

VENUS: TRENDS IN THE NUMISMATIC COMMEMORATION

M. A. Thesis – C. Ryan, McMaster University - Classics

VENUS: TRENDS IN THE NUMISMATIC COMMEMORATION OF THE STATE
GODDESS

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2016) Hamilton, Ontario (Classics)

TITLE: Venus: Trends in the Numismatic Commemoration of the State Goddess

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NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 112

Abstract

Venus is one of the most famous goddesses of the Roman pantheon, known for her grace and beauty. Her likeness was recreated countless times in a variety of different media. She was depicted in many ways on coinage, and was called several different names by the inscriptions: Venus Genetrix, Venus Felix, and Venus Victrix. By studying the whole collection of coins of Venus from the late Republican period through AD 192, it is possible to gain an understanding of how depiction of the goddess corresponded to the title she was given on that coin. Using that information, one can then determine which aspect of Venus is represented in unlabelled images of her. Similarly, the data can be used to critique scholarly opinions on the original appearances of the lost cult statues of Venus Genetrix, Felix, and Victrix. There is a fair bit of overlap between the attributes of Venus Genetrix and Felix, as they share the common image of the goddess holding an apple. However, depictions of the deity holding an infant or unveiling herself are unique to Venus Genetrix, and images of birds are not seen on coins with epithets other than Venus Felix. Venus Victrix is the only aspect of the goddess to be shown with Mars on coinage, although this happens only rarely. Otherwise, she can be difficult to differentiate from other aspects of Venus. With observations such as these and others in mind, scholarly suggestions about the appearances of the lost cult statues seem less credible, and more open for debate.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Martin Beckmann, for all of his patience, and his time, and his assistance as I worked on my thesis. I am immensely grateful for all of his guidance. To my other committee members, Dr. Michele George and Dr. Spencer Pope, thank you for your insight and making me think about my research from other perspectives. I would also like to thank my family for their constant support. To my fellow graduate students, thank you for your companionship as we blundered through the ups and downs of graduate school together. Finally, thank you to David Nissim. I am truly grateful for your help organizing my data, your continual questioning, and your endless encouragement throughout the writing process.

Table of Contents

Abstract	pg. iii
Table of Figures	pg. vi
List of Abbreviations	pg. vii
Introduction	pg. 1
Chapter 1: Coins of Venus in the Late Republican Period	pg. 7
Chapter 2: Venus' Numismatic Record from Augustus to Hadrian: from Stagnation to Innovation	pg. 21
2.1 Augustus and the Julio-Claudian neglect of Venus on Coinage	pg. 21
2.2 The Flavian Contribution	pg. 24
2.3 New Life Under Hadrian	pg. 28
Chapter 3: A Surge in Popularity: Venus Under the Antonines	pg. 39
3.1 The Venus Coinage of Antoninus Pius	pg. 40
3.2 Marcus Aurelius and Numismatic Representations of Venus	pg. 47
3.3 Commodus' Contributions to the Veneration of Venus on Coinage	pg. 60
Chapter 4: Coins as Evidence for the Identification of Statues of Venus	pg. 69
4.1 Theories about the Cult Statue of Venus Genetrix	pg. 69
4.2 Possible Statuary Representations of Venus Victrix	pg. 79
4.3 The Cult Statue of Venus Felix in the Temple of Venus and Roma	pg. 84
Conclusion	pg. 89
Appendix	pg. 93
Bibliography	pg. 109

Table of Figures

Fig. 1 RRC 205	Fig. 38 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1057
Fig. 2 RRC 258	Fig. 39 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1058
Fig. 3 RRC 313	Fig. 40 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1062
Fig. 4 RRC 320	Fig. 41 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1063
Fig. 5 RRC 349	Fig. 42 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1083
Fig. 6 RRC 357	Fig. 43 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1099
Fig. 7 RRC 359	Fig. 44 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 2193
Fig. 8 RRC 375	Fig. 45 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 162
Fig. 9 RRC 382	Fig. 46 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 163
Fig. 10 RRC 391.1	Fig. 47 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 164
Fig. 11 RRC 391.3	Fig. 48 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 167
Fig. 12 RRC 419	Fig. 49 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169
Fig. 13 RRC 424	Fig. 50 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171
Fig. 14 RRC 426.3	Fig. 51 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 172
Fig. 15 RRC 430	Fig. 52 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 174
Fig. 16 RRC 458	Fig. 53 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 959
Fig. 17 RRC 463.1	Fig. 54 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1000
Fig. 18 RRC 465.3	Fig. 55 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1166
Fig. 19 RRC 465.7	Fig. 56 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172
Fig. 20 RRC 468	Fig. 57 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1174
Fig. 21 RRC 480.4	Fig. 58 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1212
Fig. 22 RRC 482	Fig. 59 BMC IV Commodus 44
Fig. 23 RRC 485	Fig. 60 BMC IV Commodus 47
Fig. 24 RRC 494.6	Fig. 61 BMC IV Commodus 52
Fig. 26 RIC I Augustus 250a	Fig. 62 BMC IV Commodus 424
Fig. 27 RIC I Augustus 251	Fig. 63 BMC IV Commodus 439
Fig. 28 RIC I Augustus 367	Fig. 64 Venus Genetrix, courtesy of the Louvre online collections
Fig. 29 RIC II Vespasian 1077	Fig. 65 Ravenna Relief, courtesy of Roger Ulrich via Flickr
Fig. 30 RIC II Titus 386	Fig. 66 Sperlonga Relief, courtesy of Roger Ulrich via Flickr
Fig. 31 BMC III Trajan 696	Fig. 67 Algiers relief, courtesy of John Pollini via Flickr
Fig. 32 BMC III Hadrian 529	Fig. 68 Venus of Arles, courtesy of the Louvre online collections
Fig. 33 BMC III Hadrian 751	Fig. 69 Naked Aphrodite with a Sword, courtesy of Carole Raddato via Flickr
Fig. 34 BMC III Hadrian 920	
Fig. 35 BMC III Hadrian 944	
Fig. 36 BMC III Hadrian 1077	
Fig. 37 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 46	

All coin images are courtesy of the British Museum.

List of Abbreviations

BMC – H. Mattingly, R. A. G. Carson, and P. Hill, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*

CIL – *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

RIC – C. H. V. Sutherland, R. A. G. Carson, and H. Mattingly, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* Second Ed. Vol. 1; T. V. Buttrey and I. A. Carradice, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* Second Ed. Vol. 2

RRC – M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*

Declaration of Academic Achievement

The author declares that the content of this thesis has been completed by Caitlin Ryan, with recognition of the contributions of her supervisory committee consisting of Dr. Martin Beckmann, Dr. Michele George, and Dr. Spencer Pope, made during the writing and editing process.

Introduction

Venus is one of the key goddesses in Roman foundation mythology, being the mother of Aeneas, one of the originators of the Roman people. This idea was strongly emphasized in Vergil's epic poem, the Aeneid, which highlights the mythological past of the Romans leading towards the grandeur of the poet's own time. Images of Venus can be found all over the Roman world on various media, ranging from statues to wall painting to coins. Several temples were built for her in the city of Rome itself. She became a crucial part of state iconography, with various empresses being depicted in her guise, and with several emperors including her on their coinage.

By studying the varied depiction of Venus on coins, we can understand the way in which particular epithets in the legend correspond to the different attributes she is shown with in order to determine if certain attributes can be used to identify the aspect of the goddess on images without clear labelling. This may help to demonstrate why certain aspects of the goddess could be chosen to be displayed on coinage based on the contexts of their production. It can also help to fill in the sculptural record, as the cult statues for some of Venus' temples are missing, and other statues are fragmentary, allowing for hypothesizing on the original appearance of the sculptures.

My method is to go through coins of Venus from a three hundred year period through the rise and fall of several dynasties. I will track the use of a variety of attributes on her coins and the way they correspond with the epithets in the legends. In doing so, I will be able to track which attributes appear with only one epithet in order to determine

which attributes can be used to identify the various aspects of the goddess. Using this information, I will then critique scholars' hypotheses about the original appearance of the cult statues, as they largely base their interpretations upon single coin types. A similar methodology can be used to study other gods on coins, and the nature of the relationship between attributes and epithets. Furthermore, iconographic studies of the numismatic record such as this could help narrow down the identification of disputed images.

Venus is an ideal subject for an example of this kind of study because of the manageable volume of numismatic evidence available, and because of her unique relationship with the Julio-Claudians. It was thought that they had descended from her through her mortal Trojan son Aeneas. With this connection to the ruling family, Venus could become an imperial goddess even after the fall of the last of the Julio-Claudians. Indeed, images of her were used on coins by later rulers and dynasties, perhaps as a way of legitimizing their rule and ensuring continuity between their reigns. This lends insight into the relationship between the Julio-Claudians and their successors, with the latter continuously reproducing numismatic imagery from the first dynasty. Venus is also an ideal goddess to study because only three of her epithets can be found on coins before AD 200, allowing for clearer comparison between the attributes shown with each epithet. Furthermore, temples had been dedicated and built for each of these three distinct aspects of Venus which once housed cult statues. Each of these sculptures has subsequently been lost. Scholars continually speculate about the original appearance of these statues based on extant coin images.

Statuary evidence is rather problematic, as sculptures are often fragmentary, or statues discussed in writing from antiquity are missing from the archaeological record. They are also more difficult to date and interpret than coins because they usually lack any sort of labelling. Because of this, their interpretation is highly debated by scholars. On the other hand, inscriptions on coins make them relatively easy to date, and make the figures depicted on them more easily identifiable. The details of the images can also be difficult to interpret, but these can often be explained by the context of the time of a coin's minting. Furthermore, even if a coin is damaged there are sometimes multiple extant copies of it, or the type may have been reused and minted again at another time, making it easier to view the image as a whole despite the damage. Coins were continually struck, with new types being made each year, allowing for coinage to fill the temporal space between the commissioning of larger sculptural works of art.

Coinage is a particularly useful type of evidence about the Roman world because it provides insight into the way those in power wanted to be presented. When the portrait of a member of the imperial family is placed on the obverse of a coin, the viewer can automatically associate that figure with the ideas presented on the reverse. This can lead to questions about why the emperor would want to promote that association, and what contemporary events may have prompted it. These would typically present the imperial family in a positive light, playing to the ideals of the Roman audience. Hints about the events of an emperor's reign might even be included in the obverse legends, such as the addition of a place he had conquered to his list of titles, or the death and deification of a family member with the minting of coins with DIVUS/A in the legend.

I have decided to limit this study to coins from the late Republican period until the end of the Antonine dynasty in AD 192. During this time coins with Venus on them underwent several significant changes, such as transitioning from the goddess being shown opposite male portraits to female portraits exclusively, and the addition of her name, and later epithets, to the coin legends. The image of Venus on coins rose and fell in popularity drastically during this time span, with the relative popularity of the goddess at the end of the Republic and by the middle of the second century AD bookending a period lacking in coins of Venus altogether. This span provides a substantial amount of evidence, and allows room for speculation about the reasons behind any dramatic increases or decreases. Essentially, this period of time demonstrates a clear progression of Venus' depiction on coins from the earlier, more ambiguous types minted by a variety of minor state officials in self-promotion, to the later, more clearly defined depictions promoting positive images of the imperial family that aligned with the moral ideals of the Roman public.

Current scholarship on this topic has mostly been limited to studies of sculpture and portraiture, often in regards to imperial women being depicted in the guise of Venus in sculpture.¹ While this is certainly valuable, it does not provide much information about the iconography of the goddess or how she is depicted. Rather, scholarship tends to focus more on why these women would be likened to Venus. Few scholars have focused their studies on coins, instead using them only in order to supplement the gaps in statuary

¹ Kleiner 1981, Matheson 1996, Wood 1999, pg. 119.

evidence.² Furthermore, the reasoning for assigning particular epithets to sculptures is rarely explained, other than by inviting comparison with another work of art said to depict the same aspect of the goddess.³ This can prove problematic when many monuments are said to be replicas of others, creating questions about the original work, and making it difficult to create a timeline of works. The various aspects of Venus herself are also rarely discussed other than with respect to works of art, or the origins of the goddess. There is little scholarship on the rituals of her worship, or the mythology behind the development of most of the aspects of Venus, other than her role as the mother of the Julian clan through Aeneas and the Trojan War.

A great deal of the information used for this project came from the extensive Roman coin catalogues of the British Museum, as well as the *Roman Republican Coinage* by Michael Crawford, and the *Roman Imperial Coinage* by Mattingly, Carson, and Hill. By compiling all the data about coins of Venus from the Republican period until AD 192, it became possible to analyze the way in which the attributes of Venus correspond to her various epithets. By understanding the corpus of Venus coinage from this timespan as a collective it becomes possible to notice patterns in the way she is presented. This allows for informed hypotheses to be made about unidentified images of the goddess, whether on coins or other media, in order to determine which particular aspect, if any, was being venerated. The context around the depictions of Venus without labels is often crucial to understanding why one aspect might be more popular than another in a given year. It can

² Harcum 1927, Pollini 1996.

³ Zanker 1988, pg. 196-98; Mattingly BMC III pg. 356.

also help to inform why some attributes may be paired with epithets that might initially seem illogical. In essence, it can be difficult to interpret a single coin in isolation, but clues can be taken from the context of its minting, and from the group of coins as a whole.

Chapter 1: Coins of Venus in the Late Republican Period

Venus became one of the key figures of the imperial Roman pantheon despite the fact that she was not initially a principal goddess, as there are no records of priesthoods or festivals dedicated to her in archaic Rome. She has been thought to have originated in early Rome as a garden divinity, protecting vegetation and fertility.⁴ However, another popular theory is that she began as a personification of abstract charm, often associated with earning favour from the gods by honouring them. This idea comes from the common root that her name shares with *venia* (grace or favour) and *veneratio* (reverence or veneration). Venus came to be conflated with older Italian deities such as Mefitis and Cloacina, as well as the Greek Aphrodite, through shared epithets and mythology.⁵ While Venus seems to have been worshipped at shrines outside of Rome in the fourth century BC, the first temple to be built for her inside the city was not dedicated until 295 BC. From then through to the first century BC her prominence seems to have grown increasingly as temples in Rome were continually dedicated to her under the epithets Obsequens (indulgent), Erycina (from Eryx), Verticordia (heart-turner), Felix (happy), Victrix (victorious) and Genetrix (ancestress).

The last of these is crucial to understanding the dynastic ideology that became prominent in the late Republican and early Imperial periods. The Romans claimed to be descendants of Aeneas, a mythological founder of Rome, and a son of Venus. The Julian

⁴ Schilling 1954, pg. 13.

⁵ Schmidt 1966, pg. 193.

clan in particular believed that their lineage led directly back to the goddess and they used this association to legitimize their power. Because of this ancestral connection to the foundation of Rome, Venus was depicted both as a mother figure and as a sacred guardian of the people. Images of her started to become more common on coinage in the first century BC as she became the favourite deity of several important political figures. This reached a peak under Julius Caesar, who could claim special favour from Venus as her descendant.

The veneration of Venus as a divine protectress of the Roman people began in the early first century when Sulla chose her as his patron goddess, although he did not claim her as a blood relative. Nevertheless, he added his association with Venus to his list of titles, calling himself ἐπαφρόδιτος, or beloved of Aphrodite.⁶ To promote this connection, he had coins minted which featured her on the obverse. As Sulla's power grew in the early first century BC, so did the number of coins depicting her. Until this point, Venus had rarely appeared on coinage. There are five coin types (with several slight variations) of Venus prior to Sulla's emergence as a powerful politician, some of which were minted by his ancestor P. Cornelius Sulla. These date to between 151-103 BC. In the few instances when she was shown, she was represented solely on the reverse, either as a figure head on the prow of a ship or driving a *biga*, a chariot pulled by two horses.⁷ On the other hand, there are six coin types minted while Sulla was at the height of his power,

⁶ Beard et al. 1998, pg. 144; Plutarch, *Sulla* 34.2; Appian *Civil Wars* 1.97.

⁷ RRC 205, 258, 313.1-2, 320.

during and between the years of his consulships and dictatorships (87-81 BC).⁸ A similar bust image continued to be used even in 79 BC after his retirement.⁹

As Sulla's favourite goddess, Venus' bust was given a position of honour on the obverse of the coinage minted during his time. Because only her head appears there, very few distinct features can be associated with Sullan obverse depictions of Venus. Despite the lack of attributes or legends specifically identifying the goddess in obverse images, her hairstyles and jewellery remain relatively consistent with each other and with depictions in which she is more easily recognised by the accompaniment of her son Cupid.¹⁰ He is the only specific attribute with which she is presented on Republican obverses. On occasion Cupid is shown holding a palm branch, as he is on this coin. The reverse of this particular coin type shows two trophies. It is possible that this coin was minted to commemorate Sulla's victories during the first Mithridatic War because its issuing ca. 84-3 BC corresponds with the end of the war, and because the presence of the palm branch could represent victory.¹¹

Other Sullan coin types with busts of Venus have symbols of wealth and fertility, such as ears of corn and *cornucopiae* (horns of plenty).¹² These are likely meant to show how the Roman state prospered under Sulla's influence, while the image of Venus on the other side would remind the viewer of Sulla's divine right to rule with the goddess as his

⁸ RRC 349, 357, 359, 360, 375, 376.

⁹ RRC 382. See Fig. 9.

¹⁰ Cp. RRC 357 and 359. The hairstyle is also similar to the one that Venus is shown with on the reverse of Antonine coinage. In addition, the later coinage includes legends confirming the identity of the goddess as Venus Genetrix: cp. BMC Antoninus Pius 1057.

¹¹ Livy 10.47.3.

¹² RRC 357, 375, and 376. See Fig. 6 and 8.

supporter. On the other hand, it is also possible to interpret these motifs as representations of Venus' role as a goddess of fertility, especially considering her origins as a guardian of gardens. Near the end of his life, a temple to Venus was built in Pompeii following Sulla's designation of the town as a new colony of Rome.¹³ As a result of his associations with Venus and his commemorations of her, Sulla set a pattern for future aspiring politicians.

Like Sulla, Pompey the Great also viewed Venus as a patron goddess, as coins of her were minted by his supporters, and as he himself built a temple in her honour. It is possible that Pompey was imitating Sullan imagery as a way to legitimize himself as strong general and key player in Roman politics. Pompey held three consulships between 70 and 51 BC, and was governor of the province of Hispania in between holding office in Rome itself. A coin of 57 BC, during his governorship, shows a bust of Venus on the obverse which resembles those minted by Sulla. Furthermore, a building which is likely the temple of Venus at Eryx appears on the reverse.¹⁴ While the two images work together to promote the sanctity of the goddess, the identity of the moneyer, C. Considius Nonius, emphasizes Pompey's succession of Sulla as a noteworthy devotee of Venus. Nonius was an associate of Pompey and a member of a family which had strongly supported Sulla. Nonius' minting of this coin shows that he was likely an ally of Pompey by circulating images of Pompey's preferred goddess.¹⁵ As a supporter of both Pompey and Sulla, Nonius created a link between the two by minting coins of their shared patron

¹³ Schmidt 1966, pg. 194; Rives 2002, pg. 298.

¹⁴ RRC 424. See. Fig. 13.

