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The Goddess Ops in Archaic Rome

When Cicero outlines the laws on religion in his work *De legibus*, he includes Ops in the list of divinities able to grant mankind access to heaven (cf. 2, 19; 28), alongside Honos, Victoria, Salus, Mens and other divinities sharing names of concepts, i.e. the divinities that old scholarship used to call ‘personifications’, but should rather be called Qualities, or Virtues, how Cicero himself calls them¹. Students of Roman religion, however, tend not to include her in this category of divinities. Fears, following Stehouwer, believes that Ops was originally a pre-deistic power related to agriculture: ‘she who helps’, endowing objects with a special power-giving fertilizing dynamic energy². For this reason ‘in early Roman cult Ops was not conceived of as the personification of Abundance or of the Harvest, and there is no justification for citing Ops as an example of the primitive Roman's ability to deify 'abstract ideas'³.

Although in recent years most scholars have not interpreted Ops as a pre-deistic, fertilising power, they have still presented interpretations of the goddess very closely related to agriculture, and they have been hesitant to associate Ops with a more complex and nuanced concept. Georges Dumézil has defined Ops ‘l’abondance agricole personnifiée’ (italics mine), associated with Consus, ‘protecteur souterrain des moissons’. Pierre Pouthier, the author of the main monograph on Ops, has similarly thought that originally Ops is rather a ‘déesse peu personnalisée’ than a ‘déesse abstraite’, and that she cannot be compared with later divinities as Aequitas or Clementia. Henk Versnel, elaborating on previous interpretations, has argued that the festivals of Ops represent a manifestation of the abundance of the harvest, which would appear after the closing and the opening

This article is a substantial revision of a chapter of my doctoral thesis, discussed at the Scuola Normale Superiore at Pisa in November 2013. I am very grateful to my supervisors Tim Cornell and Carmine Ampolo, and to the examiners John North, Christopher Smith and Andrea Giardina for having discussed many of the arguments presented here at several stages of their development. For linguistic problems and etymologies I could count on the invaluable help of David Langslow, his profound expertise and patience. Much of the content was improved after a stimulating one hour ‘advanced tutorial’ session that Nicholas Purcell was so generous to provide in his Brasenose office. Adriano La Regina helpfully discussed with me his discoveries at Pietrabbondante. Finally, I should like to thank the anonymous BICS referee for his feedback, which was very useful to clarify my positions in the final mise au point of the paper.

¹ For Virtues see: H. Mattingly, ‘The Roman 'Virtues'', *HThR* 30 (1937) 103-117; J. R. Fears, ‘The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology’, *ANRW II* 17 2 (1981) 827-948; E. Stafford, *Worshipping Virtues: personification and the divine in ancient Greece* (Swansea 2001). For Qualities see A. J. Clark, *Divine Qualities. Cult and community in republican Rome* (Oxford 2007). For a detailed commentary on the text see A. R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De legibus* (Ann Arbor 2004), 332-36. See also the parallel passage *Cic., Nat. deo.* 2, 60-62, with commentary by A.S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De natura deorum, II*, (Harvard-Oxford 1958) 689-98.

²Fears, ‘The Cult of Virtues’ (n.1) 838. For the position of Stehouwer see *infra*.

³Fears, ‘The Cult of Virtues’ (n.1) 838 n. 57. See also 847: ‘[w]hen we meet Fortuna and Ops, as personifications, they have been so transformed by Greek forms and ideas that we can no more reconstruct their primitive significance than we can that of Neptunus’. This ‘agnostic’ approach is of course justifiable, but it does not prove the lack of presence of a cult of Ops as a goddess of abundance in archaic Rome; it is simply expression of scepticism about proving her existence.

of the silos (the *Consualia*)⁴. It is still commonly accepted that Ops in Archaic Rome was a divinity of agriculture and harvest.

