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Vacuna. An obscure, ancient Sabine goddess, who (from her name) was assumed to be a patron of leisure, but her identity is obscure. Varro connected her with *Victoria, and others with Bellona, Diana, Minerva or Venus. Horace writes of a dilapidated shrine to her near his farm, and Pliny mentions her grove in Reate. This may have been on the island of Lake Cutilia (modern Velino), where the ice-cold waters of the goddess of the lake were thought to be a cure for diarrhoea; they failed however in the case of the emperor Vespasian, who died of the disease despite taking the 'aquae Cutiliae'. [Horace *Ep* 1.10.49 with Porphyrius; Ovid *Fasti* 6.307-8; Pliny *NH* 3.109]

Valeria. A daughter of Valerius in Tusculum who was in love with her father; her nurse arranged for her to sleep with him in disguise. When Valeria realised she was pregnant she attempted suicide by jumping off a cliff, but survived the fall and returned home. Her father in turn then killed himself from shame. The child was Silvanus, the Roman god of woods and uncultivated land. [Plutarch *Stories* 311a-b]

Veiovis, also written as Vediovis or Vedius. An Etruscan god, with no known mythology, who was, according to Ovid, a version of a young Jupiter, but there also seems to be a connection with *Dis, god of the underworld. The temple at Rome (said to have been built by Romulus) was in a hollow by the Capitol 'between two groves', and was a place of asylum. The statue was of a child with a she-goat, reminiscent of the goat Amalthea who suckled the infant Jupiter in Crete. [Cicero *ND* 3.62; Gellius 5.12.8; Ovid *Fasti* 3.430-38; Varro *LL* 5.74]

Venilia. A name associated with nymphs of the sea, including: **1.** A nymph who was sister to Amata, married to Danaus, and the mother of Juturna and *Turnus, Aeneas' opponent in Italy. [Vergil *Aen* 10.76] **2.** The wife of Janus and mother of the nymph Canens. [Ovid *Met* 14.333-4]

Venus (Greek Ἀφροδίτη). Venus was originally from Lavinium, an Italian goddess of gardens, where vegetables and herbs would be grown (Venus Hortensis), and more generally of birth, death and fertility. Through the cult of Aphrodite at Eryx in Sicily she came to Rome in the third century BC as Venus Erycina, and her mythology and attributes were immediately assimilated to those of Aphrodite. There are traces of the original goddess in the great invocation to 'life-giving Venus' with which Lucretius opens his poem. and also in the linkage with Ceres ('bread') and Neptune ('water'), where Venus might mean something like 'cabbage'; generally however Venus becomes, like Aphrodite, the goddess of pleasurable love, prostitutes and sexual intercourse, though often more serious and caring than her Greek counterpart. The first temples to Venus were in the Circus Maximus and on the Capitol; an early statue was erected to Venus Cluacina (the 'purifier') on the site where the Sabines and Romans were reconciled and the one in the Circus to Venus Murtia (Venus of the myrtle) which was ritually bathed and garlanded at her festival in April. The Homeric Aphrodite as the mother of *Aeneas was taken into Roman mythology to secure Venus as the founding goddess of the Roman people through Aeneas' son Iulus. Julius Caesar accordingly dedicated a temple to her as Venus Genetrix in 48 BC after the battle of Pharsalus, and, as part of his propaganda in promoting the 'gens Iulia', issued coinage with Venus on one side and Aeneas with Anchises and Iulus leaving Troy on the obverse. Sulla and Pompey had also taken Venus as their patron, and in this context of fortune and victory the highest score in dice was called 'Venus'. The famous armless marble statue of 'Venus de Milo' in

the Paris Louvre is of Aphrodite from the late second century BC, found on the island of Melos. The planet Venus is closest to the earth, being viewed as both the morning and evening star. When it rises before dawn it is Lucifer (the Greek Phosphorus or Eosphorus), but shining after sunset it is called Hesperus. [Cicero *ND* 2.23, 53; Livy 10.39; Lucretius 1.1-49; Ovid *Fasti* 4.133-64, 865-78; Naevius fr.122; Pliny 2.36, 15.29, 18.29; Varro *RR* 1.1.6, *LL* 6.20] *See* Aphrodite, Eryx.

Vertumnus or **Vortumnus**. An Etruscan god who came to Rome in 264 BC after the defeat of Volsinii when the victorious consul, M Fulvius Flaccus, dedicated a temple to him in the Tuscan Street. He was a vegetation god, associated with the first harvest, orchards, flowers and possibly trade; his statue was of a handsome young man garland and holding a basket or *cornucopia filled with fruit, vegetables and ears of corn. His original Etruscan consort was called Voltumna, but in Roman mythology she was *Pomona, a nymph of gardens and fruit-trees. From the etymology of his name he was taken to be a 'turner' or 'shape-shifter', and Ovid narrates at length his courtship of Pomona through a series of different guises, ending with that of an old woman who pleads his love, and finally his own youthful form. [Horace *Ep* 1.20.1, *Sat* 2.7.14; Ovid *Fasti* 6.410-1, *Met* 14.641-771; Propertius 4.2; Varro *LL* 5.46, 74]

Vesta (Greek *Ἑστία*). Roman goddess of the fires of altars and hearths, the centre of family worship along with the household gods (Penates and Lar), and invoked at the end of prayers and sacrifices because she 'guards what is deep within'. She is in etymology and genealogy the equivalent of the Greek Hestia, born of Terra and Caelus, and sister to Juno and Ceres; like Hestia she has the role of the white-haired spinster-aunt who stays at home and tends the fire, and so has no mythology and few statues. Vergil represents Aeneas as being given the eternal Vestal fire along with the Penates of Troy by Hector's ghost, and taking them with him to Italy, to illustrate the continuity of Roman history with its Trojan origins. Both Romulus and Numa are credited with building the first round temple to Vesta in the forum, the circular shape in imitation of the first hut settlement. Ovid however says that the shape was in imitation of the spherical cosmos with its central fire, linking home to city and to the world. The temple was rebuilt several times, but kept to the pattern of the round shape and the inner sanctum (which no male could enter) containing the fire, the city's secret treasures, and possibly the *Palladium, the sacred image of Minerva also brought from Troy. The fire was rekindled annually on the Roman New year's Day, March 1, and the festival of the Vestalia was in June, when the temple was cleaned, and a procession of women brought offerings to the goddess. [Cicero *ND* 2.67; Livy 26.27.14; Ovid *Fasti* 3.141, 6.267-316; Plutarch *Numa* 11.1, *Rom* 22.1, *Stories* 309b; Vergil *Aen* 1.292, 2.296-7, 5.744-5, 9.259] *See* Hestia.

Vestal virgins (Vestales). The attendants of Vesta in her temple and the only female priests in Rome. They were six in number (earlier two or four), chosen by the Pontifex Maximus from young girls between the ages of six and ten, usually from senatorial families. They served for thirty years, the first decade as novitiates, the second serving the goddess, and the third instructing the novices; they were then free to marry but rarely did. the vestals were highly honoured in Rome and had many privileges: they lived in their own house (the Atrium Vestae) at the state's expense, were emancipated from their family's control and could manage their own affairs (under the general supervision of the Pontifex Maximus), had a consul's escort of lictor and *fasces*, and reserved places at games and festivals. Their duties in return were to keep the sacred fire burning day and night (if it went out the one responsible was flogged), to offer prayers

for the Roman people and to engage in various other rituals. Strict sexual purity was required during the time of office, and punishment for the loss of virginity was to be buried alive in a special tomb built by the Colline gate, but there were very few such executions. Statues of the Vestals (usually of the senior Vestalis Maxima) show them austere and dignified, dressed in an old-fashioned heavy robe with a bridal-type head-dress and veil. [Ovid *Fasti* 6.283-94; Pliny 4.11; Plutarch *Numa* 10]

Veturia. The mother of *Coriolanus, who, with his wife Volturna and her two grandsons, met him outside the gates of Rome, and, in a stirring and bitter speech, persuaded him not to bring an army against his city; Coriolanus withdrew his army and returned to the city of the Volscians, where he was either killed or sent into lifelong exile. In gratitude to the women for averting the danger, the Romans erected a temple to Fortuna at the place where the meeting took place. [Livy 2.40]

Victoria (Greek *Νίκη*). The personification of victory for the Romans tended to be listed with Salus ('safety'), Concordia ('agreement') and Libertas ('freedom') as a powerful concept requiring a temple in her own right, but Victoria also (as with the Greek *Nike) was associated with more powerful gods like Jupiter or Mars, or seen as an alternate to *Vacuna. The first temple to Victoria was said to have been erected by Evander on the Palatine, in which Romulus dedicated in bronze a four-horse chariot driven by himself, and being crowned by a figure of Victoria; Sulla and Julius Caesar also erected temples to her at Rome. [Cicero *ND* 2.61, 3.61; Livy 10.33, 35.9; Plutarch *Rom* 22, *Caes* 6.1, *Sulla* 6.1]

Vindemiator. See Constellation 26a.

Virbius. Virbius was the name given to *Hippolytus, when, in one tradition, he was restored to life by Asclepius. His patron goddess Diana transported him to Italy and concealed him in her sacred grove at Nemi in the Alban hills; there he was honoured with her and the nymph Egeria. (The priesthood of the shrine was held by a fugitive slave who reigned for a year and then was killed by his successor in the ritual connected with the *Golden Bough.) In time he married Aricia, and gave the town he founded her name. His appearance was that of an old man, explained by a doubtful etymology of his name as 'vir bis' – 'a man twice over'. It was forbidden to touch his statue and also, out of respect for his first death, horses were not allowed in the grove. His son by Aricia was also called Virbius, and, untroubled by his father's history, rushed to war to support *Turnus, driving a chariot with fiery horses. [Ovid *Fasti* 3.261-66, 6.737-62, *Met* 15.491-546; Pausanias 2.27.4; Vergil *Aen* 7.762-82 with Servius]