¹⁵ Crawford 1974, pg. 448.

deity, making Pompey Sulla's successor as one of her chief devotees. The following year another moneyer displayed the connection between Pompey and Venus by putting the symbols from the general's signet ring on the reverse of a coin featuring a bust of Venus on the other side.¹⁶ The identity of this moneyer, Faustus Cornelius Sulla, also suggests a strong relationship between Sulla and Pompey, as the mint master himself was both the son of Sulla and the son-in-law of Pompey, proving that there was a familial link between the two generals in addition to their connection in the realm of politics.

In addition to promoting the image of Venus on coinage, another way in which Pompey showed reverence to the goddess was by building a temple in Rome to Venus Victrix in 55 BC.¹⁷ In the same year as the construction of the temple, a coin was struck showing the bust of Venus on the obverse, and an unidentified woman in armour on the reverse holding a spear and leading a horse.¹⁸ It is very unlikely that she is Venus because the goddess does not typically appear on coins wearing armour. Furthermore, the only times that she is shown with horses on coins depict her driving a chariot. The military associations on the reverse in combination with the portrait of Venus on the obverse suggest that this coin could commemorate the dedication of Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix.

The third republican leader to follow this pattern was Julius Caesar. He had coinage minted with the image of Venus on it, just as Sulla and Pompey did. Although

¹⁶ RRC 426/3; Crawford 1974, pg. 450; Dio 42.18.3. See Fig. 14.

¹⁷ Beard et al. 1998, pg. 144-45; Orlin 2007, pg. 68.

¹⁸ RRC 430. See Fig. 15.

Caesar was not the moneyer, an issue of coinage with the legend C. CAESAR IMP. COS. ITER. (Gaius Caesar the Commander, consul a second time) appeared in 47 BC on the obverse of a coin showing a bust of Venus, directly linking the Caesar with the goddess. Rivalling Pompey and his temple of Venus Victrix, Caesar vowed to build his own temple to Venus in 48 BC at the battle of Pharsalus where the two men led their armies into civil war. Caesar may have done this to challenge his opponent for the favour of their patron goddess, particularly since the initial dedication was to Venus Victrix.¹⁹

However, Caesar's connection to Venus was much stronger than Pompey's because of his mythological lineage linking him to the goddess as her descendant. He had already emphasized this relationship in a funerary speech for his aunt which explicitly joined the Julian family to the ancient line of kings, and to Venus herself.²⁰ This association allowed Caesar to surpass both Sulla and Pompey with respect to their links with the divine patroness. Such a connection to a god or mythological Trojan ancestor was not unique to the gens Iulia, but was a technique used by *populares* to legitimize themselves, while older families would emphasize their relations to well-known historical and political figures.²¹ Republican coinage is general evidence for this, as many of the noble-born moneyers would depict the deeds of their famous ancestors on their coinage.²² An example of this is a coin minted in 103 BC by L. Iulius Caesar, an ancestor of Julius Caesar the dictator. The head of Mars wears a helmet on the obverse while Venus

¹⁹ Appian BC 2.10.68.

²⁰ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 6.

²¹ Rüpke 2006, pg. 222.

²² Crawford 1974, pg. 730.

holding a sceptre drives a *biga* of Cupids on the reverse.²³ Both of these gods were considered to be ancestors of the Julii, with Venus being the mother of Aeneas, originator of the Roman people, and Mars as the father of Romulus and Remus, the founders of the city of Rome.²⁴ By placing these deities on his coinage the moneyer was able promote the nobility of his lineage, which could help his career in politics to advance.

With this being the case, it is unsurprising that Caesar would dedicate his temple to Venus' aspect as the originator of his clan and the Roman race. The building project had been vowed by Caesar at the Battle of Pharsalus. When it was built in 46 BC, it was dedicated to Venus Genetrix as Caesar's ancestral goddess, not Venus Victrix as he had vowed at Pharsalus. The dedication of this temple marks the first time that the word Genetrix was given as an epithet to any Roman goddess, although the term had been used already by Lucretius in reference to the goddess.²⁵ However, by using it at a temple of Venus in Rome, Caesar was effectively creating a new official public cult and aspect of the goddess.²⁶

It is reasonable to suggest that the ten Venus coin types minted circa 46 BC may indicate the commemoration of this temple.²⁷ While her bust is on the obverse of the majority of these coins, thus not having room for a wide variety of attributes, the opposite side often shows symbols of a triumph, such as personified Victory, trophies, and captives. Although these images may invoke thoughts of war and Venus Victrix, they

²³ RRC 320. See Fig. 4.

²⁴ Zanker 1988, pg. 195.

²⁵ Lucretius 1.1.

²⁶ Weinstock 1971, pg. 84-85; Pliny, Natural Histories, 35.156.

²⁷ RRC 458, 465.3, 4, 6a-d, 7 a-b, 468. See Fig. 16 and 18-20.

remain appropriately associated with the dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix as Caesar was celebrating a triumph at the same time.²⁸

One of the coins of 46 BC shows the bust of Venus on the obverse accompanied by Cupid.²⁹ Regardless of the victorious imagery of a trophy and captives shown on the reverse, this militaristic association does not detract from the possibility of the Genetrix aspect of this Venus because of the dating of the coin and because it is logical that a mother goddess would be shown with one of her children. On the other hand, trophies appeared opposite Venus' head on two reverse types from 61 and 56 BC, both years while Pompey was influential.³⁰ The later date is also only a year before Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix was built. This suggests that the dating of trophy reverse types cannot be used to firmly identify the aspect of the goddess on the obverse, since they appear around the time of the construction of both of the temples of Venus Victrix and Venus Genetrix.³¹

A coin dating to 47 BC, the year before the dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix (and a year after the vowing of the temple), shows the bust of Venus opposite an image of Aeneas carrying the palladium and his father.³² While both of the above types emphasize the goddess' role as a mother, the second takes this idea further and reminds the viewer of Venus as the ancestress of the Roman race, and as the mother of one of its founders. Furthermore, the inclusion of Anchises may suggest to the viewer the idea of

²⁸ Richardson 1992, pg. 166.

²⁹ RRC 468. See Fig. 20.

³⁰ RRC 419.1a-e, 426.3. See Fig. 12 and 14.

³¹ See chapter four for a discussion of the cult statue of Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix and trophy coins.

³² RRC 458. See Fig. 15.

patriarchal succession, eventually leading towards Caesar through the line of Aeneas. This is suggested by the inclusion of Caesar's name in the reverse legend. The presence of Anchises also emphasizes the Roman ideal of ancestral duty, which Aeneas often embodies. As Aeneas honours his father by carrying him to safety, so too is Venus revered by her descendant through her placement on this coin and through the temple being built for her. The palladium, as an icon of defence, may also remind viewers of Venus' protection over the Roman people. This would be particularly important for Caesar to promote during 47 BC, the year this coin was minted, since it immediately followed a period of civil war.

Despite the early usage of Venus images on coinage, it is difficult to tell whether the depictions of this period refer to any of her specific aspects. The bust images themselves do not reveal enough attributes to point to any particular epithets, while the legends do not even mention her name until 80 AD. Furthermore, the title Genetrix was not shown on coinage until ca. 128-32 AD.³³

In 44 BC when Caesar was appointed dictator for life, according to the legends of many of these coins which read CAESAR, DICT. PERPETUO (Caesar the Eternal Dictator), his own image replaced Venus on the obverse.³⁴ Meanwhile she was relegated to the reverse, where her image would remain, with a few exceptions, for the rest of the period with which this work is concerned. There she is usually pictured in full length,

³³ Legends mentioning the name Venus begin with RIC II 386, while the first instance of the title Genetrix appears on BMC Hadrian 529.

³⁴ RRC 480.7-16.

leaving more room for attributes to be shown with her, and allowing for more possibilities of identifying her aspects. The majority of these coins depict her standing, carrying a Victory in one hand and a sceptre in the other, sometimes with a shield to the side or at her feet.³⁵ The addition of the attributes to her new placement on the reverse of coins in 44 BC better allows for comparison to later coins which have legends that include epithets, making the Venus on these coins more easily identifiable.

The various moneyers from the time of Julius Caesar's dictatorship depict Venus on only five reverse types; four of which are slight variations on one basic image holding a Victory, which was described in the previous paragraph. The fifth shows Venus holding scales and a sceptre, with Cupid accompanying her. On the other side are the heads of the Dioscuri.³⁶ There is only one other coin type before the end of the second century AD which shows Venus with the twin gods, which was minted between 161 and 176 AD by Marcus Aurelius. This reverse, like many others which had been minted up until this point, has Venus holding a Victory, with a shield by her feet. The Dioscuri are thought to be depicted on the shield.³⁷ While their identification is uncertain (the two small figures do not appear with any detail), the legend clearly labels the main figure as Venus Genetrix. By comparing the usage of attributes of Venus on coinage from a variety of periods, it is possible to associate some of the earlier images with epithets found on the more defined legends of later coinage. Thus the Caesarian coin with the Dioscuri on the

³⁵ RRC 480.3-5, 7-16. See Fig. 21.

³⁶ RRC 463. See Fig. 17.

³⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 172. See Fig. 51.

obverse may depict Venus Genetrix on the reverse because that title appears on a comparable later coin.

By similar comparison, the four other reverse types which show variations of Venus holding a Victory and a sceptre resemble later coins of the second century AD labelled with the epithet Genetrix in the legend, depicting Venus with the same war-evoking attributes.³⁸ Some of these variations include a shield, like the one on the Antonine coin above, although it remains undecorated. Despite the fact that the shield is a tool of war, it is not accompanied by any other weaponry. Because of this, instead of having military connotations, the shield seems to emphasize Venus' defensive role as a protectress of Rome. It is important to note that this image is not exclusive to Antonine coins with the epithet Genetrix in the inscription, it also appears on coins from that era featuring Venus Felix.³⁹ The use of a single image with multiple legends complicates the comparison between Republican and later coin types. At least in this case it can be used help narrow down the possible aspects of the Venus on Republican coins, as this type does not appear on any Antonine Venus Victrix coins, diminishing the likelihood that Venus Victrix is depicted on the Republican coins.

After Caesar's death, one more coin was minted in 43 BC with his head on the obverse and a goddess holding a sceptre and caduceus on the reverse.⁴⁰ It is likely that this deity is Venus, based on the similarity of the drapery of her robes and her pose to

³⁸ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 173.

³⁹ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169-70, 957-58, and 1002-03. See chapter three for more details. See Fig. 49.

⁴⁰ RRC 485.1. See Fig. 23.

images of her from the previous year.⁴¹ This coin seems to have been minted in celebration of Caesar's life, as it was struck only shortly after his death, and he appears wearing a laurel. If the goddess is indeed Venus, her depiction on a coin commemorating Caesar demonstrates how strongly he had emphasized the connection between the two of them.

A second coin type of the same year has the head of Venus on the obverse, and Victory riding in a *biga* on the reverse. Although Caesar himself does not appear on this coin, it was also likely issued in his memory and similarly suggests the power of the relationship between himself and Venus. While many Caesarian coins show Venus holding Victory, this coin may be a variation on the same theme, which Crawford says can be used to identify the head on the obverse as Venus Victrix.⁴² However, if those earlier coins cannot firmly identify the Venus figure holding Victory as Victrix, that epithet may not be confirmed for the head in this issue either.

The importance of Venus to the Julian clan appears to have resonated with moneyers from the time, since in 42 BC a coin was minted with a portrait of Octavian, Caesar's nephew and appointed successor, on the obverse, and Venus on a chair holding Cupid and a bird on the reverse.⁴³ The association of Venus with a relative of Caesar denotes the recognition of her relationship to his clan as their ancestor, pointing towards the Genetrix aspect of the goddess. Cupid's appearance with his mother on this coin

⁴¹ Crawford also suggests that this could be Pax, 496.

⁴² Crawford 1974, pg. 496.

⁴³ RRC 494/6. See Fig. 24.

certainly seems to stress her maternal aspect. Octavian's name is absent from the legend, but instead C. CAESAR (Gaius Caesar) is written around his portrait. Upon his adoption, Gaius Caesar had also become Octavian's official name. The combination of this label with both images shows that Caesar links the other two figures together, on the one hand as a major propagator of imagery of Venus for his successor to imitate, and on the other hand through blood as a representative of the generations between the two. Another coin in the same series has a bust of Apollo on the obverse and Venus holding a mirror on the reverse.⁴⁴ Apollo was also thought of as a hereditary god of the Julians, so his appearance with Venus on this coin seems to highlight the family's devotion and relation to these gods. Therefore, this Venus would likely also be given the epithet Genetrix.

From the middle of the second century BC to the death of Julius Caesar, the number of coin types of Venus increased dramatically, with six different types minted in 44 BC alone, as opposed to the mere five which were issued between 151 and 103 BC. In addition, while it is difficult to associate bust images of Venus with any particular epithet, as time progresses she is depicted less with attributes of military connotations, and more as the ancestral goddess of the Julian clan and the Roman people. These changes occurred as a result of three major politicians of the late republic choosing her as their patron deity. While Sulla held power it was difficult to give any particular epithet to Venus' image. Later, under the influence of Pompey, the goddess was shown in her aspect as Venus Victrix, and during his own dictatorship Julius Caesar put forth images of

⁴⁴ RRC 494.34. It is interesting to note that this is the only example of Venus holding a mirror on coinage from the second century BC to the second century AD. See Fig. 25.

Venus Genetrix, the new title which he had given her when he dedicated a temple to this aspect. Although in many cases even coins minted by Caesar cannot confirm whether she is meant to be Victrix or Genetrix, her depiction alongside her children, Cupid and Aeneas, as well as Caesar himself, thought to be her descendant, suggest a certain familiar connection that is appropriate for an ancestral goddess.

Chapter 2: Venus' Numismatic Record from Augustus to Hadrian: from Stagnation to Innovation

2.1 Augustus and the Julio-Claudian neglect of Venus on Coinage

In contrast to the abundance of Venus coin types minted under Julius Caesar, only three were struck during the reign of his successor Octavian/Augustus, despite the fact that the latter held power in Rome for a significantly longer period of time.⁴⁵ Augustus is known for his building projects in Rome, supposedly having “found it built of brick and left it in marble”.⁴⁶ This included temples for Apollo, Mars, and the posthumously deified Julius Caesar, all of whom were considered to be patrons and ancestors of Augustus.⁴⁷ Like his predecessor, he promoted the godliness of his family and his divine right to rule, although with less emphasis on Venus, and more on the gods for whom he built temples. In particular this included minting coins of Augustus’ newly deified and adoptive father, who now provided a direct link between the imperial family and the will of the gods.⁴⁸ Divus Julius, or images related with him, thus appeared on many of the coins struck for him at the end of the Republic and at the beginning of the Principate.⁴⁹ Occasionally, this meant that depictions of Venus would appear on Augustus’ coins, since Julius Caesar had emphasized his connection to the goddess so strongly. None of

⁴⁵ Caesar’s heir will be referred to by his birth name, Octavian, when discussing events which took place before 27 BC. From that year and onward, he will be called Augustus.

⁴⁶ Suetonius Divus Augustus 28, translation by J. C. Rolfe, 1913.

⁴⁷ Suetonius Divus Augustus 92, Zanker 1988, pg. 195.

⁴⁸ Shotter 1979, pg. 48-49.

⁴⁹ Zanker 1988, pg. 34.

Caesar's coin types were reused, as Augustus created his own types which added himself into the divine lineage as Caesar's adopted son.

The first of Octavian's Venus coins, minted between 32 and 29 BC features the head of the emperor on the obverse, and Venus herself on the reverse holding a helmet and sceptre, with a shield, and leaning against a column.⁵⁰ To a similar effect, another coin from the same time shows a bust of Venus on the obverse and Octavian holding a spear while dressed in military clothing on the reverse.⁵¹ Essentially, the latter coin switches the sides which Venus and Augustus appear on. The two coins bear the exact same reverse legend, CAESAR DIVI F. (Caesar, son of a god), and neither has any writing on the obverse. This legend reminds viewers of Augustus' position in the Julian clan. His connection to Julius Caesar is clear, since he is the adopted son of a dictator deified after his death. However, because this legend accompanies an image of Venus, it is also possible that the inscription is hinting at the ancestral relationship directly between Augustus and the goddess. Although the gender of *divi* confirms that the god in question must be Divus Julius, the presence of Venus combined with the legend's emphasis on Augustus' familial role implies that she is a part of their family. With this being the case, it is possible that this Venus is Genetrix, despite the weaponry that both she and Octavian are shown with.

The two coins are part of series of six. Pax, Venus, and Victoria each appear on the obverses of three coins opposite a depiction of Octavian, and on the reverse of another

⁵⁰ RIC I Augustus 250a. See Fig. 26.

⁵¹ RIC I Augustus 251. See Fig. 27.

three coins, the obverses of which show Octavian's portrait. Zanker interprets the series as illustrating Octavian's speech at Actium, and calls this depiction of Venus his protectress, even using the title *Genetrix*.⁵² Although Octavian claimed that his reasons for war with Antony were not personal, he listed all of his rival's crimes against Octavia, his sister and Antony's wife. Dio recounts that Octavian said “μήθ' ὅτι τὴν ἀδελφὴν μου ὕβρισε, μήθ' ὅτι τῶν γεννηθέντων οἱ ἐξ αὐτῆς τέκνων ἡμέλησε, μήθ' ὅτι τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν αὐτῆς προετίμησε, μήθ' ὅτι τοῖς ἐκείνης παισὶ πάνθ' ὡς εἰπεῖν τὰ ὑμέτερα ἐδώρησατο, μήτε δι' ἄλλο μηδὲν ἐθελῆσαι αὐτῷ πολεμῆσαι.” “I was unwilling to wage war on him merely because he had insulted my sister, or because he neglected the children that she had borne him, or because he preferred the Egyptian woman to her, or because he bestowed upon that woman's children practically all your possessions, or for any other cause.”⁵³ Taking into consideration Dio's account of Octavian's defense of his sister, on these coins Venus can be seen as the divine guardian of the Romans and of the Julii as she helped Octavian to defeat Antony.

A third coin type from the time of Augustus, dating between 19 and 4 BC, depicts a draped bust of Venus on the obverse, while the reverse has the legend in the centre, surrounded by a *simpulum*, *lituus*, tripod, and *patera*. All of these are symbols of religious rituals and institutions, with the tripod and *patera* representing sacrifice, especially libation, and the *simpulum* and *lituus* signifying priestly colleges. The legend reads COS IMP CAESAR AVG V XI (Consul for the eleventh time Caesar Augustus the

⁵² Zanker 1988 pg. 53, see Cassius Dio 50.24-30

⁵³ Dio 50.26. Translation by E. Cary, 1916.

Commander).⁵⁴ In this case, although his image does not appear on the coin, Augustus is associating his name with his priestly honours and the act of sacrifice. This may be a way of presenting himself as *pius*, a trait very often associated with Aeneas by Romans. Here the connection between reverse and obverse, and emperor to goddess is more subtle, but nevertheless apparent if Augustus is compared to Aeneas. Although there is no specific iconography or text on this coin to suggest that the bust of Venus represents any one of her particular aspects, the implications of *pietas* on the reverse at least leaves open the possibility that this is Venus Genetrix.

The three types discussed are the only coins of Venus minted by the Julio-Claudian emperors listed in the RIC or BMC, which is surprising given the family's connection to the goddess, and the precedent set by Julius Caesar for using this for political advantage. Despite the lack of numismatic depictions of Venus between 4 BC and AD 79, some statues and relief carvings from this period are thought to have been representations of the divinity. These images in other media, and the publication of the *Aeneid* in the lifetime of Augustus suggest that the goddess remained an important part of Roman imperial self-representation, in spite of the lack of depictions of Venus on coins from this time.