In this paper I shall put into question this common assumption on the agrarian nature of the goddess Ops. I think that the argument of Pouthier may be based on the inadequate category of abstraction, and that of Fears on the acceptance of evolutionary ideas and questionable linguistic arguments⁵. Dumézil and Versnel also proposed wholly agrarian interpretations of the goddess, heavily based on etymological reconstructions (most notably, the etymology of *Consus* from *condere*, which is usually accepted in the scholarly orthodoxy on Ops, but is probably wrong). My aim is not to demonstrate that Cicero was right: it is obvious that he was writing having in mind the religion of his time, and nothing of what he says can be used as evidence for Ops in archaic Rome. My assumption is that gods bearing names of concepts allow studying the history of the concept, in a way which is slightly reminiscent of conceptual history⁶. Although we cannot rely on contemporary literary evidence which is essential for conceptual history, conceptual gods are associated to a number of things which are extra-textual, like temples, cult personnel, festivals. Ops, in particular, is connected to two festivals in the archaic Roman *feriale*. This means that the study of Ops in the archaic period allows reconstructing a part of the history of culture and religion of Rome at the time.

My hypothesis is that in the archaic period the goddess Ops was much less ‘agrarian’ than most of modern scholars have been ready to admit and that the evidence shows that she was already connected to a nuanced and politically significant concept. I hypothesize that Ops was indeed conceived as a goddess of abundance in archaic Rome, and that as such she had a fundamental importance in the urban community. I also argue that she might have been associated with royal sovereignty together with the divinities of the *regia*. This essay will be divided in four parts: first of all I shall discuss some etymological matters regarding ops. There are two reasons why this section is necessary. First of all, ancient etymologies also present interpretations and definitions of the goddess and to present them will allow to reconsider ancient scholarship on Ops. Secondly, modern etymologies have been widely used to present specific interpretations of the history of Ops in the

⁴G. Dumézil, ‘Les cultes de la *regia*, les trois fonctions et la triade Jupiter Mars Quirinus’, *Latomus* 13 (1954), 129-39, esp 132 ; P. Pouthier, *Ops et la conception divine de l'abondance dans la religion romaine jusqu'à la mort d'Auguste* (Paris 1981) 160-61; 199-200; H. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden, New York, Köln 1993) 136-277. For further discussion see the appendix below.

⁵It is puzzling how Fears plays with categories such as personification and abstraction to deny the presence of a cult of Virtues in archaic Rome, when he himself rightly demonstrated how these categories are misleading. Fears, ‘The Cult of Virtues’ (n.1) 830-32.

⁶ For an introduction to conceptual history the essential reading is R. Koselleck, *Futures past. On the semantics of historical time* (New York-Chichester 2004) (= *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main 1979)).

archaic period, and it will be necessary to verify whether they are solid or not. After that, I shall analyse the evidence for the cult of Ops in archaic Rome, starting with the cult of the *regia* and that *ad forum*. In the third part of this paper, I shall discuss the associations of festivals in the calendar, and the relationship between Ops and Consus. A further section will be dedicated to Republican Ops, to assess elements of continuity and discontinuity with the archaic period. An appendix will be dedicated to the history of modern scholarship on Ops.

I – The name of Ops

a) Ancient interpretations

The ancient etymologies of Ops tended to connect the name of the goddess with *opus* or *ops/opes*. The oldest and most famous source associating Ops with *opus* is a passage of Varro's *De lingua Latina* (5, 64): *terra Ops, quod hic omne opus et hac opus ad vivendum, et ideo dicitur Ops mater, quod terra mater*. Varro's etymology is followed by Augustine (*civ. Dei* 7, 24 = Varr., *Ant. rer. div.* fr. 106 Cardauns) and Isidore (*orig.* 8, 11, 59). Another set of ancient sources directly connects Ops with *ops/opes*. This is unsurprising given the theological elaboration of divine Virtues in late republican scholarship. If they were divinities granting a certain benefit, and taking the same from this benefit, it must have been natural to define Ops as 'the goddess of ops'. This interpretation of the goddess is attested in Festus (p. 186 L., cfr. Paulus p. 187 L.), and must therefore come from Verrius Flaccus:

Opima spolia dicuntur originem quidem trahentia ab Ope Saturni uxore; quod ipse agrorum cultor habetur, nominatus a satu, tenensque falcem effingitur, quae est insigne agricolae. Itaque illa quoque cognominatur Consiva, et esse existimatur terra. Ideoque in Regia colitur a populo Romano quia omnes opes humano generi terra tribuat; ergo et opulenti dicuntur terrestribus rebus copiosi; et hostiae opimae praecipue pingues; et opima magna et ampla.