Virginia. A story from early Rome, around 450 BC, and almost as famous as that of Lucretia. Virginia was the daughter of Verginius and betrothed to Icilius, but she had aroused the passion of the decemvir Appius Claudius. To get her into his power during her father's absence Appius had one of his dependants declare her illegitimate and a slave, and he himself judged the case against her. Despite the pleas of Icilius, the accusations by Verginius on his return and uproar among the people, Appius was adamant. But before Virginia was handed over her father snatched a butcher's knife and stabbed her; he declared that that was the only way to make her free, and called down curses on Appius. As a result of the ensuing revolt the Appius was forced into suicide, the dependant was killed, the power of the decemviri was limited and more democratic procedures introduced into the Roman constitution. [Livy 3.44-49]

Virgo (*genitive* Virginis – 'of Virgo'). The constellation of the winged maiden holding an ear of corn; the brightest star is still called Spica, which means 'ear of corn'. Virgo is variously identified as the goddess Demeter, Cybele, Isis, Athena, Hecate, Eileithyia, Thespia, Tyche ((Fortuna') or Kore, the daughter of Demeter, or the mortal Erigone or Apollo's daughter by Chrysothemis who died as a girl, and was said to have been transformed into a star by her father. Mostly however the figure is taken, with the balancing scales, Libra, in the adjacent constellation, as the personification of Justice – Dike in Greek, Iustitia or Astraea in Latin, the daughter of Zeus and Themis ('divine law'). In Hesiod's myth of the race of iron, when humans degenerate into family feuding, perjury, greed, violence and every kind of wrong-doing, Aidos ('Honour') and Nemesis leave the earth, and this became in the tradition the departure of Justice, who may yet return to earth in a future golden age. [Hesiod *Works* 197-201, *Theog* 145; Hyginus *Astr* 2.25; Manilius 2.31-2; Ovid *Met* 1.149-50; Vergil *Ecl* 4.6] See Constellation **26**.

Virtus. The personification of virtue, deified and publicly revered. A temple was built to her in Rome, which, in an obvious allegory, led into the associated temple of Honos ('Honour'). There was a similar pair of temples at Syracuse, in Sicily. [Augustine *Civ Dei* 4.20; Cicero *ND* 2.61, 79, 3.61, 88; Livy 27.25, 29.11; Plutarch *Marc* 28]

Volturnus or **Vulturnus**. An obscure Roman deity, perhaps the same as *Vertumnus, and eponym of the river Volturnus and mount Vultur, in Apulia which was notorious for its storm-winds. Volturnus had his own priest (or *flamen*) and a festival in August. [Lucretius 5.745; Varro *LL* 6.21, 7.45; Vergil *Aen* 7.729]

Volumnia. See Veturia.

Voluptas or **Volupia**. The goddess of pleasure personified, and recognised as a powerful deity, with her own temple in Rome. Philosophers and moralists set her in opposition to *Virtus. [Augustine *Civ Dei* 4.8; Cicero *ND* 2.61]

Vulcan (Volcanus, sometimes **Mulciber**, Greek *Ἡφαίστος*). The Roman god of fire, not the sheltering home fires under Vesta's protection, but the constructive fire of technology and the smith's forge and the destructive fires of volcanoes, more prevalent in south Italy and Sicily than in Greece. Vulcan was an ancient Roman god, with a priest and a festival, the Volcania, held in August, perhaps established by Romulus, and was particularly honoured in Ostia. An unusual offering during the Volcania was to throw live Tiber fishes, normally immune to the god, into the fire, presumably to avert his destructive force in the hot summer days. His main forge was thought to be under Mount Etna in Sicily, where the *Cyclopes worked on armour and weapons for the gods. In an adaptation of Hephaestus' arms for Achilles in *Iliad* 18, Vulcan, at the request of his wife Venus, forges arms there for Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8, including a magnificent shield on which are portrayed scenes from future Roman history. He has little mythology that is not derived from the Greek Hephaestus, with whom he was immediately identified. Cicero identifies several Vulcans without giving further details – (i) son of Caelus by Minerva and father of Apollo, (ii) son of the Nile and a guardian of Egypt, (iii) son of Jupiter and Juno with a smithy at Lemnos (the Hephaestus version), and (iv) son of Maemalius, and lord of the volcanic islands off Sicily, the Lipari. In Ovid Vulcan is the father of *Servius Tullius, by Ocrisia, a local chieftain's

wife, and the paternity was confirmed by a magic flame appearing on the boy's head; according to Vergil he fathered Caeculus and the monster *Cacus, killed by Hercules. [Cicero *ND* 1.83-4, 3.55; Ovid *Fasti* 3.82, 514, 6.637; Livy 1.39; Plutarch *Rom* 24.5; Varro *LL* 6.20; Vergil *Aen* 7.679-81, 8.198, 370-453, 617-731] See Hephaestus