2.2 The Flavian Contribution

The next emperor to make use of Venus on coins was Vespasian. In AD 79 he minted a coin with the head of his son Titus on the obverse, and an image of Venus on the

⁵⁴ RIC I Augustus 367. See Fig. 28.

reverse with a helmet and spear, leaning on a column, much like one of the coin types of Augustus described above. There are some small differences between the types, as the Augustan Venus holds a sceptre instead of a spear, and has a shield lying at her feet. However, the goddess' pose on both coin types remains unchanged, as does her drapery and the helmet she carries.

This type was struck in AD 79 by Titus himself, once with a shield, and with slight changes in the legends on both sides, reflecting Titus' ascension to the throne after his father's death that same year.⁵⁵ Venus' appearance on Flavian coinage may be a way of legitimizing their rule by looking back to the traditions of their predecessors, even though the Flavians did not share the same genealogical connection to Venus that the Julio-Claudians did. This validation is particularly important for the Flavians, who had risen to power despite their lack of aristocratic Roman ancestors. Furthermore, the use of an Augustan reverse type may be an attempt to suggest some continuity between the two dynasties. Vespasian had reused early imperial coin types, especially those of Augustus and Tiberius, throughout the entirety of his reign, beginning in AD 69.⁵⁶ This created a visual link between himself and the earlier emperors, which his son Titus seems to have continued through the minting of this Venus reverse type ten years later.

Around AD 80 a new coin was struck using the same Venus reverse type, however, instead of Titus' image on the obverse, his daughter Julia's face is depicted, with her own name appearing in the legend. Additionally, the reverse legend reads

⁵⁵ RIC II Vespasian 1077-78, Titus 13-16, 32-35, 51-54. See Fig. 29.

⁵⁶ Buttrey 1972, pg. 95-100.

VENVS AVG (Venus the Venerable), marking the first time that the goddess' name is used on Roman coinage.⁵⁷ It is striking that the name is not simply Venus, nor is she given any of her particular epithets, but is rather identified as Augusta, an incredibly common epithet used for a multitude of divinities, as well as women of the ruling family. While the precise significance of the term is still being argued by scholars, at the very least the title seems to emphasize a connection to the imperial family and state policies.⁵⁸ Through this Venus is explicitly identified as a goddess of the emperors, holding the same title that they do.

Many imperial women from Livia onwards held the title Augusta, including this Flavian Julia. The obverse legend emphasizes this connection, as both Julia and Titus are given this epithet. The legend reads IVLIA AVGVSTA TITI AVGVSTI F (Julia the Venerable daughter of Titus Augustus).⁵⁹ The title Augusta/us is repeated three times on this coin, once on the reverse and twice on the obverse, drawing a clear correlation in the viewer's mind between Julia, Titus, and Venus. This implies Venus' role as an imperial goddess. Instead of being the patron specifically of the Julian family, she may now be associated with the power of the emperors, despite the fact that the Principate now belongs to a different dynasty. The relationship is no longer familial or personal, but a patronage of the imperial family, regardless of their ancestry.

⁵⁷ RIC II Titus 386. See Fig. 30.

⁵⁸ Lott 2014, pg. 132-33. Lott does a good job of summarizing the discussion of the Augusta/us epithet, based mainly on Wissowa's opinion from 1902, and Fishwick's argument from 1991.

⁵⁹ Rarely some coins of the same type read IVLIA AVGVSTA T AVG F.

Although this was certainly not the first time that imperial women were depicted on the coinage of their sons, husbands, and brothers, this is the first time that one is pictured in conjunction with Venus. It seems to have been more common under the Julio-Claudians to associate empresses such as Augustus' wife Livia with Juno and Ceres, more matronly goddesses than Venus.⁶⁰ These deities were traditionally aligned with ideas of marriage, childbirth, and fertility, all of which were greatly esteemed, particularly in light of Augustus' promotion of family values. Nevertheless, Venus remained an important goddess in sculpture, as mentioned above. Looking back to her origins, she too maintains an aspect of fertility, more likely associated with young brides, so it seems fitting for the sixteen year old Julia to be aligned with her.

This same reverse type was minted one final time under the Flavians, in this case depicting the head of Domitian's wife, Domitia Longina on the reverse. She had also been given the title Augusta, as recorded in the legend of the coin.⁶¹ Although she was in her late twenties in AD 82 when the coin was minted, much older than Julia, Venus seems to have been an appropriate choice for a new mother. Domitia had given birth to the couple's only child just two years earlier, and had only recently become Augusta. At this time she would have been the main hope for producing a line of heirs for the continuation of the Flavian dynasty, and had recently fulfilled this wish with the birth of her son. As the mother of presumed generations of future emperors, it seems fitting that she would be associated with the divine originator of the first Roman imperial dynasty. However, a

⁶⁰ Rose 1997, pg. 13, see n. 51 on pg. 218.

⁶¹ RIC II Domitian 847.

year later her son died, and she was temporarily exiled from Rome. No later coins of her with Venus exist, possibly because of this failure to produce a surviving heir.

2.3 New Life Under Hadrian

After the Domitia coin was minted in AD 82, there was another gap in the numismatic commemoration of Venus until Hadrian's reign ca. AD 128, with three minor exceptions. The first was another coin minted in 82, with Julia's portrait on the obverse, and an image of Vesta on the reverse. She carries a sceptre and the Palladium. However, the reverse legend says VENVS.⁶² Buttrey states that this must be an error as many other extant coins of the same type read VESTA.⁶³ Venus does not appear on coinage with a Palladium except for one case in which she is on the obverse of a Republican coin that shows Aeneas carrying a Palladium and his father.⁶⁴ On the other hand, a temple of Vesta on the Palatine contained a Palladium, so she was more commonly associated with it on coinage.⁶⁵

The second and third exceptions are coins struck in AD 107 by Trajan which were restorations of earlier types. One is a coin minted by Julius Caesar, which shows Venus' bust on the obverse, and Aeneas carrying Anchises and the palladium on the obverse.⁶⁶ This coin clearly refers to the goddess as a mother, since her son and husband are shown in association with her. Moreover, it shows Trajan's recognition of the importance of this

⁶² RIC II Domitian 849.

⁶³ Buttrey and Carradice 2007, pg. 330, n. 98.

⁶⁴ RRC 458. See Fig. 16.

⁶⁵ Jones 1990, pg. 319.

⁶⁶ BMC III pg. 141, number 31 under 'Types Not in the British Museum'; Mattingly 1926, pg. 250.

role of Venus to the Roman race, since it was only one of two images that he chose to restrike.

Caesar's head and name appear on the obverse of the second restored coin. However, Mattingly points out that the reverse image, which depicts a half-dressed Venus holding a transverse spear and helmet while she and a shield lean against a column, was never struck by Caesar, but by Augustus and Titus.⁶⁷ This signifies that his connection to the goddess had been portrayed so strongly that even approximately 150 years after Caesar's death images of her were associated with him, regardless of their historical accuracy. While he may not have minted a coin of Venus with those exact attributes, such an image would have been appropriate for a coin commemorating one of his victories. Mattingly also points out that like Vespasian reminting coins of Augustus and Tiberius as discussed above, Trajan seems to make connections to both the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, promoting imperial continuity despite the change in imperial families and the civic turmoil that occurred between each new line of rulers.⁶⁸

The next major development in Venus coin types happened under Hadrian between AD 128 and 138, during which time he minted six different reverse images of the goddess, four of which are accompanied by legends clearly identifying particular epithets of the goddess. The remaining two coins do not include Venus' name. Hadrian's head appears on the obverse of four of the Venus coins, and his wife Sabina's portrait

⁶⁷ BMC Trajan 696; Mattingly 1926, pg. 260; RIC I Augustus 250a; RIC II Titus 13. See Fig. 26, 29, and 31.

⁶⁸ Mattingly 1926, pg. 270.

appears on the other two. She is featured on a reverse type of Venus Genetrix, which later emperors reused, and which scholars suspect represented the cult statue of the goddess, in addition to a type without a legend.⁶⁹ Hadrian's portrait is also shown on two types of Venus Genetrix, as well as one without her name, and one of Venus Felix, a title meaning "happy" or "lucky" which had not been associated with Venus until this point.⁷⁰ The type without a name in the legend with the bust of Hadrian on the obverse is considered by Mattingly to be the extant cult statue of Venus of Aphrodisias, accompanied by Cupid shooting an arrow.⁷¹ Since this depiction seems to refer to a statue in a particular place, this may be a coin commemorating a visit there on Hadrian's many travels.

The second reverse type from the reign of Hadrian without Venus' name is very similar to the type that was minted first by Augustus, then by the Flavians and Trajan. This reverse type shows Venus holding a spear and a helmet. In this case, as with a variation struck by Titus, she is also accompanied by a shield. Sabina's image appears on the obverse of the coin. Despite the lack of a reverse legend, Mattingly calls this type Venus Victrix.⁷² There is no precedent set by earlier coinage for this identification, and little is known about how Pompey's cult statue of Venus Victrix might have looked. According to Weinstock, the statue probably wore armour or was accompanied by

⁶⁹ Harcum 1927, pg. 141. BMC Hadrian 944-49, 1883-84, 1903. BMC Antoninus Pius 46, 145* (BMC IV pg. 24), 1061, 1120-23, 1132, 2164-65, 2168. BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172-73, 1187-88, 1225. BMC Commodus 44-46, 439.

⁷⁰ Boatwright 131. With Venus Genetrix: BMC Hadrian 529, 749* (BMC III pg. 334). With Venus Felix: BMC Hadrian 751. Without a name in the legend: BMC Hadrian 1077.

⁷¹ BMC Hadrian 1077. See Fig. 36.

⁷² BMC Hadrian 920, pg. 356. See Fig. 34.

weapons and trophies.⁷³ If this is the case, the statue would support Mattingly's claim that the goddess on this type is Venus Victrix.

On the other hand, Richardson suggests that the cult statue of Venus Victrix's iconography can be found opposite a bust of Caesar on coinage from 45-44 BC.⁷⁴ These coins mark the first time that the goddess' image appeared on the reverses of coins opposite a mortal. The Caesarian coins depict variations of Venus draped and holding a Victory in one hand and a scepter in the other, often with a shield at the bottom.⁷⁵ Without an epithet or the cult statue itself to compare to, this repeated coin image cannot be ascribed to one specific aspect of Venus. Certainly the attributes suggest a military connotation, which in early uses of the image might have related to contemporary events, but the reuse of this type by Hadrian, since it had already been minted by previous rulers, just seems to promote a sense of continuity between emperors and dynasties without any allusion to war.

One of the types labelled with an epithet is dedicated to Venus Felix, while the other four commemorate Venus Genetrix.⁷⁶ This marks the first time that the title appears on a coin of the goddess, and thus the first time that the image can securely be classified as a Venus Genetrix type without hypothesizing based on the moneyer or contemporary events. This makes it possible to associate the attributes depicted with the

⁷³ Weinstock 1971, pg. 83.

⁷⁴ Richardson 1992, pg. 411. RRC 480.3-5, 7-16. For more discussion of these coins, see Chapter 1 pgs. 7-8. See Fig. 21.

⁷⁵ RRC 480.3-5, 7-16. For more discussion of these coins, see Chapter 1 pgs. 7-8. See Fig. 21.

⁷⁶ BMC III pg. 379, number 12 under 'Coins not in the British Museum', BMC Hadrian 529, 749* (BMC III pg. 334), and 944 appear with the epithet Genetrix, while 751 is labelled as Felix. BMC Hadrian 920 and 1077 do not identify the goddess at all in the legend.

goddess with certain epithets, allowing for direct comparison of the different aspects of Venus.

The first of the three types officially inscribed with the name Venus Genetrix was minted between AD 128 and 132. A portrait of Hadrian appears on the obverse, with a reverse image of the half-dressed goddess holding a Victory and a sceptre while a shield and helmet are set on the ground. No numismatic depictions of Venus had shown her holding Victory since 44 BC in the dictatorship of Julius Caesar.⁷⁷ The only other time the two goddesses had been associated on coinage since then was on a coin struck a year later by L. Flaminius Chilo, who had also made coins of Caesar, with Venus on the obverse and Victory on the reverse.⁷⁸ Perhaps it is this recollection of Caesarian imagery that makes this a depiction of Venus specifically in her aspect as Genetrix. This Hadrianic coin type is similar to the last Republican coin of Venus, and may directly reference it. It is likely that any mention of Venus as a mother would make Romans living under Hadrian think of the temple which Caesar built and her connection to the imperial rulers of Rome. The type was struck again in AD 134-38, with some variation. The only difference on the reverse of this coin and the one above is that the face of Medusa is visible on her shield.⁷⁹ Hadrian's head appears on the obverse of both coins.

The second Venus Genetrix type shows Venus without any attributes, but facing forward with her hands raised.⁸⁰ Both of the Genetrix coins described above have busts

⁷⁷ RRC 480. See Fig. 21.

⁷⁸ RRC 485. See Fig. 23.

⁷⁹ BMC Hadrian 749* (BMC III pg. 334).

⁸⁰ BMC III pg. 379, number 12 under 'Coins not in the British Museum'.

of the emperor on obverse, continuing the association of the goddess with imperial rule, although the reverse images are not particularly unique and do not demonstrate anything which can be considered distinctive characteristics of Venus Genetrix.

In contrast, the third coin dedicated to Venus Genetrix appears opposite an image of Sabina, Hadrian's wife.⁸¹ As Boatwright points out, she and many of the other imperial women from the early second century AD were not born into prestigious families, but found their prominence in Roman society through marriage and the adoption of their husbands into the imperial household.⁸² Like many other imperial women before her, Sabina was also given the title Augusta on coinage. The reverse of this coin varies greatly from the other images of Venus minted by Hadrian, Trajan, and the Flavians. It shows the goddess unveiling herself with one hand while holding an apple in her other hand. It is striking that this is the only Venus coin of Hadrian to be minted opposite the face of an imperial woman. This could indicate an association of the empress with fertility, although this is not likely the case as she did not have any children. However, as Augusta she may be considered to be the mother or protectress of the Romans, which would make her connection to Venus Genetrix appropriate.

The apple on this third Hadrianic Venus Genetrix coin is likely a symbol of the mythological Judgement of Paris, which could serve as a reminder to the Romans of the Trojan roots which connect them to the goddess. The act of unveiling appears only on coins which identify Venus in the legend, either without an epithet or as Genetrix. Some

⁸¹ BMC Hadrian 944. See Fig. 35.

⁸² Boatwright 1991, pg. 518.

scholars believe that this coin type depicts the cult statue from Julius Caesar's temple of Venus Genetrix, especially because this image is labelled with the specific epithet, and resembles other statues which could be copies of the lost original by Arkesilaus.⁸³ Whether or not this is true, the legend and distinctive attributes on this coin begin to allow for comparison to images on coins with other names for the goddess. This is the first time that this iconography of Venus was used on Roman coinage. Furthermore, the attributes of the goddess on the other three Hadrianic Venus Genetrix types, a Victory, helmet, shield, and sceptre, all appear at least as early as 29 BC if not earlier. Therefore, keeping this in mind, the apple and undraping pose seem to be the first features which can be strongly associated with Venus' aspect as a mother.

The only other epithet for Venus which is used on Hadrian's coinage is Felix. There is one type with this title on it, which was struck between AD 134 and 138.⁸⁴ An image of the emperor appears on the obverse, and a depiction of the deity sitting on a throne with a Cupid and spear on the reverse. Cupid appears several times with his mother on Republican coinage.⁸⁵ However, he is not depicted on coins with her between 42 BC and AD 134. As noted above, Venus is always shown with a spear on the coin type repeated during the Flavian dynasty. Taking these precedents into consideration, it appears that Hadrian may be recalling older ideas of the goddess while also expressing some continuity with the reuse of the spear attribute used both by his immediate predecessor and the dynasty that was in

⁸³ Harcum 1927, pg. 143; Schmidt 1966, pg. 194. For other possible cult statues of Venus Genetrix, see Weinstock 1971, pg. 86, and Chapter 4.

⁸⁴ BMC Hadrian 751. See Fig. 33.

⁸⁵ RRC 313, 320, 349, 359, 391.1a, 391.3, 463, 468, 494.6.

power before him. This is the first time that the two attributes have appeared together, which could suggest that Venus Felix is associated with continuation of the Roman Empire through a combination of imagery typical of a variety of periods.

Felix does not appear on many numismatic legends until the epithet becomes much more popular in the reign of Marcus Aurelius with Lucius Verus, and of Commodus. Boatwright points out that the title was not used before Hadrian built the temple of Venus and Roma. She also claims that this coin depicts the cult statue of Venus from this temple.⁸⁶ This seems to be reasonable, given that the temple was dedicated in AD 135, at approximately the same time that this coin was struck. Boatwright also suggests that by venerating Venus Felix on coins and at this new temple Hadrian differentiated himself from his predecessors, who had built temples for Venus Victrix and Genetrix as personal divine patronesses. On the other hand, Venus Felix, especially when paired with Roma, could be a goddess for all the Roman people “by exalting the strength and origins of Rome and the Roman people above those of an individual family.”⁸⁷

While this may be true of Venus Felix, it does not necessarily mean that other aspects of the same goddess do not have the same effect. Although Venus Genetrix may have been a family goddess of the Julio-Claudians, she is not exclusively related to that clan. Venus and Aeneas are presented by Virgil as being the founders of the whole Roman race, not just the ancestors of Augustus. Furthermore, while the first imperial dynasty may have claimed a special relationship to the goddess, this appears to have continued through

⁸⁶ Boatwright 1987, pg. 131-2.

⁸⁷ Boatwright 1987, pg. 132.

the succession of other families since they continued to venerate her on coins, as demonstrated by Hadrian in the paragraphs above and by her popularity on Antonine coinage. This implies that the goddess no longer belonged to one particular clan, but whichever dynasty held imperial power.

One variation of the Venus Felix coin also includes a globe underneath the spear on the reverse of a denarius.⁸⁸ This is the only time that a globe appears on imperial coinage of Venus before AD 200. It is also one of two items that the goddess is shown with that are unique to the epithet Felix.⁸⁹ The globe had been used with Venus previously on Republican coinage.⁹⁰ All of the prior instances were minted in 44 BC with either CAESAR IMP(ER) (Caesar the Commander) or CAESAR DICT. PERPETUO (Caesar the Perpetual Dictator) in the legend, and show the goddess holding a Victory.⁹¹ The globe also seems to be a variation on these coins, as only three out of the seventeen recorded in the RRC depict it, while it appears on only one out of six Hadrianic coins of the same type. While the globe may suggest an idea of world-wide domination in the hands of the goddess and her Roman people, particularly when combined with her spear, it certainly does not seem to hold much significance since it seems to be a less popular choice of the moneyers.⁹²

Mattingly suggests that this is because it was not an attribute associated with the goddess depicted on the coin, but instead was a symbol representing Hadrian's *decennalia*,

⁸⁸ BMC Hadrian 756. See Fig. 33 for a similar type.

⁸⁹ A dove is also used either with Felix or with an unspecified aspect of Venus, but does not appear after 42 BC (RRC 494.6) until the reign of Antoninus Pius in BMC 1083.

⁹⁰ RRC 480.3, 480.15, 480.17. See Fig. 21.

⁹¹ See above for Venus holding a Victory on Hadrianic and Caesarian coinage.

⁹² Jones 1990, pg. 127.

the celebration of a decade of ruling.⁹³ The coin dates to a year between AD 134 and 138, so it is possible that it was minted in 137 after Hadrian had ruled for twenty years. Therefore, even though the globe is shown only with Venus without an epithet or with Venus Felix, it should not be considered as an identifying feature of that aspect of Venus.

The beginning of the imperial period shows the exclusion of Venus from coinage throughout the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors after Augustus, followed by a slight increase in her appearances on coinage throughout the Flavian dynasty. Trajan did not mint his own new Venus coin types, but instead restored those of Julius Caesar and Augustus. The reuse of older types emphasizes how important it was for new emperors to try to create a visual connection between themselves and their predecessors. Under Hadrian there was an influx of new reverse types of the goddess, as well as the innovation of the use of epithets in the inscriptions. With this it becomes possible to compare Venus' poses and attributes with the titles she is given, which can be used to identify other images of her that do are not labelled, such as earlier coins or depictions in other media.

Hadrian's successors continued to put epithets of Venus on their coins, namely Felix, Genetrix, and Victrix. However, the titles appear with less regularity on Antonine coins than those of Hadrian. The legends of Antonine coins usually include the name of the goddess, although sometimes they do not refer to her by any titles corresponding to specific aspects. Instead, many of these coins refer to her as Venus Augusta, or simply Venus. Nevertheless, the number of numismatic depictions of Venus greatly increases

⁹³ Mattingly, BMC III pg. cxxxvi.

during the Antonine dynasty, and thus provides plenty of coin types with various epithets and attributes to examine.

Chapter 3: A Surge in Popularity: Venus Under the Antonines

As Hadrian grew older, he adopted and chose as his heir one of his most successful proconsuls, Titus Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus, later known as Antoninus Pius. As a condition of his adoption, Antoninus was compelled to adopt his nephew Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus, the son of Hadrian's deceased first choice of successor.⁹⁴ Antoninus' accession took place in AD 138, and he ruled until his death in 161. Under the Antonine dynasty another increase in coinage of Venus occurs. Unfortunately, some of the Venus coins minted under Antoninus Pius and his successors are difficult to date specifically, because of a lack of specificity in the titulature of the women depicted on the obverse, as they are not given new titles based on their accomplishments in war, nor can the number of years in which they had held a consulship be included in the legend. However, the titulature on the coinage can give some hints towards narrowing down the range. Many of the coins struck during Antoninus' reign were minted for his daughter, Faustina the younger, after AD 147, when she was given the title Augusta after having given birth to her first child. This indicates that these coins must have been minted between AD 147 and the death of Antoninus in 161. Some of Antoninus' Venus coins occasionally appear opposite images of his deceased wife, Faustina the elder, who was deified after her death.⁹⁵ The title Diva in the legends of her coinage signals this, meaning that those coins were likely struck shortly after AD 140.

⁹⁴ Balsdon 1975, pg. 141

⁹⁵ Balsdon 1975, pg. 142

3.1 The Venus Coinage of Antoninus Pius

Like the coinage of Hadrian, the coins of Venus struck by Antoninus more often included the title *Genetrix* in the legend than any other epithet of the goddess. However, on many of the extant coins the deity is simply named, or called *Venus Augusta* in the legends instead of any particular epithet. The title “*Augusta*” was given to most imperial women, as well as many goddesses, so its use on Venus’ coinage likely has little to do with any of her specific aspects or attributes. Out of the nine different types of Venus coins minted during Antoninus Pius’ reign, one names *Venus Felix*, four appear without any distinct titles, two with the epithet *Genetrix*, and four without the name of the goddess at all.⁹⁶ One type appeared on a variety of coins with different legends, some naming *Venus Genetrix*, others *Venus Felix*, and others still did not give the name of the goddess at all.

The vast majority of numismatic evidence from this period depicts images of the empresses or princesses rather than the male members of the imperial family. This fits well with the trends already discussed in chapter two about the desirable traits of the empresses, beauty and fertility, being represented by *Venus*, who also helps to associate them with dynastic power and continuity of imperial policy. For most of Antoninus Pius’ reign, *Venus* appears on coinage opposite portraits of *Faustina the Younger*, the daughter of Antoninus and the wife of his successor *Marcus Aurelius*. Her mother, *Faustina the*

⁹⁶ For coins without an epithet see BMC Antoninus Pius 46, 145* (BMC IV pg. 24), 1061-77, 1091‡ (BMC IV pg. 165), 1095, 1120-23, 1132, 2147-50, 2160-7, 2185-86, and 2193. For coins of *Venus Genetrix* see BMC Antoninus Pius 1057-60, 1090† (BMC IV pg. 165), 2145-46, and 2159* (BMC IV pg. 375). For coins without a name see BMC Antoninus Pius 432-34, 1099-1102, 1991‡ (BMC IV pg. 334), 2195-97, 2202. For coins of *Venus Felix* see BMC Antoninus Pius 1083.

Elder, is shown less frequently, likely because she died only two years after her husband was named emperor. She appears on obverses opposite two types of Venus reverses, one of which is unique to her as a deified empress, while the other was copied from a coin of Sabina, her imperial predecessor, and reused by her successors.⁹⁷

The first of the two Venus Genetrix types shows a bust of Faustina the Younger on the obverse, with the legend FAUSTINAE AUG PII AUG FIL (for Faustina Augusta daughter of Pius Augustus). She wears an elaborate hairstyle, as well as pearls and a crown. The reverse is unique to the reign of Antoninus, and shows Venus holding an apple in one hand while the other arm cradles an infant. The writing on this side clearly labels this goddess with VENERI GENETRICI SC (for Venus the mother by the decree of the senate).⁹⁸ This depiction of the deity encapsulates what a mother goddess should be, with the inclusion of the infant as an easily recognisable reference to her maternity. The apple symbolizes the Trojan origins of the Roman people and the role Venus played in the birth of a population, both through her actions throughout the Trojan war, in particular here the Judgement of Paris, and through her own son, Aeneas.⁹⁹ The combination of these two attributes sets Venus up as the mother of the Roman people, which is certainly how a future empress would also want to be seen. This coin seems to celebrate the fertility and physical motherhood of Faustina II, as well as hint at her future role in the Roman state.

⁹⁷ Coins of Faustina the Elder: BMC Antoninus Pius 46, 145* (BMC IV pg. 24), cp. BMC Hadrian 944-49, BMC Antoninus Pius 2164-65, BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172-73, BMC Commodus 44-46. Coins of Diva Faustina: BMC Antoninus Pius 432-34.

⁹⁸ BMC Antoninus Pius 2145. See Fig. 39 for a similar coin.

⁹⁹ Jones 1990, pg. 317.

The second Venus Genetrix type is a variation of the first. It has a similar portrait of Faustina II on the obverse (her crown is missing in this depiction). The legend is also like that of the other coin, reading FAUSTINAE AUG PII (for Faustina Augusta [daughter] of Pius). Venus stands on the reverse, holding an apple and a sceptre.¹⁰⁰ The legend reads VENERI GENETRICI (for Venus the mother). The presence of the apple on these two coins seems to follow a precedent set by Hadrian, who also showed Venus holding the fruit, while his wife is depicted on the other side, on one of the four Venus Genetrix reverse types that he minted.¹⁰¹ The recurrence of this imagery with the same epithet under Antoninus strongly suggests that at this point the apple should be considered to be a distinguishing attribute of Venus Genetrix. During the reigns of Antoninus and Hadrian, it is used only with that epithet, and not with Victrix or Felix.

The other attribute on this coin, the sceptre, may symbolize the authority of the goddess. She had been shown holding one on coinage as early as 106 BC, and had been shown with one consistently through the various dynasties discussed until this point.¹⁰² That being said, the sceptre is in no way unusual for Venus. Like the apple, it too had appeared on a coin of Hadrian naming Venus Genetrix in the legend.¹⁰³ However, this exact same reverse type, with another similar Faustina II obverse, had been used by Antoninus on another coin which simply bore the inscription VENUS SC (Venus by the

¹⁰⁰ BMC Antoninus Pius 1057. See Fig. 38. See the above paragraph and Chapter 2 for more detailed discussion of the apple in the iconography of Venus.

¹⁰¹ BMC Hadrian 944. See Fig. 35.

¹⁰² RRC 313. See Fig. 3.

¹⁰³ BMC Hadrian 529. See Fig. 32.

decree of the senate), without any specific epithets. This could suggest that this plain Venus is also Genetrix.

On the other hand, the prevalence of the sceptre on coinage with Venus throughout each period examined for the scope of this paper may hint that this attribute does not have any association with particular aspects of the goddess. The sceptre was usually associated with triumph in a Republican context, and came to be connected with imperial power.¹⁰⁴ However, from the time of Hadrian when epithets of Venus began to be used in numismatic legends through the rule of Antoninus Pius, the sceptre was not shown on coins with any epithet other than Genetrix. It appears most often on coins with simply the goddess' name, or Venus Augusta, but nevertheless, until this point, it can only be associated with the maternal aspect of the deity. This same type was used a third time on a coin without the name of the goddess. The reverse legend simply reads SC (by the decree of the senate), not acknowledging the deity at all.¹⁰⁵

It is unsurprising that Antoninus would repeat the use of Hadrianic imagery on his coins, as previous chapters of this work have shown that the emperors would reuse older types to help suggest continuity between rulers and dynasties. Perhaps with this goal in mind, a Venus Genetrix reverse type minted by Hadrian was also struck by Antoninus. It shows Venus unveiling herself with one hand while holding an apple in the other.¹⁰⁶

Hadrian's coin has Genetrix in the legend, while Antoninus' merely uses the name of the

¹⁰⁴ Jones 1990, pg. 281.

¹⁰⁵ BMC Antoninus Pius 2193. See Fig. 44.

¹⁰⁶ BMC Hadrian 944, BMC Antoninus Pius 2164. See Fig. 35 and 37 for a similar type.

goddess. Doubtless, because of the repetition of the type, this coin is also meant to represent Venus Genetrix.

Another one of Antoninus' coins closely resembles one of Hadrian's Venus Genetrix reverses. This coin shows his daughter on the obverse, while the reverse has Venus holding a Victory, with a shield and sometimes a helmet beside her on the ground. Hadrian's version also includes a sceptre in one of the goddess' hands.¹⁰⁷ Antoninus' coin may be a direct reference to his predecessor's, however a Victory should remind the viewers of Republican images of Venus and her role in the Julio-Claudian clan, as well as the foundation of Rome. It is interesting to note that while Antoninus referred to the precedents of Hadrian and the first imperial dynasty, none of the Venus coins seem to refer openly to those of the Flavians. While there may have been connections through coins minted with other imagery, perhaps this may suggest the lack of importance of Venus to Vespasian and his sons, while the repetition of Republican images emphasizes her importance to Julius Caesar.

A similar coin, with only AUGUSTA (the Venerable) minted in the legend, depicts Venus with a shield on the ground next to her, and an apple in her hand. Diva Faustina I is shown on the obverse.¹⁰⁸ The apple appears on six out of the nine reverse types of the goddess minted by Antoninus.¹⁰⁹ None of the legends refer to any aspect of Venus other than Genetrix, although they do not always refer directly to her. As we have

¹⁰⁷ BMC Hadrian 529, BMC Antoninus Pius 1099, 2195. See Fig. 32 and 43 for similar types.

¹⁰⁸ BMC Antoninus Pius 432-34. See Fig. 43 for a similar type.

¹⁰⁹ The apple is on BMC Antoninus Pius 46, 145* (BMC IV pg. 24), 432-34, 1058-77, 1090†-91‡ (BMC IV pg. 165), 1095, 1120-23, 1132, 1991‡ (BMC IV pg. 334), 2145-50, 2159* (BMC IV pg. 375), 2160-2164, 2168-72, 2185-86, and 2193.

already seen, the apple is always shown in combination with some other attribute or action of the goddess, whether unveiling herself, or with a sceptre, a baby, a shield, a rudder, or a dolphin. The recurrence of the apple may point to its significance as an identifiable marker of Venus. Her early associations as a fertility goddess, and the myth of the golden apple in the Judgement of Paris, as discussed above, make the apple one of the most recognizable attributes of Venus. The potency of this image as an identification marker of Venus would also increase if it was part of a highly visible and well-known sculpture, such as the cult statue of Venus Genetrix, as some scholars have suggested.¹¹⁰

The last two reverse types show the goddess holding an apple and a rudder.¹¹¹ The second, more frequent type also includes a dolphin around the rudder. There is no epithet on either of these coins, and a rudder does not appear on any coins within this period that name a certain aspect of Venus. The presence of a dolphin brings to mind the statue of Augustus Prima Porta, in which Venus' son Cupid rides a dolphin at the feet the emperor. With this in mind, it is easy to associate the dolphin with the descendants of Venus and her role as a mother. However, while these connections seem quite noticeable, they may be easier to recognize in retrospect for a modern viewer than for a contemporary moneyer, who may have been distanced from the statue by time and space. On the other hand, it is also entirely possible that the connection between the Augustus Prima Porta and the Antonine coin may have been intentional, as yet another way of connecting the imperial family to the rulers of the early Principate. The rudder may

¹¹⁰ Harcum 1927, pg. 141.

¹¹¹ BMC Antoninus Pius 1091‡ (BMC IV pg. 165).

symbolize control, and the responsibility of the goddess and her offspring to direct the city and its people safely.¹¹² This idea reflects well the role of the emperor and his empress, who is depicted on the reverse, as the leaders of the Romans, guiding the people towards prosperity. Ship motifs had appeared on Republican coinage of Venus from the late second and early first centuries BC, but had not reappeared until now.¹¹³ The goddess is occasionally associated with marine imagery in order to reflect one of the myths about her birth, which suggests that she was born from the sea.¹¹⁴

Venus herself is not pictured on a final reverse type minted by Antoninus Pius, although *VENERI FELICI* (for Venus the Happy) appears in the legend. Instead, a dove is shown on the reverse, while a portrait of Faustina II appears on the obverse.¹¹⁵ Today the dove is a well-known symbol of peace, mostly through Judeo-Christian iconography. However, the dove was also associated with Venus, as Vergil describes them as her iconic birds.¹¹⁶ Like several of the other coins that Antoninus minted for Venus, this is a new type. The deity had not before been associated with doves on coinage, except for a type struck in 42 BC with Venus holding a bird on the reverse and Octavian on the obverse. As a result of the novelty of this type, and because this is the only coin that Antoninus minted with the epithet *Felix* in the legend, it is reasonable to suggest that the dove could be an attribute used to recognize Venus Felix, as opposed to any of her other aspects. To

¹¹² Jones 1990, pg. 273.

¹¹³ RRC 205, 313, 357, 391.3.

¹¹⁴ Jones 1990, pg. 317.

¹¹⁵ BMC Antoninus Pius 1083. See Fig. 42.

¹¹⁶ Vergil, Aeneid 6.190-94.

summarize, the dove may be used to identify depictions of Venus Felix, while the apple and infant can be used to recognize images of Venus Genetrix.

3.2 Marcus Aurelius and Numismatic Representations of Venus

Antoninus Pius was succeeded by his nephew and son-in-law, Marcus Aurelius, who had been designated by Hadrian as Antoninus' heir.¹¹⁷ Because of the family connection, the same Faustina II that was featured on coins of Venus during her father's lifetime continued to be shown on coins minted by her husband. Changes in the obverse legends demonstrate this, as she is no longer referred to as Faustina Augusta, the daughter of Antoninus, but just by her own name. Regardless of whether her father or her husband was in power, all of the Venus coins of Faustina II were minted after AD 147, when she was given the title Augusta upon the birth of her first child.¹¹⁸ It has been suggested that different portrait types of her were created each time she gave birth.¹¹⁹ The fact that she had twelve children could explain the abundance of her portraits, and of coins minted with her image on the obverse. It is likely that the frequency of her association with Venus on coinage is also a celebration of Faustina II's fertility, and her role as the mother of emperors.

Marcus Aurelius ruled with his co-emperor, Lucius Verus, from AD 161 until Lucius' death in 168, and took on his son Commodus as a co-emperor in 177. The coinage of this time can be difficult to date, and is not always clear whether it was minted

¹¹⁷ Balsdon 1975, pg. 141.

¹¹⁸ Balsdon 1975, pg. 142.

¹¹⁹ Fittschen 1996, pg. 44, 71.

under Marcus alone, or with Lucius. Either way, there was a severe influx of coinage of Venus during Marcus' rule (before the accession of Commodus), as seventeen reverse types of her were minted, four of which were labelled with the name of Venus Genetrix.¹²⁰ Two types were struck with the name of Venus Felix, although one of these also appears on a contemporary coin naming Venus Genetrix.¹²¹ The same type also appears without the title of a specific aspect of Venus. This shared type may indicate that the attributes on it belong to no particular aspect of the goddess. The shared type is one of seven types minted without an epithet.¹²² Three types name Venus Victrix in the legend, and a singular type is not shown with the name of the goddess at all.¹²³

Depending on when the Venus coins were minted, either Faustina II appears on the obverse, or Lucilla, the daughter of Marcus Aurelius and the wife of Lucius Verus. The obverse legend of her name LUCILLA AUGUSTA appears on many of her coins, after the title was given to her upon her marriage to the emperor. The title Augustus/Augusta was not necessarily hereditary, so Lucilla had not been called Augusta from birth. Instead, it had to be given, in this case on the occasion of her marriage. The lack of reference to her parentage on some coins suggests that these coins were struck during the lifetime of Lucius and while she was the wife of a living emperor, between AD 164 and 168. Other coins minted for her read LUCILLAE AUG ANTONINI AUG F (for

¹²⁰ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171-173, 955* (BMC IV pg. 536), 1166, 1212.

¹²¹ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169-70, 957-59, 1002-03

¹²² BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 159-60, 163-68, 320-24, 352* (BMC IV pg. 432), 839, 9568 (BMC IV pg. 537), 1001† and ‡ (BMC IV pg. 542), 1166-77, 1187-89, 1211 (BMC IV pg. 578), 1224-27, 1357* (BMC IV pg. 610).

¹²³ Coins of Venus Victrix in BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 161, 174, 353-56, 960-65, 999-1001, and 1001* (BMC IV pg. 543). Coin without the name of Venus in BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 832.

Lucilla Augustus, daughter of Antoninus Augustus). In these instances, she herself is named as Augusta, but is also acknowledged as the daughter of an emperor. Thus, coins with this legend must have been minted after her marriage, but likely also after Lucius' death. Her mother Faustina II's titulature on coinage sets the precedent for this, as her name does not appear on coinage without reference to her father until her husband became the ruler of Rome. Coins of Faustina II are even more difficult to date because her title on coinage does not change between the accession of her husband in AD 161 and her own death in AD 175.

Three reverse types depicting Venus Victrix were minted, with several variations on one of them. The reign of Marcus Aurelius marks the first time that coins were inscribed with this epithet of the goddess, which was most well-known from Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix, and Caesar's initial vow at the Battle of Pharsalus to build another temple for her.¹²⁴ Several types had been produced previously showing the deity holding a Victory, but these had all lacked the epithet, and perhaps were references to the Republican coinage of Julius Caesar.¹²⁵ Of course, Venus Victrix would also remind the viewers of Pompey.¹²⁶ The new use of the title Victrix on coins by Marcus Aurelius was likely done to commemorate his success in the wars with Parthia and the German tribes. His predecessor, Antoninus Pius, enjoyed a very peaceful reign, and would have had no cause to commemorate the victory of the Romans over barbaric peoples. The reign of

¹²⁴ Appian BC 2.10.68.