The *opima spolia* are said to originate from Ops the wife of Saturn, who is himself considered a farmer, who is named after sowing (*a satu*), and who is represented holding a sickle, which is a distinctive mark of the farmer. Thus she is also named *Consiva*, and she is believed to be the earth. For that reason she is worshipped in the royal house by the Roman people, because the earth bestows all the resources (*omnes opes*) to mankind. Accordingly,

those who are wealthy (*copiosi*) of earthly things are called opulent, the fat sacrificial victims taken on the first place are called rich (*opimae*), and the rich things (*opima*) are magnificent and distinguished.

The main focus of this text was an explanation of the expression *opima spolia*, the remark on Ops is a digression. In this passage there is apparently a strong connection between Ops, Saturn and agriculture. Ops is considered the earth, and as such she is the goddess who bestows opes. These opes, it has to be said, do not seem to involve directly agriculture in the examples Festus makes: wealthy people, fat sacrificial victims, and rich things seem to relate to a concept of abundance in general rather than agricultural abundance. It seems obvious that in our sources there is a stratification of different interpretations of the concept of abundance bestowed by Ops. The connection between Ops and opes is also followed by Fulgentius (*myth.* 1, 2) and Isidore (*orig.* 14, 1, 1). Macrobius chooses to follow both traditions speaking about Saturn and Ops: ‘some have believed that they are the heaven and the earth: on this view, Saturn's name derives from ‘sowing’ (*satus*), which originates in the heaven, and Ops is the earth, from whose bounty (*opes*) the sustenance of human life is sought, or else her name derives from toil (*opus*), which causes fruits and grains to grow’⁷. Tertullian also presents both interpretations (*Ad. Nat.* 2, 12).

Interestingly enough, the connection between Ops and terra is very consistent in the ancient sources giving an interpretation of Ops, regardless if they follow Varro or Verrius Flaccus, and it needs some explanation. Varro organizes the etymologies of the names of gods in book 5 of *De lingua Latina* (57 ff.) in a peculiar, well-structured way: gods are mainly divided in gods of heaven and gods of earth, and from this main division several others follow. The starting point of Varro's division is that ‘heaven and earth are the supreme gods’ (5, 57: *principes dei Caelum et Terra*). Immediately afterwards, Varro starts providing examples of this divine couple: the first example is Serapis and Isis. After that, he writes that *idem principes in Latio Saturnus et Ops* and he goes on tracing back this theological couple of gods of heaven and earth to Samothracian cults (5, 58). For Varro, therefore, Saturn and Ops were the Latin example of a divine couple including a god of heaven and goddess of earth. It is, then, natural, that Varro explains Ops as terra. It is clear from the text quoted above that Macrobius had the same doctrine in mind when he referred to Ops as terra. Although the remaining texts do not mention Saturn as a god of heaven, several of them refer to Ops/terra in connection with Saturn: Festus (p. 186 L. *ab Ope Saturni uxore*, cfr. Paulus p. 187 L.),

⁷ Sat. 1, 10, 20: *caelum ac terra: Saturnumque a satu dictum, cuius causa de caelo est, et terram Opem, cuius ope humanae vitae alimenta quaeruntur, vel ab opere per quod fructus frugesque nascuntur.* Trans. R.A. Kaster, Loeb classical library.

Fulgentius (myth. 1, 2: *Opis quoque eius uxor*), Tertullian (2, 12, 19: *Opem adiungunt [Saturno]*)⁸. In conclusion, it seems to me that the interpretation of Ops as terra must come from a philosophical or theological doctrine, which must be relatively late⁹. Festus, in the passage quoted above, seems to imply a connection between the epithet *Consiva* and the identification with the earth, but this comes with reference to the marriage with Saturn.

We may attempt to identify the theological or philosophical doctrine at the origin of the identification between Ops and earth. Varro's interpretation is based on a variant of a Stoic theological doctrine which is normally attributed to Chrysippus¹⁰. Chrysippus classifies the gods in seven different categories, starting with the gods of heaven. The concept of god depends on the first place on the regularity and the harmony of natural phenomena, which include the birth of animals and plants. Chrysippus explains that it is so because the heaven is the father and the earth is the mother, as the earth is made fertile by the water coming from the heaven. He does not formally identify heaven and earth with a primordial couple of gods, and in this regard the fragment is different from Varro. However, the structure of the passages is very similar, and the basic idea is there, therefore I think it is quite probable that Varro was familiar with the theology of Chrysippus, whom Varro quotes several times in *De lingua Latina*¹¹. