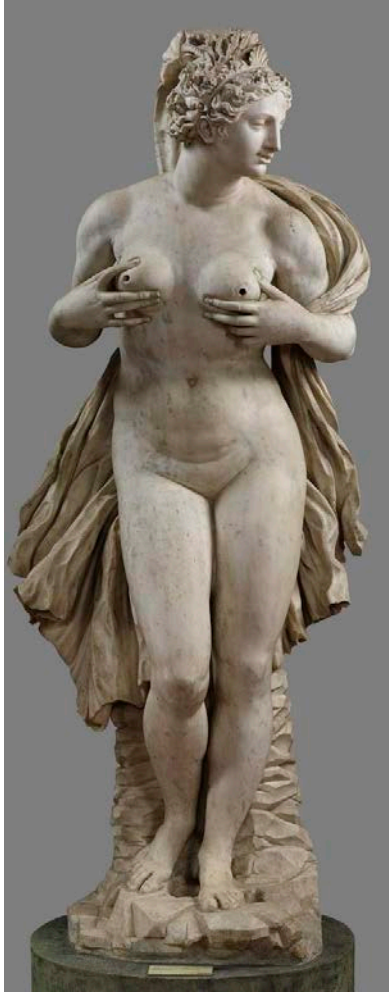


Fig. V.3: Fertile Ceres.

particular, a popular myth appears in which, following the Rape of the Sabine women, Romulus ordered his men to purify themselves in the name and before an image of Venus. Traditionally, the spot upon which they did so became sacred and later the Sabine king Tadius build a shrine there (Pliny 15.29 and Servius 1.724). The Chthonic goddess, as a manifestation of everything feminine, must offer this to the world, to be not only a vessel for receiving masculine lust and seed, not only to be a caretaker for harvesting grain and making bread, but also to be a priestess offering salvation (cf. fig. V.3).

Perhaps the least obvious of the Chthonic goddesses is Minerva. As discoverer of the olive, Minerva has a close but subtle association with the earth through agriculture (Virgil, *Georgics* 1.18-9). Additionally, in the Roman version of the Orestes myth, the goddess makes a lengthy blessing upon the land in her acquittal of the titular character (Ennius, *Orestes* 157-61). Whereas we might have otherwise expected a goddess such as Ceres, Diana, or some other obvious nature-spirit to offer such a blessing, Minerva calls on plants to bloom, harvests to occur, and spring to come forth. Not only does the goddess have authority over the trial, and thus the legal process in general, she seems to have jurisdiction over agriculture. The interaction between humanity and the natural world would seem to lie within Minerva's control.

In contrast to her Celestial sister, understanding the Chthonic goddess means appreciating the subtle and yet profound power of the feminine. She is the fertile mother, bringing forth life.

The Chthonic goddess clearly has a strong connection with agriculture and nature, regardless of the specific deity. She is the nurturing sister, helping plant and gather. This form of the divine feminine incarnates life in all its forms, in every metaphorical permutation. She is the sensual lover, taking the seed. She is the devout priestess, blessing and purifying. She is the silent goddess, with power over life and death. The Chthonic goddess holds the entirety of the Roman world, yet does so without demand or expectation, performing her duties and making her decisions without decree.

Chapter VI

The Urban Goddess: Rome's Divine Governess

The Urban goddess represents our third category of the divine feminine in Roman mythology. While the Celestial and Chthonic goddesses stand in direct contrast to one another, the Urban goddess shares some qualities with her two counterparts while distinguishing herself in the specific group that she represents. She maintains a similar sense of authority as does the Celestial goddess, for example, while maintaining the Chthonic goddess' connection with the feminine. Where the Urban goddess differentiates herself from the other categories is in her identification with the civilized world. While the other representatives of the divine feminine in Roman myth embody the cosmic forces of creation or the life cycle of humanity, the Urban goddess represents the city, the very embodiment of everything that helps the Roman people stand above the primitive world surrounding them. Art, literature, government, organized warfare, artisanship, the institutions of family and community: all these concepts provide the Romans their sense of cultural identity and, collectively, fall under the domain of the Urban goddess. She is Rome itself, the living city and its people, embodying everything they are and do.

Because the Urban goddess, like the lives of the Roman people themselves, represents an amalgamation of many ideas, differentiating her from other categories of the divine feminine may prove difficult. The Celestial goddess embodies the power and authority of the divine feminine; first among goddesses, Juno *Lucina* looks down upon the world, providing light to

humanity (Virgil, *Georgics* 5.60).³⁶ When the Gauls threatened Rome, Juno's sacred geese alerted the city's defenders to an incoming raid (Livy 5.46). Whether as a Celestial or Chthonic goddess, Juno looks down upon the Roman people, guiding and protecting them so long as they remain faithful to her. In both cases, she sees to



Fig. VI.1: Minerva victorious.

the welfare of the Roman people. The differentiation of the Urban category appears in the manifestation of how this form of the divine feminine interacts with Rome. Rather than interacting with the weather or some other natural force, the Urban goddess remains fixed within the daily lives of the people.

In order to understand the nature of the Urban goddess, we should appreciate what distinguishes the imagery most obviously associated with her. Minerva a goddess tied directly to the city, probably best illustrates the *mythos* of the Urban goddess. As a goddess of civilized life and everything connected to it, Urban Minerva embodies everything that identifies Roman society (cf. Fig. VI.1). Perpetually dressed for war, this goddess stands ever ready, holding “her Aegis to protect her brother’s life” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.46-7). Unlike Bellona, her bloodthirsty Sabine colleague,³⁷ Urban Minerva embodies the military spirit of the Roman Legions, their implacable resolve, unshakable discipline, and indomitable courage. Romans glory

³⁶ Specifically, in her capacity as a cognate with Luna.

³⁷ The Romans imported Bellona from the Sabines and continued her cult at least into the 1st century C.E. Her influence as a goddess of war fluctuated against Minerva and Mars from one commander to another and one period to another (Livy 8.9, 10.19, and 28.9; Lucan 7.569; and Servius 9.53).

at war and their goddess is no different. Urban Minerva receives the spoils of defeated enemies from victorious commanders and thrills to gladiatorial combat during her festivals (Livy 45.33 and Ovid, *Fasti* 6.205). She is patron to both the skillful crafts and the liberal arts of Rome, to leadership, and to people of intellect (3.4-10 and 3.815-21). Slaves trained in her arts hold the highest value, and Romans of skill give thanks to this Urban goddess (Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.284 and Varro 7.28). Minerva even receives credit for having invented mathematics (Livy 7.3 and Ovid, *Fasti* 3.815-34). Anything overt that a visitor may observe about Rome upon viewing the people going about their lives owes to the influence of Minerva. As an Urban goddess, she embodies all the ideas, the values, the very identity of Rome; everything that separated them as a culture from the outside world is attributable to the Urban goddess.



VI.2: Venus as a bride.

As discussed earlier, the Chthonic goddess represents the strongest manifestation of femininity for the divine feminine. She is the embodiment of womanhood in a goddess. This idea, combined with the Chthonic goddess' dominion over humanity's life cycle, could lead us to include marriage within that category. We must consider, however, how fundamental the family is to Roman society. Cicero himself stated, "the first bond of society is marriage" (*On Duties* 1.17). If the Urban goddess does represent the collective ideals of Roman civilization, then it would seem that she must also embody the institution of marriage (cf. fig. VI.2).

With very little effort, we find multiple Roman goddesses with influence on daily life in Rome. Urban Juno is the patroness of Roman weddings. As the protector and patron of Rome's women, the queen of the gods involves herself in every aspect of female life, with multiple *cognomina* associated with the nuptial ceremony.³⁸ Besides this clear example of a marriage-goddess, however, other examples of the divine feminine lend their support to the institution. Venus, as the force *par excellence* of reproduction, often concerns herself with proper marriages in order to maintain the strength of the Roman people. Many young brides among the lower classes, for example, cut off a lock of their hair in dedication to Venus *Calva*.³⁹ By whatever name the Romans called her, the Urban goddess clearly had a strong influence over their lives.