¹²⁵ RRC 382, 391, 465, 480, 485; BMC Hadrian 529, 749* (BMC III pg. 334); BMC Antoninus Pius 1099, 2195, 2202.

¹²⁶ Beard et al. 1998, pg. 144-45; Orlin 2007, pg. 68.

Hadrian, the first emperor to use Venus' epithets on coinage, similarly was not shaped by major foreign wars, but rather by his diplomacy and travels throughout the empire. Thus, the celebration of military achievement would not have had a place within the promotion of his imperial ideals. On the other hand, Marcus Aurelius dealt with two major wars during his rule, enjoyed two triumphs, and had a column erected in his honour memorializing his accomplishments in battle. Because of this, it is appropriate for Marcus to mint coins with images of Venus Victrix, upholding the idea of the supremacy of the Roman people with the divine support of their patron goddess.

The first reverse type of Venus Victrix minted by Marcus Aurelius is very similar to the standard Flavian Venus type, which was struck repeatedly by all three emperors of that dynasty, and also by Hadrian. The goddess holds a helmet and a spear while leaning on a column.¹²⁷ Mattingly had called the goddess on the Hadrianic coin Venus Victrix, which was somewhat premature as nothing on the coin itself, nor any extant evidence can prove this identification.¹²⁸ However, its similarity to this Antonine coin naming Venus Victrix could perhaps support this view. As with many reused types, the repeated imagery invokes ideas of the past, suggests continuity, and perhaps serves as a way to legitimize the rule of a new emperor. This could be particularly potent during the period of adopted emperors, who could make no claims to ancestral divinity, nor say that they were relatives of rulers who had been deified posthumously. Rather, their right to rule came from their own worth and the mentorship of their predecessors. Perhaps by minting

¹²⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 161. See Fig. 161.

¹²⁸ Mattingly 1965, pg. 356.

coins such as this one which refer to previous dynasties the adoptive emperors could claim the support of Venus as the patron goddess of imperial rule and divine protectress of the Romans, just as the emperors were the physical guardians of the people.

Another type minted by Marcus Aurelius celebrating Venus Victrix shows the goddess half-nude posing with Mars, who is fully naked and holds a shield.¹²⁹ This image appears on the other side of a coin of Faustina II. She and her husband had been represented as Mars and Venus in statuary several times, which had set a trend for other couples to follow, often in funerary monuments.¹³⁰ This coin likely references such other works of art. Kleiner uses this proposal to suggest that coins which depict Mars without a beard are modelled after clean-shaven statues of the god, particularly the Ares Borghese. This would imply that the figures on the coin are meant to be the divinities themselves, not the emperor and empress in the guise of the gods.¹³¹ This type of depiction certainly seems to suggest the importance of marriage, beauty, and fertility to the Romans, all three of which Faustina II was commended for. What is curious is that this type of imagery seems to be more appropriate for a representation of Venus Genetrix, not Victrix. In this case, perhaps the victory is more allegorical than realistic. It is possible that Mars is meant to represent war here, which Venus, as the protectress and embodiment of Roman values and people, has subdued sexually. This still suggests the supremacy and military success of the Romans which Venus Victrix is usually associated with.

¹²⁹ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 999. See Fig. 54.

¹³⁰ Matheson 1996, pg. 182, D'Ambra 1996, pg. 219, Kleiner 1981, pg. 513.

¹³¹ Kleiner 1981, pg. 534.

The third Venus Victrix type has the goddess holding a Victory and a shield. It was minted several times with a few variations. At times the variations of this reverse type show the goddess draped with a robe, otherwise she is shown naked above the waist. Some versions of the type also include a helmet next to the shield.¹³² However, the different decorations on the shield provide more iconographic significance than the other variants on the basic type. Sometimes the shield is blank, but of the six variations on the basic reverse type, four of the shields were decorated. The poor condition of two of them makes it difficult to tell what they were meant to depict.¹³³ One of the other two shields shows Venus' family, Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius.¹³⁴ The last one portrays Romulus and Remus being suckled by a female wolf.¹³⁵ Both of these are foundation myths of the Roman people, and are fitting for the shield of Venus as the mythological ancestress of the Romans through both myths. The presence of Venus' descendants on her coinage would seem to allude to her motherly aspect as Genetrix, yet they only appear on Venus Victrix coins, possibly labelled thusly simply because of the presence of a Victory in the hand of the goddess, and minted in commemoration of a triumph or other military success. Unfortunately, the lack of a precise date makes it difficult to understand the context surrounding the commissioning of these coins.

This is the only time that Romulus and Remus appear on a coin of Venus, and only the second time that Aeneas is shown with his mother on coinage. The first time he

¹³² BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 174, 353, 356, 356, 360-65, and 1001* (BMC IV 543).

¹³³ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 964 and 965. See Fig. 52 for a similar type.

¹³⁴ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 963. See Fig. 52 for a similar type.

¹³⁵ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 174. See Fig. 52.

had been featured carrying a palladium on the reverse of a coin minted by Julius Caesar in 47-46 BC, which had a portrait of Venus on the obverse. The republican coin had no legend labelling any particular aspect of the goddess, but the Caesarian context of its minting and its dynastic implications suggest that this coin may have honoured Venus Genetrix.¹³⁶ By considering the different possible connotations of these two comparable Aeneas coins, it can be determined that perhaps the scene of Aeneas' escape from Troy is less forceful on the Antonine coin because of its placement on the shield. With this positioning, the ideas of familial responsibility become secondary to the conquering imagery of the Victory and the shield itself.

Similar reverse types also appear on coins of Venus Genetrix from the same period, and on some Hadrianic coins honouring the same aspect of the goddess.¹³⁷ In the case of the Antonine coins on which Venus is accompanied by a Victory and a shield, the secondary image on one of the shields is thought to be the Dioscuri.¹³⁸ There is little detail remaining to prove this identification, although a depiction of the twin gods would be appropriate for a commemoration of the birth of the future emperor Commodus and his twin brother who died in childhood. This context may be the reason why the coin was minted with the name of Venus Genetrix instead of Victrix, however the absence of a secure date makes this impossible to prove. The Dioscuri appear with Venus on one other coin, minted in 46 BC. While their portraits occupy the obverse, the goddess appears on

¹³⁶ See Chapter 1 for more details.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 2, BMC Hadrian 749* (BMC III pg. 334).

¹³⁸ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 172. See Fig. 51.

the reverse without a legend labelling her.¹³⁹ As a result of the subordinating placement of the Dioscuri on the Aurelian coin, their reappearance with the deity can do little to help identify the aspect of Venus on the Republican example.

Another variation of this type on a Venus Genetrix coin has a plain shield, but shows a figure, whose kneeling pose suggests its captivity, sitting on the ground next to Venus.¹⁴⁰ This has even further connotations of triumph which could be associated with Venus Victrix and little to do with motherhood and the dynastic ideals of the imperial family typically associated with Venus Genetrix. In short, the use of the Victory and shield type on both Venus Victrix and Genetrix coins indicates that neither of those attributes holds unique significance for either aspect of the goddess, and cannot be relied upon completely as identifying markers on unspecified depictions of her.

An image of Venus on a Genetrix coin that better fits a typical view of the divine ancestress of the Romans depicts Lucilla on the obverse, and the goddess sitting on the reverse holding an apple and sceptre while Cupid stands nearby.¹⁴¹ As has already been discussed, the apple holds strong connotations of the mythological Trojan origin of the Romans, and thus can be closely linked with Venus as Genetrix. On the other hand, Cupid had appeared on one Hadrianic type with the legend *VENERIS FELICIS* (For the happy Venus).¹⁴² Although this Aurelian type is the only example of Cupid on a coin labelled with the name of Venus Genetrix, the majority of depictions of him with his

¹³⁹ RRC 463. See Fig. 17.

¹⁴⁰ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171. See Fig. 50.

¹⁴¹ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1212. See Fig. 58

¹⁴² BMC Hadrian 750-56. See Fig. 33.

mother on coinage date to the Republican period, many of which can be associated with the influence of Julius Caesar and his temple of Venus Genetrix.¹⁴³ However, several others date to the time when Sulla held power.¹⁴⁴ He had given himself the name Felix, and had chosen Venus as a favourite goddess.¹⁴⁵ Despite this, the depiction of Cupid on this coin may just be a way of referring to Republican coinage more generally. It is also possible that the combination of the son of Venus with the definitive apple may point specifically back to the coinage and cult statue of Venus Genetrix commissioned by Caesar.

Another Venus Genetrix type was also minted with the goddess holding a Victory and sceptre.¹⁴⁶ This image has been repeated from Antoninus Pius, Hadrian, and Julius Caesar. Under Hadrian, the type had also been given the name Genetrix in the legend, while those of Caesar and Antoninus do not refer to her by any epithets.¹⁴⁷ However, the type is used by Marcus Aurelius without an epithet, and with both Venus Genetrix and Felix. The Caesarian roots of this type are likely the reason why it is associated with Venus Genetrix. On the other hand, Venus Felix may also be appropriate because of the link to Hadrian and his temple of Venus Felix and Roma Aeterna.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the continued usage of this type, with its common attributes, under several names, suggests that this could represent a generic Venus, to whom any epithet could be applied. The

¹⁴³ RRC 463, 468. See Fig. 14 and 20.

¹⁴⁴ RRC 349, 359, 391. See Fig. 5, 7, and 10.

¹⁴⁵ Jones 1990, pg. 114.

¹⁴⁶ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 173. See Fig. 49 for a similar type.

¹⁴⁷ BMC Hadrian 529, BMC Antoninus Pius 1099, RRC 480. See Fig. 21, 32, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Boatwright 1987, pg. 130.

goddess was shown with a Victory or a sceptre (at least separately) on coins with all three of the epithets discussed her, as well as on coins without any of them.

A similar type shows Venus with a sceptre and the three Graces in her hands.¹⁴⁹ The legend on this coin describes the goddess as Felix. This is the only time that the Graces appear on coinage of Venus, despite the fact that they are often considered to be her attendants.¹⁵⁰ They too are associated with charm, beauty, and marriage, making them fitting companions for the goddess. It has been suggested that Venus Felix, particularly on empress coinage, may represent the peaceful and happy marriage of the leading couple of Rome.¹⁵¹ The combination of the Graces with the sceptre, as an embodiment of imperial power, corresponds well with this interpretation.

The remaining reverse types of Venus minted during the reign of Marcus Aurelius were produced without reference to any of her specific epithets. Many of these are repetitions of coins minted by Hadrian or Antoninus Pius. One of them shows the goddess holding an apple in one hand and adjusting her drapery with another, much in the same way that she is shown on one of Hadrian's Venus Genetrix coins.¹⁵² As mentioned in chapter two, this type of imagery first appeared on Venus Genetrix coinage, and is never shown on coins with other epithets of Venus. Thus it is likely that the goddess on the Aurelian coin is also Venus the mother. A second type minted by Marcus Aurelius following a precedent set by Hadrian shows Venus holding a dove and a sceptre. The

¹⁴⁹ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 170* (BMC IV pg. 407).

¹⁵⁰ March 1998, pg. 338; Jones 1990, pg. 129.

¹⁵¹ Jones 1990, pg. 317.

¹⁵² BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172, BMC Hadrian 944. See Fig. 35 and 56.

dove had appeared without the goddess on one of Hadrian's coins under the name of Venus Felix.¹⁵³ In addition, a bird was depicted on a coin of Octavian struck in 42 BC, held in Venus' hand while she sat with Cupid hovering beside her.¹⁵⁴ The dove was thought to be sacred to the goddess although it is depicted on her coinage only rarely. Of these three bird coins, only Hadrian's had a legend identifying the aspect of the goddess, so the dove on Marcus Aurelius' coin must also be associated with Venus Felix, despite the fact that Octavian's coin predates the association of the title with the deity.¹⁵⁵ That is not to say that the earlier coin also depicts Venus Felix, but that it does not negate the relationship of a dove with that aspect of the goddess.

Other reverse types reproduce images minted by Antoninus Pius, showing Venus with an apple and a sceptre, who had struck it with the name of Venus Genetrix.¹⁵⁶ Marcus himself had already made coins with the same attributes, plus a Cupid, for the same aspect of the goddess, so it is likely that this coin also honours her.¹⁵⁷ One version of this coin does not have an empress on the obverse, but rather the co-emperor Lucius Verus. The legend reads L VERUS AUG ARM PARTH MAX (Lucius Verus Augustus Arminius Parthicus the Great).¹⁵⁸ This is only one of two coins of Venus minted during this period with a male portrait on the obverse. The legend suggests that this was struck to commemorate a victory over Armenia and Parthia. However, the BMC lists this as a

¹⁵³ BMC Antoninus Pius 1083. See Fig. 42.

¹⁵⁴ RRC 494.6. See Fig. 24.

¹⁵⁵ Boatwright 19871, pg. 131. Venus was only called Felix starting in the reign of Hadrian. See chapter four for more information.

¹⁵⁶ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 164, BMC Antoninus Pius 1057. See Fig. 38 and 47.

¹⁵⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1212. See Fig. 58.

¹⁵⁸ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus Hybrids ‡ (BMC IV pg. 610).

hybrid, meaning that there is a strong likelihood that it was a counterfeit coin. Mattingly describes hybrids as “irrational combinations of obverse and reverse” which “represent in the main, if not entirely, the activity of false moneyers...”¹⁵⁹ This means that there is no relationship between the two sides of the coin, and that the depiction of Venus opposite Verus’ portrait is no way symbolic. Instead, it signifies the peculiarity of the coin, as it does not correspond with the contemporary iconographic program.

Marcus Aurelius struck additional coins with another type repeated from his adoptive father, which showed the deity holding an apple, with a rudder and a dolphin on the ground. The dolphin coins minted by either emperor do not name an epithet of Venus, however the association of the dolphin with her son Cupid, and of the apple with Venus Genetrix, points towards this type honouring Venus as the ancestress of the Romans.

Two unique Venus types without any epithets were minted under Marcus Aurelius. They both show the goddess holding an apple without any other attributes, and one depicts her fixing her hair with her other hand.¹⁶⁰ With the apple as a reference to the Judgement of Paris, it is fitting for the deity to be focused on her hair, as this gesture and the myth both emphasize her beauty. Certainly it would be appealing for Faustina the younger, who appears on the other side of this coin, to be associated with this. On the other hand, what appears to be an apple may actually be a handheld mirror, another symbol of Venus’ physical attractiveness. A mirror had been minted with an image of

¹⁵⁹ BMC III pg. lxxxvi.

¹⁶⁰ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 163, 1001‡ (BMC IV 543). See Fig. 46.

Venus once before, on a coin struck in 42 BC.¹⁶¹ The date of this coin, only two years after the death of Julius Caesar, may hint at its identification as a Venus Genetrix coin, particularly since the same moneyers had made other coins associating Octavian with the goddess. Whether the round object is an apple or a mirror, it is possible that this coin of Marcus Aurelius is also a Venus Genetrix coin, given the apple as an identifying attribute, and the Republican precedent of the mirror from a time when Venus' relationship to the Julii was strongly emphasized.

A final Aurelian type was minted without the name of the goddess in the legend at all. On one side it shows Faustina the younger, while the reverse depicts Venus leaning on a shield placed on top of a helmet, and holding branch.¹⁶² The shield and helmet appear on many coins of Venus, such as have already been described above, but the branch is unique to this coin. The goddess had been associated with a palm branch, which represents victory, on some Republican coins which date to periods of power for Sulla, Pompey and Caesar.¹⁶³ As these three leaders all revered different aspects of Venus, it is not possible to connect the palm branch with one in particular. On the other hand, the branch on this Aurelian coin could represent a different kind of tree. In particular, the Golden Bough could be appropriate for Venus to hold. In the Aeneid, Aeneas is sent to pick this magical branch in order to descend into the Underworld safely.¹⁶⁴ If this is a link to her son, then it is possible that this coin depicts Venus

¹⁶¹ RRC 494. 34. See Fig. 25.

¹⁶² BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 832.

¹⁶³ Jones 1990, pg. 233; RRC 359, 419.1c, 465.3. See Fig. 7, 12, and 18.

¹⁶⁴ Vergil, Aeneid 6.187-192.

Genetrix, but otherwise remains ambiguous, as the other attributes hold no certain association with any specific aspects of the goddess.

3.3 Commodus' Contributions to the Veneration of Venus on Coinage

Marcus Aurelius enjoyed a long and happy marriage, as evidenced by the vast amounts of coinage minted for his wife. They had born at least twelve offspring, many of whom had died in childhood, leaving only Commodus as his father's heir. The last four emperors had been chosen by their predecessors based on their political and military experience, as well as their family connections, and were subsequently adopted into the royal family in order to accede the Roman rule. However, none of the previous emperors had living sons to inherit the throne, so adoption was necessary for ensuring a smooth succession. With Commodus as his surviving son, Marcus Aurelius did not have to choose another heir, and was able to train his son in the running of the empire from a young age. In AD 177 Commodus was named the co-emperor of his father, and they shared a joint rule until Marcus Aurelius' death in 180.

Meanwhile, Faustina II had passed away in AD 175 and had been deified upon her death. As a result, her husband and son as co-emperors minted a coin shortly afterward for DIVA AUG FAUSTINA (The divine Augusta Faustina) as the obverse legend reads, accompanying her portrait. The reverse shows a familiar type: Venus holding a Victory and sceptre. In this case, the goddess is named Venus Felix, although the same type had been minted by Marcus Aurelius with the title Genetrix.¹⁶⁵ If Jones' theory about Venus

¹⁶⁵ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Commodus 1592* (BMC IV pg. 656), cp. BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 173. See Fig. 49 for a similar type.

Felix representing a happy marriage is correct, then it is certainly fitting that she would be used on a coin celebrating the life of the recently deceased empress.¹⁶⁶ In this way, although the attributes on the coin and the reuse of the type itself say little about the designation of the coin to a certain aspect of the goddess, the context of its minting and the obverse legend can help to explain the use of this epithet.

A final Venus coin from the life of Marcus Aurelius was minted around AD 179-80. It is the only coin of the goddess to be struck with the head of the emperor. The obverse legend identifies him in his role as the high priest, reading M AUREL ANTONINUS AUG P M (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, Pontifex Maximus). The reverse is of Venus Genetrix, raising one hand and holding a shield in the other.¹⁶⁷ This is the only time that this type was minted. It seems to be a combination of types, as the shield is relatively common on coinage of the goddess, while the act of raising an arm appeared only once before, on a coin of Hadrian which shows Venus Genetrix lifting up both her arms.¹⁶⁸ This is the only coin from the time of Commodus with the name of Venus Genetrix in the legend. Like the coin described above with Lucius Verus on the obverse, this Marcus Aurelius coin is considered to be a hybrid, and therefore was likely not sanctioned by the state. However, unlike the other hybrid which seems to have paired an existing obverse type with a reverse that had also been used previously, the reverse type on the later coin is unique. This probably signifies that the coin has no implications

¹⁶⁶ Jones 1990, pg. 317.

¹⁶⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Commodus Hybrids ‡ (BMC IV pg. 687).

¹⁶⁸ BMC III pg. 379, number 12 under 'Coins not in the British Museum'.

whatsoever about official Antonine iconography, since the reverse depicting Venus was never used by Roman mints.

Most of the other Venus coins minted by Commodus alone are dedicated to Venus Felix, and depict his wife, Crispina, on the obverse. During his rule far fewer coins of the goddess were struck than during the lives of his predecessors.¹⁶⁹ It is possible that this is linked to the fact that he was minting coins for only one empress, not two as both Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius were.¹⁷⁰ Their marriage was childless, which may also explain the lack of Venus Genetrix coinage which was relatively commonly struck by the three previous emperors. Of Commodus' coins, only the one described above is dedicated to Venus Genetrix. Another coin, this one without an epithet, also likely shows the mother goddess, since the imagery is the same as that on a coin of Hadrian, on which Venus unveils as she holds an apple.¹⁷¹ Crispina is on the obverse of this coin, unlike the previous Venus Genetrix coin.¹⁷² It is thought to have been struck around AD 180-183, when the couple had been married for no more than five years. It is possible that the coin suggests some hope for children in the early years of the marriage, or that it at least acknowledges the role of the empress in the ruling of the state, whether or not through reproduction.

A single coin of Venus Victrix was struck by Commodus, which in some ways resembles the Venus Victrix coinage of his father. The younger emperor shows her half-

¹⁶⁹ Commodus only struck six Venus types, in comparison to his father's seventeen.

¹⁷⁰ Duncan-Jones 2006, pg. 225.

¹⁷¹ BMC Hadrian 944. See Fig. 35.

¹⁷² BMC Commodus 44. See Fig. 59.

dressed, holding a helmet and a sceptre, with a shield at her feet.¹⁷³ The major difference between the Venus Victrix coins of the two emperors is that Victory has been replaced by the sceptre. While one symbolizes Roman supremacy through war, the other is an image of imperial power, which could have been thought of as a pair of corresponding ideals of the state. Otherwise, the use of the helmet and shield on Venus Victrix coinage corresponds to previous imagery of that aspect of the goddess, and suits the divine protectress of Rome.

The remainder of Commodus' Venus coinage bears the epithet Felix. One of these types is the same as one minted by both Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. It shows the goddess holding an apple and a sceptre.¹⁷⁴ However, their versions of this reverse type either do not include an epithet, or name Venus Genetrix, not Felix. This coin of Commodus is the only one which portrays an apple with an aspect of the goddess other than Genetrix. While the image follows the precedent set by previous emperors, the legend does not. This could be a way for Commodus to set himself apart from his predecessors by adapting one of their standard images to better suit his own program of imperial imagery. He struck fewer coins of the goddess than them, which revere Venus Felix proportionally more than the coins of the other emperors. Three out of six of

¹⁷³ BMC Commodus 52, cp. BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 353-56. See Fig. 55 and 61.

¹⁷⁴ BMC Commodus 439* (BMC IV pg. 769), cp. BMC Antoninus Pius 1062, 1095, 2168-72, 2185, 2193; BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 164-66, 320-24, 352* (BMC IV pg. 432), 389, 1167-71, 1189* (BMC IV pg. 575), 1211 (BMC IV pg. 578), 1224, 1357* (BMC IV pg. 610).

Commodus' reverse types of Venus label her as Felix. In comparison, his father only minted two types for Venus Felix out of seventeen, and his grandfather one out of nine.¹⁷⁵

This phenomenon could also have been caused by his wife's lack of fertility, with Venus Felix signifying their new marriage and the hope for children not yet born. Although one coin with Venus Genetrix imagery was struck opposite a portrait of Crispina, Venus is not clearly labelled with that epithet, merely suggesting a connection between Venus Genetrix as a mother and Crispina rather than openly stating it.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, Crispina also appears on all of Commodus' coinage of Venus Felix, visibly associating his wife with this aspect of the goddess as a symbol of a happy marriage. Perhaps if the union had produced children later on, the trends on the coinage would have reflected this with more images of Venus Genetrix and less of Venus Felix. As it is, the Venus Felix coins were all struck AD 180-183, before there would have been great concern about the succession and lack of heirs. Thus, in this case Commodus is able to use this coin to refer back to the past and continue the imagery of his ancestors, but also adjust it to better reflect the conditions of his own reign.

The final Venus type minted by Commodus also revered Venus Felix, but is unique to this emperor. The goddess appears sitting down and holding a sceptre and a Victory, who in turn holds some sort of wreath. A dove sometimes is depicted

¹⁷⁵ Commodus' Venus Felix coins: BMC Marcus Aurelius and Commodus 1592* (BMC IV pg. 656); BMC Commodus 47-51, 424-25, 439* (BMC IV pg. 769), and 440-41. Marcus Aurelius' Venus Felix coins: BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169-70, 170* (BMC IV pg. 407), 957-59, and 1002-03. Antoninus Pius' Venus Felix coin: BMC Antoninus Pius 1083.

¹⁷⁶ BMC Commodus 439. See Fig. 63.

underneath the deity's chair.¹⁷⁷ As demonstrated by Antoninus' coin with Felix in the legend, the bird is likely an identifying feature of Venus Felix imagery, as it had not been shown with any other epithet on earlier coinage.¹⁷⁸ The wreath could have two different connotations, of kingship or triumph, depending on the circumstance.¹⁷⁹ In this case it may represent both, as it is associated with royalty when depicted within the context of the imperial family. On the other hand, the wreath can be an attribute of Victory personified, and was awarded to generals celebrating triumphs. Here it is shown in Victory's hands, opposite an image of the empress, so it is possible that this representation of a wreath symbolizes both meanings. This coin was struck during a period of conspiracy by Lucilla, the former empress, against her brother and his wife.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps it was with this in mind that Commodus chose the imagery for this coin in order to make the couple appear, in opposition to Lucilla, united and strong under Venus Felix, as well as formidable and divinely sanctioned to rule, as suggested by the symbolism of Victory with the wreath, and with the imperial connotations of the sceptre. The urgency of this message in a period of such confusion may explain why it was struck on several different denominations of currency, the *aureus*, *denarius*, *sestertius*, and *as* in order to better disseminate this idea to a wider range of people.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ BMC Commodus 47-51, 424-25, 440-41. See Fig. 60 and 62.

¹⁷⁸ BMC Antoninus Pius 1083. See Fig. 42.

¹⁷⁹ Jones 1990, pg. 73, 96, 320.

¹⁸⁰ Balsdon 1975, pg. 148.

¹⁸¹ Aurei: BMC Commodus 47-49. Denarii: BMC Commodus 50-51. Sestertii: BMC Commodus 424-25. Asses: BMC Commodus 440-41.

Thus, by examining the attributes used since the reign of Hadrian when epithets of Venus first began to be used on coinage, one can begin to determine which attributes can be used as identifying markers of particular aspects of the goddess. The infant and act of unveiling do not appear with any epithet other than Genetrix, while the apple is only shown once with another aspect of the goddess, which coin of Venus Felix was struck by Commodus relatively late after the apple first appeared on Venus' coinage. Venus Felix can be identified by a dove or globe, as seen on a Hadrianic coin.¹⁸² Finally, Romulus and Remus, Aeneas, and Mars only make appearances on coinage naming Venus Victrix, or without an epithet. That being said, her descendants are depicted only as decorations on her shield. On the other hand, the sceptre and Victory can be seen on coins with all three epithets, so they cannot be used to determine the aspect of the goddess in cases where the legend does not specify it. There is some overlap of attributes between Venus Felix and Genetrix types, as noted above in the one case of the apple, but also with depictions of Cupid. Venus Victrix imagery can also be shared with that of Venus Genetrix, as they can both show the goddess half dressed, and with a helmet and shield. However, other than the traits shared by all three epithets, the only common characteristic of Venus Victrix and Felix is the spear. With these mutual features in mind, unlabelled images of Venus can possibly be identified by the attributes that do not appear with her using a process of elimination. For example, since a spear appears only on coins of Venus Victrix and Felix, if there is no spear on an unlabelled coin the possibility remains that it depicts Venus Genetrix and not Venus Victrix.

¹⁸² BMC Hadrian 756. See Fig. 33.

From the time when epithets began to be used on coinage of the goddess, each emperor seems to have favoured a different aspect of her. Hadrian minted more coins for Venus Genetrix, while Antoninus Pius tended not to put epithets on most of his coinage of the goddess, and Marcus Aurelius, although he too often did not include the aspect of Venus, seems to have had a favourite Venus Victrix type, which he struck several variations of. As discussed above, Commodus seems to have preferred Venus Felix. It is interesting to consider the events of each of their reigns which could have determined why Venus was honoured continuously, but with emphasis put on different aspects of the goddess. As the hypothesis above suggests, Commodus may have wanted to portray an image of a happy marriage in the early years of his rule, while peace remained and before there was an urgent need for an heir. Marcus Aurelius spent much of his time as emperor at war, which could explain the influx of Venus Victrix coinage. Antoninus Pius enjoyed a peaceful rule, and the death of his wife only a few years before his accession as well as the fact that only one of his four children was living at that time all preclude him from a need to emphasize particular aspect of Venus. Hadrian's sudden minting of coinage for Venus Genetrix near the end of his reign may coincide with the late adoption of his successors, portraying an image of the goddess as the divine mother of the imperial family, despite their lack of a blood connection.

Under the adoptive emperors, a gradual rise and fall of coinage of Venus can be seen. She does not appear on any of Nerva's coins, and only on one of Trajan's, which is itself a reproduction of one of Julius Caesar's. An increase began under Hadrian, which peaked during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and began to decline under Commodus.

Following this last emperor's death was a period of civil war, leading towards a new dynasty of emperors, similar to how the Flavians took power following turmoil in Rome after the assassination of Nero and the end of the Julio-Claudians.

The coinage of the first two centuries of the Roman Principate and the last century of the Republic display a variety of changes in the coinage depicting the goddess. One of the most notable of these is that as more coins were minted with portraits of imperial women on the obverse, at the same time more reverse types of Venus were struck. This trend can be seen particularly during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who was minting coins for both his wife and his daughter, who was married to his co-emperor. In comparison, less coins of Venus were struck by the Flavians, likely because neither Vespasian nor Titus were married during their periods of rule. The other major change to the numismatic depiction of Venus was the addition of epithets to her coinage during the reign of Hadrian and the frequency of their use on Antonine coins, which make it possible to better understand the way in which her depiction and reverence had changed after a time of stagnation by the Flavians and exclusion by Augustus' successors.

Chapter 4: Coins as Evidence for the Identification of Statues of Venus

Numismatic images of Venus, particularly the later ones which include epithets, have been used by scholars to attempt to identify figures in relief and free-standing sculptures. However, they often do not agree on what lost cult statues originally looked like. By comparing the statuary images to those on coinage, it is possible to group the statues into types based on the similarities in pose and attributes to the corresponding coins and their legends. This is how the statue type called Venus Genetrix got its name: from its resemblance to the reverse of Sabina coinage dating to AD 134-138, on which the goddess holds an apple and lifts her veil, while the legend reads VENERI GENETRICI (for Venus Genetrix).¹⁸³ All three of the aspects of Venus used on coins of Hadrian and the Antonine dynasty had cult statues which have since been lost, and the original appearance of which scholars struggle to agree upon. The trends of the numismatic evidence discussed in the last three chapters can be used to help understand and comment on the previously established theories of other scholars.

4.1 Theories about the Cult Statue of Venus Genetrix

The temple of Venus Genetrix, dedicated by Julius Caesar in 46 BC, stood in his new Forum Iulium. Initially he had vowed to build a temple to Venus Victrix two years earlier, just before the Battle of Pharsalus, but evidently changed his mind and constructed the temple for his ancestral goddess, who was supposedly the originator of the Julian clan.¹⁸⁴ It has been suggested that he chose to change the epithet of Venus in

¹⁸³ BMC Hadrian 944-49, 1883-84, 1903; Waldstein 1887, pg. 10.

¹⁸⁴ Appian BC 2.10.68.

order to dissociate the building from civil war.¹⁸⁵ Unlike Pompey's temple for Venus, the temple of Venus Genetrix was located inside the *pomerium*, the ritual boundary of the city, in the heart of Rome where it would highly visible to many citizens.¹⁸⁶

The cult statue of this temple, said to have been created by Arkesilaos, has been lost. There is no way of knowing if the name "Venus Genetrix type" is fitting for the Sabina coin type and the statues resembling it, or if they truly reflect the iconography of the cult image. The coin displays the goddess standing while unveiling and holding an apple in her outstretched arm, and the statues of this type mimic this. Their poses, body types, and the way the drapery hangs and reveals the form of the goddess are compared to other sculptures and to numismatic representations of Venus in order to determine whether an individual sculpture is of the Venus Genetrix statue type.¹⁸⁷

The vast majority of the evidence is also fragmentary, so the attributes which many of the statues once held in their missing hands can only be guessed at based on the positioning of the arms, and by comparison with more complete works of art, such as the Myrina terracotta statuettes, which include apples in their hands.¹⁸⁸ Scholars assume that the abundance of statuary evidence of this type indicates that they, as well as the Sabina coins, are based off of a particularly famous original, as the cult statue of Venus Genetrix would have been, especially given its context in the temple of the Forum Iulium.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, the best preserved statue of this type, the Venus at the Louvre, was

¹⁸⁵ Ulrich 1993, pg. 67.

¹⁸⁶ Zanker 1988, pg. 24.

¹⁸⁷ Harcum 1927, pg. 141.

¹⁸⁸ Harcum 1927, pg. 142.

¹⁸⁹ Harcum 1927, pg. 148.

discovered at Frejus, also known as Forum Iulii, a city founded by Julius Caesar, where there likely would have been a replica of the famous cult image.¹⁹⁰

Art historians have also linked the style of the Louvre statue with older Hellenistic and Classical Greek models, such as the Venus in the Gardens by Alkamenes.¹⁹¹

Although Arkesilaos may have been inspired by the sculptures of the Greek masters, it is also possible that the multiple Roman statues of this type are copies of famous Greek ones, and thus have little to do with the cult statue of Venus Genetrix. In addition, although there is a strong similarity of this type to the Sabina coin, many other different images also appear on coins with the same legend. However, the Sabina coin is one of the first coins to be struck with the epithet Genetrix, and was done so more frequently than other contemporary Venus Genetrix coinage.¹⁹²

Although the type continued to be used by Hadrian's successors opposite images of their wives and daughters, it was not used again with the same epithet. Instead, the type was struck with the name of Venus, or Venus Augusta, but do not include an epithet specifying the aspect of the goddess.¹⁹³ This could imply two different things: the first is that the Venus Genetrix statue was so famous at this point that there was no need to identify her image on coinage. This is plausible, considering that the act of unveiling

¹⁹⁰ Harcum 1927, pg. 143. See Fig. 64.

¹⁹¹ Elderkin 374.

¹⁹² There is only one example of each of the other three Genetrix types minted by Hadrian in the BMC: ¹⁹² BMC III pg. 379, number 12 under 'Coins IV pg. 24), 1061, 1120-23, 1132, 2164-65, 2168. BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172-73, 1187-88, 1225. BMC Commodus not in the British Museum', BMC Hadrian 529, and 749* (BMC III pg. 334). The Sabina coin type, showing Venus Genetrix undraping and holding an apple can be found in the BMC nine times: BMC Hadrian 944-49, 1883-84, 1903.

¹⁹³ BMC Antoninus Pius 46, 145* (BMC IV pg. 24), 44-46, 439.

does not appear with any legends referring to the other aspects of Venus. It is one of the few features of Venus on coinage that appears exclusively with Genetrix or without an aspect. The other option is that this coin does not represent the cult statue, and therefore the image is not associated with an aspect of Venus on later coins. Rather, this image could just be one of many types that was minted in honour of Venus Genetrix, with no particular connection to her cult.

The Sabina coins were minted approximately 180 years after the dedication of the temple and the original cult statue. Contemporary to the time of the dedication of the temple in 46 BC, several coins of Venus were struck, however her head usually appears on the obverse of these, leaving little room for identifying attributes. The reverses of these coins do not display any attributes unique to Venus Genetrix that can be used to identify her. Rather, most of the reverses of 46 BC depict Victory either walking and holding a trophy, or riding in a *quadriga* and carrying a palm branch and a wreath.¹⁹⁴ She also appears on later coinage with the legends naming Venus Genetrix, Victrix, and Felix, although always as a smaller figure standing in the palm of the larger goddess¹⁹⁵ Victory is one of two attributes, the other being a sceptre, that appear with all three epithets.

¹⁹⁴ RRC 465.3-7. See Fig. 18 and 19.

¹⁹⁵ With Genetrix: BMC Hadrian 529, 749* (BMC III pg. 334); BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171-73, 955* (BMC IV pg. 536), 1166.

With Victrix: BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 174, 353-56, 956, 960-65, 1001* (BMC IV pg. 543).

With Felix: BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169-70, 957-58, 1002-03; BMC Marcus Aurelius and Commodus 1592* (BMC IV pg. 656); BMC Commodus 47-51, 424-25, 440-41.

Other contemporary reverse images show a trophy with objects of war and captives.¹⁹⁶ The only other time that a prisoner appears on Venus coinage is during the rule of Marcus Aurelius, who minted a reverse of Venus standing holding a Victory, with a shield and a captive at her feet. This coin bears the name of Venus Genetrix.¹⁹⁷ A third coin type of Venus from 46 BC shows the Dioscuri on the obverse, with Venus on the reverse with a set of scales, a sceptre, and Cupid.¹⁹⁸ This is the only time that scales appear on coinage of the goddess. The image of Cupid cannot be used identify to Genetrix coinage, as he can also be associated with depictions of Venus Felix. As mentioned above, the sceptre is used commonly with all three of the main epithets of Venus, and thus cannot help with identifying the aspect of the goddess. None of the Caesarian coin types of 46 BC share attributes with the Sabina coin, making it difficult to draw similarities between the later coin, as well as the so-called Venus Genetrix type statues, and the iconography of Venus contemporary to the creation of the original sculpture.

The obverse images of Venus on the coins of 46 BC do not include any drapery, which could suggest that it had been removed, like the pose of the goddess on the Sabina coin. Some coins minted before 46 BC depict busts of Venus wearing a veil, and others do not. Of the coins struck between 46 and 20, she does not wear any drapery in obverse images, with one exception in 46-45, the coin with drapery and captives on the reverse.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ RRC 468. See Fig. 20.

¹⁹⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171. See Fig. 50.

¹⁹⁸ RRC 463. See Fig. 17.

¹⁹⁹ RRC 468. See Fig. 20

Otherwise, drapery returns to her bust representations on a coin type minted between 19 and 4.²⁰⁰ It is also possible that the drapery on obverse images of Venus on Republican coinage before the temple of Venus Genetrix was built is of little significance, as indicated by the inconsistency with which it appears. Venus generally disappears from obverses after the life of Augustus, so there are no examples of draped obverse images whose identities can be confirmed by epithets in the legends.

Others have suggested that the Genetrix cult statue showed Venus standing with Cupid accompanying her, as she is depicted in several reliefs in Ravenna, Sperlonga, and Algiers.²⁰¹ The Ravenna relief was carved in the middle of the first century of the Principate, during the reign of Claudius. It depicts the imperial family, with Augustus and a woman (likely either Livia or Antonia) in the guise of Jupiter and Venus, with a half-nude Germanicus, and an unidentified prince.²⁰² The age of the different figures, as well as the different generations to which they belonged indicate that this cannot be a representation of a scene that actually took place. All of the extant figures are barefooted, which also implies a degree of divinity.²⁰³ In this case, the main identifying feature of Venus is the small Cupid on her shoulder. The Sperlonga Venus can also be recognized by her son perched on her shoulder.²⁰⁴ It dates to the reign of Tiberius. Although only her head and shoulders appear in this relief, one of her shoulders is uncovered, perhaps

²⁰⁰ RIC I Augustus 367-68. See Fig. 28.