Arguably the greatest influence, the longest-lasting impact Rome has had upon the western world is its legal system. The notions of governance and jurisprudence practiced in Rome and her territories continue to resonate even today. Roman law being such an important part of Roman life, it seems reasonable that we should then discover representations for it within the *mythoi* of the Urban goddess. Consuls sacrificed annually to Juno *Sospita*, the representative deity for not just Rome, but many cities in Latium (Cicero *Pro Murena* 41-90, Herbert-Brown 33-40, and Ovid, *Fasti* 2.50-68). The queen of the gods offers guidance, protection, and power to the faithful leaders of Italy. Juno *Moneta* offers innumerable warnings to the people, from imminent Gallic attack to earthquakes and other natural disasters (Augustine 7.11, Livy 4.7, 4.20, 6.20, and 7.28). Beyond just the petty jealousies of her Hellenic predecessor or the

³⁸ Juga, Domiduca, Iterduca, Pronuba, Cinxia, Prema, Pertunda; these are just a few of the most common surnames attached to Juno for marriage purposes (Arnobius 3.7, Augustine 6.1, and 11; and Virgil *Aeneid*, 4.166, and 457).

³⁹ Both Servius and Macrobius attribute this custom to the tradition in which, during the siege of the Gauls, the women of Rome cut off their hair for the production of bow strings (Servius 1.724; and Macrobius 2.70).

tyrannical machinations of the Phoenician,⁴⁰ Urban Juno is prophetic, powerful, proactive, and protective. Even Diana, untamed guardian of the wilderness, had an Urban incarnation. Urban Diana is the protectress of all the lower classes of Roman society, offering comfort to those beyond the common concern of the citizenry. Rome even celebrated a Day of Slaves each year, in which master must give gifts to slave, and employer to employee.⁴¹ Because Diana's original worshippers were the Sabines and other conquered or otherwise absorbed, non-Roman Latin cultures, Diana embodies not just the outside in Roman myth, but the outsider, the groups that do not speak our language, honor our gods, or know our ways. Even these people have representation with the Urban goddess.

The Urban goddess embodies everything that made Rome civilized. She helped the Romans identify their city and themselves as separate from the outside world. Juno not only presides over weddings and governance, but she also differentiates the role of a goddess in Italy versus Greece, Asia, or Africa. Diana protects the outsiders of Roman society, drawing a clear distinction between what is Roman and what is not, but at the same time, she brings them into the city, drawing a path for their eventual Romanization. The Urban goddess represents the civilized and civilizing aspects of life. The Urban goddess not only stands as councilor and

⁴⁰ Besides the various Italian incarnations of Juno, Etruscan Uni, Hellenic Hera, and Phoenician Astarte appear to be the largest contributors to what eventually becomes the Juno of Rome. Uni is a passionate lover of her king and appeared his equal among the council of the Etruscan gods, contributing to Juno's influence in the Roman pantheon. Hellenic Hera contributes the classic myths of her jealousy towards her husband's philandering. The Italians already had a strong sense of Juno as the dominant force in the world prior to Hellenization, contributing to Juno's authority. Phoenician Astarte, a strongly sexual and often violent goddess, seems to have contributed much to the independent streak in some Juno myths, as we see in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The best evidence for the synchronicity among these various goddesses comes from the gold tablets from Uni's sanctuary at Pyrgi in Etruria. These tablets name and describe the goddess in various languages, using region-specific identifiers such as Hera in Greek and Astarte in Phoenician (de Grummond 78-80).

⁴¹ Occurring in August, the Day of Slaves commemorated the dedication of Diana's temple. According to tradition, Servius Tullius allowed Sabines and other Latin cultures to build themselves this temple upon their arrival in Rome (Dionysius 4.26, Livy, 2.32 Martial 12.67, and Plutarch 100).

lawgiver, but as artisan and warrior. Every trait we may assign to the Roman man, we may also identify with the Urban goddess since she is the patroness of everything that is civilized about Rome.

Chapter VII

The Untamed Goddess: Rome's Wild Child

As we saw between the Celestial and Chthonic goddesses, a strong contrast exists between the Urban goddess and her counterpart in Roman myth, the Untamed goddess. Marking a strong counterpoint to the divine feminine when manifested in the city, this final category demonstrates everything that is uncivilized about the Roman world. The Untamed goddess is terrifying, uncontrollable, and mysterious. Simultaneously, she is full of the power, potential, and threat of the unexplored regions lying just beyond the known world. She lives outside the reach or civilizing influence of man, removed from his authority or influence. The Untamed goddess neither recognizes nor tolerates the sovereignty of man. She is the divine feminine triumphant.