²⁰¹ Weinstock 1971, pg. 86.

²⁰² Wood 1999, pg. 136-7. See Fig. 65.

²⁰³ Matheson 1996, pg. 184.

²⁰⁴ See Fig. 66.

reflecting the slipping drapery or unveiling associated with the Venus Genetrix statue type.

The most notable of the three carvings is the Algiers relief, which several scholars say portrays a group of statues, including what is believed to be Venus Genetrix with Cupid, and Divus Julius in the temple of Mars Ultor.²⁰⁵ Venus and Mars are thought to be depictions of sculptures, not the divinities themselves, because they seem to be standing on statue bases. The relief is damaged at the feet of the figure thought to be Divus Julius, so there is no way of knowing if he too appeared to have a statue base. Although this portrait is unlike others of Julius Caesar from his lifetime or from the early Principate, some scholars have noted that he was portrayed with a younger face as time progressed.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, there is a small hole in the carving above his head, which is thought to have been a spot to mount a metal star. This would symbolize the divinity of the figure beneath it.²⁰⁷ The figure of Mars is more easily identified through his weaponry, beard, and breast plate.

Meanwhile, Venus is recognizable in the relief carving because of her pose and clinging drapery, which resemble her depiction on coinage as well as statues of the Venus Genetrix type.²⁰⁸ One of her shoulders is also exposed by the slipping of her veil, which is similar to the bare shoulder on the Sperlonga relief.²⁰⁹ Venus is also the goddess shown most often in conjunction with Mars because of their affair in mythology. In this relief a

²⁰⁵ Zanker 1988, pg. 196; Beard et al. 1998, pg. 331. See Fig. 67.

²⁰⁶ Gsell 1899, pg. 40-41.

²⁰⁷ Beard et al. 1998, pg. 333, caption for Figure 7.2.

²⁰⁸ Gsell 1899, pg. 38.

²⁰⁹ See Fig. 66.

Cupid stands at her feet, offering her a sword. As demonstrated by a coin of Marcus Aurelius, Cupid could be an attribute of Venus Genetrix, although he also appears with images of Venus Felix on some of Hadrian's coins.²¹⁰ It is because of the combination of figures that this figure is thought to be Venus Genetrix. Here she is shown with her son, one of her famous descendants, and her lover, another supposed ancestor of the Roman people, as the father of Romulus and Remus.²¹¹

The Algiers relief is an example of the difficult nature of the evidence from this period. The relief itself is not solidly dated, although reasonably if it is meant to depict the temple of Mars Ultor it must have been carved after the temple was dedicated in 2 BC and before the end of the first imperial dynasty, as indicated by the styling of the cloak of the so-called Divus Julius in the typical manner of Julio-Claudian men.²¹² The relief also cannot be confirmed to indeed be a representation of the temple of Mars Ultor. Furthermore, if it does depict that temple, the identification of the figures remains uncertain, whether or not these figures were meant to portray the temple statues.

On the other hand, it is at least likely that there was a sculpture of Venus in the temple of Mars Ultor. Ovid states that Venus stood joined with Mars in the temple built by Augustus, although he does not mention which aspect of the goddess.²¹³ He states “*venerit in magni templum, tua munera, Martis, stat Venus Ultori iuncta, vir ante fores.*”

²¹⁰ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1212; BMC Hadrian 750-56. For a detailed discussion of the Hadrianic coins, see below. See Fig. 33 and 58.

²¹¹ Zanker 1988, pg. 195-96.

²¹² Gsell 1899, pg. 38. Even if the relief does not represent the temple of Mars Ultor, the cloak would still imply a date between the end of the first century BC and the first half of the first century AD.

²¹³ Ovid, *Tristia* 2.1.295-96.

” If she enters the temple of mighty Mars, thine own gift, Venus stands close to the Avenger, in the guise of a man before the door.”²¹⁴ The temple Ovid describes here is the temple of Mars Ultor, the “*munera*” built by Augustus, who is addressed as “*tua*” in this poem. Although it is translated as “close” in the Loeb translation given above, in this case *iuncta* could possibly be interpreted as joined, or sharing a statue base, as the two figures seem to do in the relief.²¹⁵ It is probable that the two figures also appeared together on the pediment decoration of the temple of Mars Ultor, as well as the temple of Venus Genetrix.²¹⁶

Finally, the temporal separation and location from the original monuments, the statues and temple of Mars Ultor being in Rome, and the Algiers relief in Carthage, brings to question how similar the figures on the relief would have been to the statues in the temple. However, if coins depicting the same characters had been in circulation, then it is possible that the artist could have based the relief images on these. For example, Cupid appears with Venus on the obverse of a coin minted ca. 46 BC by Caesar, whose name is on the reverse legend.²¹⁷ If the cult statue of Venus Genetrix (and her statue in the temple of Mars Ultor) depicted mother and son together, then the sculptor of the Algiers relief could have known this from the coin image, and based his carving on it, despite never having seen either statue personally.

²¹⁴ Translation by A. L. Wheeler, 1924.

²¹⁵ Gsell 1899. pg. 39.

²¹⁶ Beard et al. 1988, pg. 200; Grossi 1936, pg. 218.

²¹⁷ RRC 468. See Fig. 20.

This raises the question of how contemporary viewers of the coins would have interpreted the numismatic images. It is uncertain whether or not an artist in Carthage would have known who this coin was meant to honour without explicitly being told so in the legend, especially since he would have likely been working over fifty years after the coin was struck. Zanker suggests that at least a local Roman would likely be able to recognize such an image, as it would have been available to him to see as part of religious rituals and life in the city.²¹⁸ The Algiers relief was originally carved in Carthage for an altar. It is possible that whoever commissioned this monument had witnessed the temple first hand and described or drew the statues for the artist to base the relief on, or even showed him a coin of the cult statue as a model, if one was minted.

In any case, the repetition of Venus with Cupid on three reliefs carved during the Julio-Claudian dynasty, supported by coins with similar imagery from around the time of the dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix suggests that the depiction of these two deities together must hold some significance, possibly being based on a famous work like the lost cult statue of Arkesilaos.

A third option that has been suggested is that the cult statue of Venus Genetrix showed the goddess holding a Victory in one outstretched palm and a sceptre in her other hand, while a shield rests at her feet, as she is depicted on a series of coins from 44 BC.²¹⁹ As Weinstock points out, a similar image appears on later coins with legends of both

²¹⁸ Zanker 1997, pg. 179.

²¹⁹ RRC 480.3-5, 480.7-18. See Weinstock 1971, pg. 86, n. 4. See Fig. 21.

Venus Victrix and Genetrix.²²⁰ Thus, it is possible that this figure represents the cult statue of Venus Victrix from Pompey's temple, as Richardson has suggested.²²¹ The obverse of the coin described above displayed a bust of Caesar, with legends either identifying him as dictator for life, or imperator. On the one hand, the association of Venus with Caesar immediately brings to mind their familial connection and the temple he built for her as the founder of his clan and the Roman people. On the other hand, the presence of Victory suggests an image of Pompey's Venus Victrix, which could have been shown opposite a bust of Caesar as a way of declaring his ultimate success over his rival Pompey by appropriating one of his major contributions to the Roman public.²²² Caesar had vowed a temple to that aspect of the goddess at the Battle of Pharsalus, so it is also possible that this coin depicted Venus Victrix without being the cult statue from Pompey's temple, and was rather a way to recall his allegiance to the deity and remind viewers of his success in war.

4.2 Possible Statuary Representations of Venus Victrix

An interesting suggestion is made by John Pollini concerning the identification of the cult statue of Venus Victrix. He supposes that the statue type of Venus of Arles could be replicating the original statue from Pompey's temple. This type depicts the goddess semi-nude, standing with her weight on her left leg, and her head turned to the left to look at whatever she once held in her hand away from her body.²²³ Another type, the Naked

²²⁰ Weinstock 1971, pg. 86.

²²¹ Richardson 1992, pg. 411.

²²² Pollini 1996, pg. 777.

²²³ Pollini 1996, pg. 763-64, 774-775. See Fig. 68.

Aphrodite with a Sword, closely resembles the pose of the Arles Venus.²²⁴ An Augustan cameo seems to combine the two statue types and shows a Venus Arles type figure holding a sword and shield, which Pollini thinks would be absolutely appropriate for a statue of Venus Victrix.²²⁵ He also suggests that the image does not appear in later works of art because it did not remain culturally relevant for long after the death of Pompey, and after Octavian successfully avenged Caesar.²²⁶

With this theory in mind, it is interesting to note that while a shield does appear frequently on coins of Venus throughout the centuries relevant for this paper, there is only one instance of a sword depicted on a coin with Venus. In this case it is not even one of her attributes, but in the hand of Roma, with whom Venus is depicted on the obverse of a coin minted in 75 BC.²²⁷ If Pollini is correct in saying that the image of Venus Victrix with a sword lost its potency over time, then the numismatic record supports this through the lack of commemoration of this statue on coinage. However, Pompey's influence in the middle of the first century BC, particularly through his connections with the moneyers of his time, would suggest that a few coins would have been minted with this statue on it at the time of its creation, as was likely the case for the statue of Venus Genetrix, no matter how her cult image originally looked, with the influx of Venus coinage around the time of the dedication of the temple. Therefore, one must consider why there was no numismatic celebration of Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix at the time that it was built.

²²⁴ See Fig. 69.

²²⁵ Pollini 1996, pg. 763-64.

²²⁶ Pollini 1996, pg. 779.

²²⁷ RRC 391.3. See Fig. 11.

The Algiers relief, with Cupid handing a sword to his mother, could instead reflect this Venus Victrix. The identification of the Venus in the temple of Mars Ultor is not certain, and could just as easily be Victrix as Genetrix. On the other hand, if the relief does not display the statues at this cult, perhaps it could be a likeness of Pompey's Venus Victrix grouped with other well-known statues in Rome, especially since the identification of the third figure on the Algiers relief is uncertain.

Yet another suggestion has been made about how Pompey's Venus Victrix might have appeared. Weinstock says that she probably wore armour or was accompanied by weapons and trophies, as she appears on Pompey's ring as described by Dio.²²⁸ He writes “τό τε ὄλον τῆ τε Ἀφροδίτῃ πᾶς ἀνέκειτο... καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γλύμμα αὐτῆς ἔνοπλον ἐφόρει...” “In general he was absolutely devoted to Venus.... Accordingly he used also to wear a carven image of her in full armour on his ring...”²²⁹ Weinstock only uses one contemporary coin as evidence, which minted in 56 BC by Pompey's son-in-law. It depicts the bust of the goddess on the obverse and three trophies on the reverse, along with a jug and a *lituus*, a curved augural staff.²³⁰ The trophies likely represent success in battle, while the jug and *lituus* are both symbols of priesthood, respectively of sacrifice and divination.²³¹ These would all be fitting attributes for Venus Victrix, who was said to have supported Pompey in war, winning him three triumphs represented by the trophies,

²²⁸ Weinstock 1971, pg. 83. Cassius Dio, Roman Histories 43.43.3

²²⁹ Translation by E. Cary, 1916.

²³⁰ RRC 426.3. See Fig. 14.

²³¹ Jones 1990, pg. 171, 309, 312

and with the divine sanction suggested by the religious objects. A similar image is also reported to have Pompey's ring.²³²

Weinstock also says that an armed Venus Victrix appears on other coins, and that these were minted by Julius Caesar or others later, but does not describe them or provide their catalogue numbers.²³³ This makes it difficult to tell which Caesarian coins he thinks represent Venus Victrix. The bust of the goddess appears on the obverses of some Caesarian coins which depict trophies on their reverses, alongside shields, *carnices* (a kind of war trumpet), captives, spears and chariots.²³⁴ None of Caesar's coins seem to show the deity in armour. Thus, the theory that the cult image of Venus Victrix wore armour or held weapons and trophies needs further support than just the bust of the goddess opposite a trophy on two coins.

Weinstock seems to have gotten the idea from Wissowa's section on Venus in W. H. Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*. However, Wissowa's description of the statue is quite different from Weinstock's. The German scholar states that the statue of Venus Victrix holds a helmet in one hand and spear in the other, with a shield resting at her feet. She is not armoured, but is rather half-draped and nude from the waist up. Yet Wissowa also states that this statue was at the temple of Venus on the Capitoline, not crowning Pompey's theatre.²³⁵ An inscription mentioning a public image of Venus Victrix on the Capitol suggests that this is the aspect

²³² Santangelo 2007, pg. 231.

²³³ Weinstock 1971, pg. 83, n. 5.

²³⁴ RRC 468, 482. See Fig. 20 and 22.

²³⁵ Wissowa 1937, *Myth. Lex.* 6.199.

of the goddess worshipped at this earlier Republican temple.²³⁶ The description of this cult statue is based on an Augustan coin type, which had been reused frequently during the early Principate, as it had been repeated by all the Flavians, and by Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius.²³⁷ If the later emperors were not simply trying to align themselves with the iconographic program of their predecessor, then it is likely that this type represented a well-known statue, which this one would have been, especially because of its location on the Capitol. These attributes, the helmet, spear, and shield, are not unique on coinage to Venus Victrix. The helmet and shield can both be seen on coins with the epithet Genetrix, and the spear with Felix. However, they do not appear together with a name other than Venus Victrix.

This type is usually minted without an identifying epithet in the legend, with the Aurelian coin as an exception. The version struck by Marcus Aurelius does identify this goddess as Venus Victrix.²³⁸ He is the first to use this title on coinage, yet Hadrian was the first of the emperors to use Venus' epithets on coins, although he did not use one with this coin type. Curiously, he only minted two Venus coins without an epithet in the legend.²³⁹ If the Sabina coin does indeed reflect the cult statue of Venus Genetrix, as the inscription suggests, one would expect Hadrian to include the name of the goddess on both his coin types depicting famous statues of her, not just the Genetrix type.²⁴⁰ This

²³⁶ CIL 1² p. 331.

²³⁷ RIC I Augustus 250a; RIC II Vespasian 1077-78; RIC II Titus 13-16, 32-35. 51-54 386-88; RIC II Domitian 847, 849; BMC Trajan 696; BMC Hadrian 920; BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 161-62. The shield is not always present.

²³⁸ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 161-62.

²³⁹ BMC Hadrian 920 and 1077. See Fig. 34 and 36.

²⁴⁰ Cp. BMC Hadrian 529, 750-56, 944-49, 1883-84, 1903. See Fig. 32, 33, and 35.

either suggests the emperor's inconsistency, which seems unlikely given that every other Venus coin he minted contains the name of Genetrix or Felix, or that this coin type did not reflect a famous statue.

Perhaps the lack of a reverse legend, let alone an epithet, was done to better reflect the original coin type minted by Augustus, which did not mention the name of the goddess, instead reading CAESAR DIVI F (Caesar son of a god). This coin type is the only evidence that Wissowa uses to support his claim that this is the famous Capitoline Venus. Furthermore, if this coin type does represent the Capitoline Venus, there is no evidence which suggests that this cult statue would resemble the one in Pompey's temple of Venus Victrix, other than that they were both meant to represent the same aspect of the goddess.

4.3 The Cult Statue of Venus Felix in the Temple of Venus and Roma

Venus Felix, the third aspect of the goddess identified on coinage of the first two centuries of the Principate, also once had a cult statue at the temple of Venus and Roma dedicated by Hadrian circa AD 135. Despite the fact that Sulla had used both Felix and Epaphroditos in his own nomenclature, the epithet Felix first came to be associated with Venus until the reign of Hadrian. The later placement of a sacrificial altar for newly-wed couples strongly suggests that the aspect of Venus honoured at this temple was Felix, who was meant to represent prosperity and happiness in marriage.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Boatwright 1987, pg. 131.

The cult statue of Venus Felix has been lost, although what the sculpture looked like seems to be less debated by scholars than those of Victrix and Genetrix. Richardson and Boatwright point out that a series of coins was struck circa AD 134-138 which bears the name of Venus Felix.²⁴² They both think that this coin type reflects how the cult statue of Venus in this temple would have appeared. However, they interpret the type differently. Richardson says that she sits on a throne, holding a Victory and a sceptre.²⁴³ On the other hand, Boatwright identified the winged figure as Cupid and the long object as a spear, agreeing with the description in the BMC.²⁴⁴

Neither Victory nor Cupid are unique attributes of any aspect of Venus, as the former is on coins with all three epithets, and the latter also appears on coins of Venus Genetrix minted by Marcus Aurelius in addition to the Hadrianic Venus Felix series in question. If it is indeed Cupid on these coins, these are the only two Felix types on which he can be seen. Since neither attribute is unique to a specific epithet they cannot be used to determine which of the two deities appears on the Hadrianic coins. The winged figure does indeed look similar to an image of Cupid firing a bow on another one of Hadrian's coins.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, it does not at all resemble the Victory depicted on an earlier Hadrianic coin.²⁴⁶ Based on these contemporary coins, as well as Republican representations of Victory, it seems as though she usually appears draped, while Cupid is

²⁴² BMC Hadrian 751-756. See Fig. 33.

²⁴³ Richardson 1992, pg. 410.

²⁴⁴ Boatwright 1987, pg. 131; Mattingly BMC IV pg. 334.

²⁴⁵ BMC Hadrian 1077. See Fig. 36.

²⁴⁶ BMC Hadrian 529. It is somewhat difficult to identify this figure as Victory, although it does appear to have wings, as well as drapery similar to that of the larger goddess. See Fig. 32.

often naked. In the case of the suspected cult statue coin, it looks as though Venus is holding a nude figure, so it is more likely to be Cupid than Victory.

Marcus Aurelius seems to have reused this type several times, although the BMC now identifies the figure in Venus' hand as Victory, not Cupid as before. The Aurelian and Hadrianic coin types certainly look alike, although the extent of the similarities is difficult to tell because of the damaged condition of the later samples. The one visible difference between them is that some Aurelian versions of this type seem to have the winged figure facing the left, while the Hadrianic form stands facing the front. The damage prevents details of the figure's clothing from being seen, so it is unclear whether it is nude or draped. The epithet *Genetrix* appears on one of the seven Aurelian samples, while *Felix* is inscribed three times, and without a specific epithet three additional times.²⁴⁷ Given that the title *Felix* is used far more frequently than any other of the goddess with this type, or with any other type of seated Venus coin, it is likely that coins of her sitting represent her aspect as *Felix*. Of only four different reverse types inscribed with the name *Felix*, two do not have the goddess sitting, one of which does not show her at all.²⁴⁸ This coin, as well as the only one showing Venus *Felix* standing was struck only once.

²⁴⁷ BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 159, 1174, and 1189* (BMC IV pg. 575) contain the no epithet; 169, 957, and 1002 use the title *Felix*; 173 calls Venus *Genetrix*.

²⁴⁸ In addition to the type described above, BMC Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 170* (BMC IV pg. 407) and 959 depict Venus sitting. She does not sit on BMC Antoninus Pius 1083* (BMC IV pg. 164) or BMC Commodus 439* (BMC IV pg. 769). The coin of Antoninus Pius pictures a dove with the inscription *VENERI FELICI* (for Venus *Felix*).