The most easily recognizable Untamed goddess is Diana. She surrounds herself with the spirits of nature in scenes of the unexplored Wilderness, as Actaeon discovers to his dismay (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.138). Untamed Diana embodies the mystery of divine nature, a power forbidden to man (cf. fig. VII.1). As the mistress of nymphs, surrounded by springtime imagery, Diana blends metaphors of



Fig. VII.1: The Death of Actaeon.



Fig. VII.2: The Mistress of Animals

untapped fertility and unapproachable maidenhood. Her celebrations in southern Italy and Sicily, forbidden to men, included wild dancing, singing, and other orgiastic rites.⁴² She is the final descendant of the pre-Hellenic Mistress of Animals (cf. fig. VII.2), in command of the fertility of nature and celebrated by orgiastic rites (Nilsson 503-40). Diana's myths seem to revolve themselves invariably around her status of

freedom, of being untamed and untamable. She helps the nymph Arethusa escape an overly amorous pursuer, for example, letting the girl disappear into the wilderness (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.610). She is the representative of all the potential of the unmarried virgin and all the danger of the unexplored forest, accompanied in myth by the young stag or the bear, symbolic of masculine, animal power. As the twin sister of Apollo, she contrasts sharply with that deity and his status as the patron of all things civilized (Campbell, *Goddesses* 109-17). While Apollo embodies music, culture, and all the things that bind together civilized man, his sister represents all those freedoms from civilized life, including, potentially, death. Diana is the supreme huntress among the gods keeping company only with a select group of equally free

⁴² These rites were not restricted to Italy. Caryae and Sparta both provided records of similar festivals (Nilsson 503). Homer alludes to these rites in the *Iliad*, calling her the “noisy” goddess (23.208). The Homeric Hymn to Artemis also makes mention, saying that the goddess “leads and starts off the dance, and the rest, / pouring forth their ambrosial voices, sing about Leto with beautiful ankles” (27.18-9).

nymphs.⁴³ She does not recognize social rank, for she is equally the patron of slaves, plebeians, and any other subaltern group in Roman society.⁴⁴ The hierarchical social order of civilized Rome is anathema to Untamed Diana. Danger never drifts far from this goddess, as many mortals find when crossing her path (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.269 and 13.182). In fact, she delights in driving men to madness, should any dare damage her protected wilderness (Augustine 7.16 and Varro 5.74). Whereas other goddesses may offer patronage to devoted or respectful followers, some even becoming mothers to distinguished lines of Roman families, Diana stands apart. She is the patron and avenger of the untamed wilderness, embodying all the potential that Rome believed the world outside their city held.

The question of what lies beyond both haunted and tantalized the Romans. For them, the mysteries of the outside world were an irresistible siren song, calling them into ever-expanding quests, and the Untamed goddess embodied this synthesis of enticement and terror. Proserpina, the beautiful queen of the Underworld, presents to the Roman hero a lovely image of the mysteries beyond death (Cicero, *Nature* 2.26 and Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.127). Although Dis, by whatever name he employs, embodied the Underworld itself, it is to his dread queen that visitors pay homage and offer gifts. We may easily ask the question of which deity is dominant in the Roman Underworld. Certainly the people of Rome referred to the kingdom of the dead by its

⁴³ Callisto, the nymph that suffered Juno's wrath, was one of Diana's attendants until she succumbed to Jupiter's lust and was cast out. In Roman myth, the natural places of the world, such as springs and groves, were thought to be sacred to and protected by Diana and her nymphs (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.153-74 and 4.756-67; and *Metamorphoses* 2.412-45).