A written source seems to confirm that both cult images in the temple of Venus and Roma were seated, as Cassius Dio reports that the architect Apollodorus criticized Hadrian's design of the temple, saying that its roof would be too low for the goddesses to stand upright.²⁴⁹ This would imply that any seated depiction of Venus on coins would be modelled after this cult statue. Boatwright suggests that while the basic pose of the sculptures was decided before Hadrian's death, the details of their attributes were not confirmed until the reign of Antoninus Pius when the statues were completed.²⁵⁰ This could account for the discrepancy between the Hadrianic and Aurelian coins. Cupid may have been a part of the original plan, and was depicted on coins from the initial dedication of the temple. On the other hand, Victory could have replaced him in the final design, making the Aurelian samples more accurate representations of what the cult statue of Venus Felix actually looked like.

Although it is currently impossible to know for certain what any of these lost cult statues originally looked like, coinage gives hints which can help to narrow down the possibilities of the sculptures' appearances. Certainly this can be problematic, in that the numismatic and sculptural records may not correspond, such as with Pollini's theory about Pompey's statue of Venus Victrix, or with the question of varied interpretation of the images themselves, both by modern scholars as proven by Richardson and Boatwright with the statue of Venus Felix, and by contemporary artists possibly using coin images as models for recreating original statues which they had never seen. In any case, despite the

²⁴⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69.4.

²⁵⁰ Boatwright 1987, pg. 123.

difficulties of the evidence, coins allow scholars to fill in the gaps of the sculptural record with numerous hypotheses based on their similarity to the figure types of sculptures, their legends, and their historical contexts. They are a particularly valuable kind of proof to use in a study of statues since they include the information that sculptures tend to leave out, as the inscriptions can provide approximate dating, and can identify the main figures depicted.

Conclusion

Over the approximately three hundred year span that this research project covers, the numismatic representation of Venus changed depending on who minted the coins, and the socio-political context surrounding them. Republican coins from the late second – early first century BC tended to show Venus on the reverses of coins as only a figurehead on a prow, or occasionally driving a *biga*. When Sulla rose to power, moneyers began to place a portrait of Venus, Sulla's favourite goddess, on the obverse of coins, giving it a position of prominence. Only bust images of Venus could be seen on coins for about forty years. During this time Pompey the Great had become a leading man in Rome, and continued minting coins of Venus, while also building a temple to Venus Victrix. Following the fall of Pompey, the dictatorship of Julius Caesar began, and Venus' image was once again placed on the reverses (although not exclusively), now opposite portraits of Caesar, marking the first time that she appeared in connection with a depiction of a mortal on coins. Caesar claimed to be descended from Venus, and tried to make this abundantly clear in his coinage, as well as in his construction of the Temple of Venus Genetrix.

Following Caesar's death, his successor Octavian/Augustus managed to mint three more coin types for the goddess before she disappeared completely from Roman coinage until AD 79, when the Flavians reused one of Augustus' reverse types opposite obverse portraits of the emperor Titus. In the following years his likeness was replaced with those of the imperial women, his daughter Julia, and his sister-in-law/future empress Domitia Longina. This was the first time that Venus was depicted opposite images of empresses.

The goddess was eventually shown more frequently opposite female imperial portraiture than with depictions of the emperors. At the same time, Venus' name began to be included in the reverse legends of the coins, allowing the images to be interpreted far more easily by both contemporary and modern viewers.

After the fall of the Flavian dynasty, neither the new emperor Nerva nor his successor Trajan minted any new Venus coin types. However, Trajan did strike restorations of some of Julius Caesar's coins. It is likely that the restorations, as well as the Flavian reuse of an Augustan coin type, may signify the desire for later emperors to connect the iconographic program of their own rules to those of their predecessors, creating continuity between the dynasties. This continued under Hadrian and the Antonine emperors, although they also created new Venus types. Hadrian struck several new types, including using epithets of Venus other than Augusta on coins for the first time. Some carried the name of Venus Felix, likely in reference to the new temple of Roma Aeterna and Venus Felix that Hadrian had built. Other new reverse types described Venus as a mother with the epithet Genetrix, the most notable of which had a portrait of the empress, Sabina, on the obverse.

These two titles, Genetrix and Felix, continued to be used by Antoninus Pius, who frequently used images of Venus on coins of his wife and daughter, marking the start of a large increase in Venus coinage. His successor Marcus Aurelius maintained this surge as he too struck coins for two imperial women. He was also the first to use the epithet Victrix on coins of Venus, likely reflecting the military conquests of his reign. The last emperor of this dynasty, Commodus, minted a few coins naming Venus Victrix and

Genetrix, but ultimately favoured Venus Felix. During his reign the number of Venus coins produced began to dwindle, probably because he only minted them for one empress, his wife Crispina, and only in the first few years after their marriage. Their lack of children caused no reason celebrate Crispina's beauty or fertility with more coins of Venus. By the end of the Antonine dynasty, coins of Venus were minted almost exclusively opposite portraits of imperial women as a way of commemorating the happiness and productivity of their marriages.

Throughout this period of time the coins of Venus show changes in the numismatic record, the most significant of which are her transition in the Flavian period to being shown on reverses only, and with her name in the legend. For the purposes of this study, the addition of epithets to Venus' titulature on coins is also crucial to understanding the iconography of individual aspects of the goddess. The gradually increased usage of epithets from Hadrian to Commodus, who used epithets on all of his coins of Venus, allows for more comparison between epithets and attributes of the goddess.

Essentially, based on the evidence of coinage from 151 BC to AD 192 it seems as though the aspect of Venus on coins would be chosen based on the stage of life of the moneyer or emperor: marriage, birth, war, and succession. Thus, Venus went from being depicted on coins as the ancestral goddess of the Julio-Claudians to becoming a numismatic symbol of the importance of legitimate succession within the imperial household by emphasizing Venus' role as a fertility goddess shown in connection with the second century AD empresses.

A similar iconographic study could be done focusing on other gods or personifications. Certainly it is useful for understanding which attributes can be used to identify the deities generally, but also in their more specific aspects. In turn, having broad knowledge of the depictions of a variety of gods may help in determining what missing statues might have looked like, or even recognizing the images of unidentified and disputed deities. A further step that could be taken after a study of another god has been completed is to determine if certain attributes correspond with specific epithets, regardless of which deity they are shown with. For example, one could compare the attributes and poses of Venus Victrix with those of Jupiter Victor, keeping in mind what makes them similar or different. This would give contemporary scholars further understanding about how the gods functioned under specific aspects, and how important epithets could be for the depiction of the deities.

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, a full study of a god on coins can greatly inform scholars on the appearance of missing sculptures, as simply comparing a single coin type to a statue is not a sound way of determining how the sculpture appeared originally. Scholars have conflicting opinions, and often base these on different coins as models of what the statues once looked like. Instead, it would be more useful to look at the group of that deity's coins as a whole in order to gain a more complete understanding of how the god was typically depicted, and which attributes were most commonly shown with certain epithets. This allows for informed guesses to be made about missing or fragmentary sculpture.

Studies such as this can help to illustrate the way in which the gods were presented, but also how contemporary events could shape that depiction, with certain aspects shown on coinage under specific circumstances. This also reveals the power of coins to disseminate the messages about the contexts of their minting to the general public, as one of the chosen media for communicating imperial ideals to the Roman people. They allow state iconography to be spread far and wide, to be seen on a daily basis by a broad spectrum of viewers. Coins are also continuously produced, so there are many chances to mint new images quickly. This makes coins the perfect media to do an iconographic study of the way a god was depicted depending on the changing social and political circumstances of the imperial family.

Appendix

	<p>Fig. 1 RRC 205 minted in 151 BC by P. Cornelius Sulla. The head of a god, possibly Janus or Saturn, appears on the obverse. Venus is thought to decorate the prow of the ship on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 2 RRC 258 minted in 129 BC by Sex. Iulius Caesar. Roma is depicted on the obverse, while Venus drives a biga as Cupid crowns her from behind.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3 RRC 313 minted in 106 BC by L. Memmius Gal. Saturn is shown in the obverse. Similar to RRC 528, Venus is in a biga holding a sceptre, but in this case Cupid is flying with a wreath.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4 RRC 320 minted in 103 BC by L. Iulius Caesar. Mars wears a helmet on the obverse, as Venus rides in a chariot pulled by Cupids, with a sceptre in her hand. A lyre appears on the left side.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5 RRC 349 minted in 87 BC by L. C. Memmius Gal. As RRC 313 (fig. 3 above). Likely minted by a relative of the earlier moneyer.</p>

	<p>Fig. 6 RRC 357 minted in 84 BC by C. Norbanus. Venus is shown on the obverse for the first time. A prow, caduceus, ear of corn, and fasces with an ax appear on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 7 RRC 359 minted in 84-83 BC by Sulla. Venus' head with Cupid holding a palm branch are depicted on the obverse. The reverse shows two trophies with a jug and lituus.</p>
	<p>Fig. 8 RRC 375 likely minted in 81 BC by Q. B. Cornelia. Venus' head is depicted on the obverse, while two <i>cornucopiae</i> are shown on the reverse. RRC 376 is similar, except that a single cornucopia appears on the reverse with the legend EX S. C.</p>
	<p>Fig. 9 RRC 382 struck in 79 BC by C. Naevius Balbus. Venus' bust graces the obverse, while she drives a <i>triga</i> on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 10 RRC 391.1 minted in 75 BC by C. Egnatius. Venus' bust is accompanied by Cupid near her shoulder on the obverse. The reverse shows Libertas in a biga with Victory crowning her.</p>

	<p>Fig. 11 RRC 391.3 was also minted in 75 BC by C. Egnatius. This time Libertas appears on the obverse, while Roma and Venus are shown on the obverse. Roma holds a sword, and Venus stands with Cupid and rudders.</p>
	<p>Fig. 12 RRC 419 was struck in 61 BC by M. Lepidus. Venus' head is shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts a man on horseback carrying a trophy.</p>
	<p>Fig. 13 RRC 424 was minted in 57 BC by C. Considius Nonianus. A bust of Venus is depicted on the obverse. A temple, likely the temple of Venus at Eryx, as suggested by the legend ERVC, is on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 14 RRC 426.3 was minted in 56 BC by Faustus Cornelius Sulla. Venus is on the obverse, while three trophies, a jug, and lituus are on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 15 RRC 430 was minted in 55 BC by P. Crassus M. F. A bust of Venus is shown on the obverse, and the reverse shows an armoured woman with a spear guiding a horse.</p>

	<p>Fig. 16 RRC 458 was minted in 47-46 BC by Julius Caesar. Venus' head appears on the obverse, while Aeneas carries Anchises and a palladium on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 17 RRC 463.1 was minted in 46 BC by Mn. Cordius Rufus. The heads of the Dioscuri are shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus carrying a set of scales and a sceptre. Cupid sits on her shoulder.</p>
	<p>Fig. 18 RRC 465.3 was minted in 46 BC by C. Considius Paetus. Venus' bust is on the obverse. The reverse shows Victory driving a <i>quadriga</i> and bearing a wreath and a palm branch.</p>
	<p>Fig. 19 RRC 465.7 was also minted in 46 BC by C. Considius Paetus. The obverse depicts a bust of Venus. Victory carries a trophy on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 20 RRC 468 was minted in 46-45 BC by Julius Caesar. Cupid sits behind Venus' head on the obverse. The reverse shows a trophy, shield, and <i>carynx</i>, as well as captives sitting on the ground.</p>

	<p>Fig. 21 RRC 480.4 was minted in 44 BC by L. Aemilius, M. Mettius, P. Sepullius Macer, or C. Cossutius Mardianus. The obverse shows the head of Caesar. Venus holds a sceptre in one hand and Victory in her other palm on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 22 RRC 482 was minted in 44 BC by Julius Caesar. The head of Venus appears on the obverse. The reverse shows a trophy, a shield, a <i>carnyx</i>, and some spears.</p>
	<p>Fig. 23 RRC 485 was minted in 43 BC by L. Flaminus Chilo. Caesar's head is shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus carrying a sceptre and a caduceus.</p>
	<p>Fig. 24 RRC 494.6 was minted in 42 BC by L. Livineius Regulus, P. Clodius, L. Mussidius, or C. Veibius. The obverse depicts the head of Octavian. The reverse shows Venus sitting down with a bird in her hand, and Cupid hovering nearby.</p>
	<p>Fig. 25 RRC 494.34 was also minted in 42 by the same group of officials as listed above. Apollo's head is on the obverse. Venus appears on the reverse holding a mirror.</p>

	<p>Fig. 26 RIC I Augustus 250a was minted ca. 32-29 BC. Octavian's bust appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus leaning on a column while carrying a helmet and a sceptre. A shield also leans against the column.</p>
	<p>Fig. 27 RIC I Augustus 251 was minted ca. 32-29 BC. Venus' bust is on the obverse. The reverse shows Octavian dressed for war.</p>
	<p>Fig. 28 RIC I Augustus 367 was minted ca. 19-4 BC. Venus' head appears on the obverse. The reverse shows the legend COS IMP CAESAR AVGVVS XI surrounded by priestly implements: a <i>simpulum</i>, a <i>lituus</i>, a tripod, and a <i>patera</i>.</p>
	<p>Fig. 29 RIC II Vespasian 1077 was minted in AD 79. Titus' head is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus holding a helmet and spear as she rests against a column.</p>
	<p>Fig. 30 RIC II Titus 386 was minted in AD 80-81. Julia's head appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus reclining against a column as she lifts a helmet and spear.</p>

	<p>Fig. 31 BMC III Trajan 696 was minted in AD 107. The head of Julius Caesar is on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus resting her weight on a column, carrying a spear and a helmet. A shield lies on the ground.</p>
	<p>Fig. 32 BMC III Hadrian 529 was minted ca. AD 128-132. Hadrian's head is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus with a helmet, shield, and sceptre as she holds a Victory</p>
	<p>Fig. 33 BMC III Hadrian 751 was struck ca. AD 134-138. The emperor's bust appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus carrying Cupid in one hand and a spear in the other as she sits on a chair.</p>
	<p>Fig. 34 BMC III Hadrian 920 was minted ca. AD 134-138. Sabina's head is on the obverse. On the reverse is Venus carrying a helmet and a spear as she leans on a column with a shield at her feet.</p>
	<p>Fig. 35 BMC III Hadrian 944 was minted ca. AD 134-138. The obverse shows Sabina's head. The reverse depicts Venus unveiling as she carries an apple.</p>

	<p>Fig. 36 BMC III Hadrian 1077 was minted ca. AD134-138. Hadrian's head is shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts what is thought to be the cult image of Venus of Aphrodisia, joined by Cupid firing his bow.</p>
	<p>Fig. 37 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 46 was struck in AD 139-40. A bust of Faustina the Elder is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus holding an apple while unveiling herself.</p>
	<p>Fig. 38 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1057 The date of this coin is unknown. The obverse depicts the head of Faustina the Younger. Venus holds a sceptre and an apple on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 39 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1058 The date of this coin is unknown. Faustina the Younger is shown on the obverse. Venus appears on the reverse holding an infant and an apple.</p>
	<p>Fig. 40 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1062 The date of this coin is unknown. The head of Faustina II is on obverse. The reverse shows Venus carrying an apple and a sceptre.</p>
	<p>Fig. 41 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1063 The date of this coin is unknown. The obverse depicts the bust of Faustina II. The reverse shows Venus carrying an apple and rudder. A small dolphin swims around the rudder.</p>

	<p>Fig 42 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1083 The date of this coin is unknown. The head of Faustina II is on the obverse. A dove appears on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 43 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 1099 The date of this coin is unknown. The head of Faustina II appears on the obverse. Venus appears with a Victory in her hand on the reverse. A shield sits on a helmet by her side.</p>
	<p>Fig. 44 BMC IV Antoninus Pius 2193. The date of this coin is unknown. The bust of Faustina II is shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus carrying a sceptre and an apple.</p>
	<p>Fig. 45 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 162 was minted ca. AD 161-176. A bust of Faustina II is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus carrying a helmet and a spear as she leans on a column.</p>
	<p>Fig. 46 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 163 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The head of Faustina II appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus carrying an apple.</p>

	<p>Fig. 47 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 164 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The bust of Faustina II is shown on the obverse. Venus carrying a sceptre and an apple appears on the reverse.</p>
	<p>Fig. 48 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 167 was minted ca. AD 161-76. A head of Faustina II appears on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus carrying a dove and a sceptre.</p>
	<p>Fig. 49 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 169 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The bust of Faustina II is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus sitting down and carrying a Victory and a sceptre.</p>
	<p>Fig. 50 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 171 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The head of Faustina II is depicted on the obverse. Venus holds out a Victory on the reverse as she leans on a shield placed on a prisoner.</p>
	<p>Fig. 51 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 172 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The head of Faustina II is on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus holding a Victory as she grasps a shield. The Dioscuri are thought to decorate the shield.</p>

	<p>Fig. 52 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 174 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The bust of Faustina II is depicted on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus holding out a Victory and clutching a shield resting on a helmet. The shield depicts a wolf.</p>
	<p>Fig. 53 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 959 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The obverse shows Faustina II. The reverse depicts Venus sitting down and hold three small figures in her palm. A sceptre rests behind her.</p>
	<p>Fig. 54 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1000 was minted ca. AD 161-76. The obverse depicts Faustina II. The reverse shows Venus holding Mars' arm. He carries a shield and wears a helmet.</p>
	<p>Fig. 55 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1166. This coin was minted after AD 164. The bust of Lucilla appears on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus carrying a Victory as she leans on a shield which rests on a helmet.</p>
	<p>Fig. 56 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1172 This coin was minted after AD 164. Lucilla appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus holding an apple an unveiling.</p>

	<p>Fig. 57 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1174 This coin was minted after AD 164. Lucilla is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus carrying Victory and a sceptre.</p>
	<p>Fig. 58 BMC IV Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus 1212 This coin was minted after AD 164. Lucilla's head is shown on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus sitting down and carrying an apple and sceptre. Cupid stands in front of her.</p>
	<p>Fig. 59 BMC IV Commodus 44 was minted ca. AD 180-83. Crispina's bust is on the obverse. The reverse shows Venus unveiling and carrying an apple.</p>
	<p>Fig. 60 BMC IV Commodus 47 was minted ca. AD 180-83. The head of Crispina appears on the obverse. The reverse depicts Venus sitting down carrying a Victory who holds a wreath. A dove sits below the chair.</p>
	<p>Fig. 61 BMC IV Commodus 52 was minted ca. AD 180-83. Crispina is on the obverse. Venus carries a helmet and a sceptre on the reverse as she leans on a column. A shield rests on the ground</p>



Fig. 64 Venus Genetrix at the Louvre found near Frejus, dating to the end of the first century BC or the beginning of the first century AD. Now at the Louvre.



Fig. 65 Ravenna Relief found in Ravenna, dating to the middle of the first century AD. Now in the Museo Nazionale di Ravenna. Venus is the only female figure, second from the right.



Fig. 66 Sperlonga Relief from the Sperlonga Grotto, dating to the middle of the first century AD. Now in the Museum at Sperlonga.



Fig. 67 Algiens relief, found near Carthage, dating to the 1st century AD. Now in the Carthage Museum. Venus is on the left, standing next to Mars. Divus Julius appears on the right.



Fig. 68 Venus of Arles, marble, found near Arles, dating to the end of the first century BC, now in the Louvre.



Fig. 69 Naked Aphrodite with a Sword, marble, from the Villa of Theseus in Nea Pafos, 2nd-3rd century AD, Cyprus Museum, Nicosia.

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CIL 1² p. 331

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