⁴⁴ Some debate continues over the extent of Diana's cult in Rome. Admittedly, she does not figure prominently in Latin literature, aside from direct Hellenic imports, until the 1st century B.C.E., and then mostly just in reference with other goddesses to natural processes. Catullus, for example, refers to her as Juno *Lucina* in c.34, in reference to the moon in control of the menstrual cycle. Secondary evidence exists, however, of her prominence among the lower social orders. As mentioned above, the Sabines and Latins brought the Diana cult with them. In addition, every year, the "Day of the Slaves" festival celebrated to Diana by slaves, freedmen, and other lower social orders occurred at her temple on the Aventine (Dionysius 3.43 and Martial 12.67).

ruler, Dis. Even swift Mercury, who carries souls into the afterlife, has some influence in the Underworld. Untamed Proserpina, however, along with her mother, Ceres, holds the key to immortality and potential reincarnation (Servius 4.609 and cf. fig. VII.3). A man may bow to whichever patron god he chooses, but if he wishes peace in the Elysian Fields, then two goddesses truly hold his final destiny. These two goddesses, mother and daughter, control the secrets to life and death in Roman myth, with special festivals dedicated to one or both of the



VII.3: Ceres and Proserpina, at opposite points in life.

Untamed goddesses upon the departure of a spirit to ensure its safe arrival in the afterlife (Arnobius 7.22 and Ovid, *Fasti* 4.629-33).

Proserpina and Ceres are not the only goddesses to have power over death, though. Juno may grant an even greater release from mortality, for it is she that has sovereignty over the godhead (Herbert-Brown 58-9). While other cultures explored the idea of their particular queen of the gods having some power to grant immortality, the Romans embraced this concept fully. For example, they imported the Hellenic myth of Hera nursing an infant Heracles, granting the hero his god-like strength. Significance differences appear, however, between the Greek and Latin versions of this myth. Queenly Hera consents to nurse an infant Heracles at the request of Zeus. Untamed Juno, though, only grants Hercules his godhead after he proves his valor as an adult. In fact, Etruscan tradition indicates that the Untamed goddess battles the hero herself,

regardless of any decisions by the king of the gods.⁴⁵ Unlike the Greek myth, however, in which Athena and Hermes bring the child to Hera and the queen of the gods consents to nurse the future hero, in the Latin myth. While other gods may adjudicate, or even demand, the deification of a mortal, and Jupiter may even decree such an event, only Juno holds the power to make such a thing come to pass. Romulus himself, destined to become the god Quirinus, could not achieve his godhead until granted such by Untamed Juno (Ennius, *Annales* 1.62-3). Even Aeneas, destined for kingship and veneration, had to continue in his suffering; not even Jupiter could end his war with Latins, until the queen of the gods relented and allowed fate to proceed (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.110-6 and 12.954-1000). The Trojans could only find peace and Rome eventually achieve its destiny, once Jupiter met Untamed Juno's demands. Any great figure from Roman myth must please Untamed Juno to earn his godhead and be freed forever from death.

No matter the route a Roman's life may take, he is surrounded by the Untamed goddess. She stands just outside the city walls, tempting him away from the organized orthodoxy Roman life. As enticing as the Untamed goddess is, she simultaneously guards those protected, sacred areas where man is forbidden to enter, where he is either too unprepared or too savage to appreciate. As fully feminine as the Chthonic goddess may be or as fully regal the Celestial, the Untamed goddess has her power from throwing off the fears and restrictions of civilization. She

⁴⁵ One could easily debate the Roman versions of the Hercules myths. They vary greatly from one source to another. The few commonalities are that they draw heavily from the Etruscan traditions and often mitigate the animosity between Hercules and Juno. The Etruscan tradition of these myths has Hercules confront challenges set by Uni, ultimately facing the goddess herself and earning his immortality by suckling at her breast. Ovid, in *Metamorphoses*, dispenses with much of Hercules' backstory, saying only that the hero claims to be a son of Zeus, that queen Juno is without hatred for him, and that the goddess, herself, sends Hercules on his many adventures (9.15-22). de Grummond makes a detailed analysis of the available Etruscan material on the hero's representation in myth (180-8).

worries not of marriage, of children, nor even of death. She is the divine feminine of the perpetual present.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

We have examined four categories of the divine feminine in Roman mythology, Celestial, Chthonic, Urban, and Untamed. Regardless of the specific myth or the period from which that myth originates, we can appreciate the overarching themes that appear to hold true through Roman mythography. The Celestial goddesses of Rome exercise great authority and sovereignty, while their Chthonic incarnations appear deeply feminine, involved with the lives of the Roman people. The Urban goddesses embody all the institutions and values that identified the culture of Rome both to themselves and to the outside world, while the Untamed goddesses embody that world beyond and all of its mysteries. These basic concepts, rather than restricting the interpretation of myth, can aid in the understanding and further exploration of Roman mythography.

Rather than trying to minimize our understanding of these goddesses in terms of specific surnames or metaphors found with a single work or author, we see the overarching themes that manifest within Roman mythography as a whole. Juno may be Lucina in a poem by Catullus and Regina in Virgil's epic, but that should not confuse our understanding of the goddess. The Romans understood this manifestation of the divine feminine, not simply from a nametag, but firstly from how she manifested herself in the universe. The polynomial nature of any Roman deity was not meant as a limiting factor, one that separated specific individuals from one another, but rather aided an amalgamated culture in articulating manifestations of a generalized divine

feminine agency. Thus can Venus appear as a sultry seducer of men and sexual fertility goddess in Ovid's work, while to Virgil, she is a mother and patroness of Rome itself. The Romans would not struggle with this change in personality, nor with a variety of *cognomina* assigned to the goddess, since in each case the various incarnations are simply different incarnations of the same, animating force. These manifestations of Venus, along with all of the other manifestations of the divine feminine, only assume specific characterizations in Roman mythology for specific narratives. Otherwise, the Romans understood the emanation of divinity as a much more basic, animistic force, incarnate to varying degrees with every culture's belief systems.

Rather than applying undue weight to Greek or any other contributing mythology, we can understand that the Romans had a unique, though inclusive, system of myths that aids in our understanding of their worldview. The major deities of Latin myth all demonstrate applicability to any number of mythological groups through various metaphors. Celestial Juno is the queen of the gods with sovereignty over the universe, reminiscent of Phoenician Astarte. Chthonic Ceres acts as a mother to the people, similar to the Nordic Freyja. Urban Minerva is violent and dominating but also creative and ingenious, like the Etruscan Menra or the Hellenic Athena. Untamed Diana lives in the world beyond the settlements of Rome much as the Minoan Mistress of Animals lived beyond the palace-complexes of the Bronze Age Aegean. These symbols do line up within their respective categories, but as we have seen, they also fall into other groups irrespective of a superficial identity. Within the context of Rome's specific, cultural mythography, these mythological categories offer a better understanding of their cultural context. Untamed Juno has little in common with the jealous Hellenic Hera. Celestial Proserpina rules over the Underworld like the Nordic Hella, but can also grant reprieves from death as Untamed

Proserpina. The cultural context of these myths is critical in differentiating the goddesses from their cross-cultural counterparts, preventing all too frequent misidentifications.

If our theory of these four categories is correct, then it should be further applicable in Roman mythography. Beyond the major goddesses such as Juno, Minerva, and so on, we should be able to apply these four categories to the lesser, more abstract deities such as the *Carmenae*, *Acca Larentia*, *Rumina*, *Flora*, and others, often only mentioned in fragmentary texts or uncorroborated artwork. If our analysis of myths from intact works such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Aeneid* falls comfortably within the four categories, then we may extend our study into fragmentary Latin literature. Ennius' work and other, even earlier examples of myths of which we have only, at best, a few ill-connected lines, has often defied comprehensive analysis. The writer's translation of Ephemerus, mentioned in this analysis only with the assistance of citation and corroboration from later Roman authors such as Varro, presents a divergent view of the Roman gods. With the aid of the four-category theory presented here, mythographers may finally begin an analysis of more purely Italian myths without being burdened by the weight of Hellenization.

As an amalgamation of animism and anthropomorphism, Roman myths employed all of the traits of its originating cultures, not just those of Greece. Would the people of Rome view a story about Zeus and Hera in the same way as would an Athenian? Is it not reasonable to conclude that, as the Romans incorporated the disparate myths of other cultures, no matter how much or little they adapted those stories, their perception of them, their cultural contextualization of them, would differ? Our theory of the four categories presents the notion that the Romans, initially an agrarian, animistic culture, absorbed foreign myths and modified them into their own

mythology. Anthropomorphic goddesses merged into a generalized, animistic notion of the divine feminine to accommodate both the original belief system and the new myths.

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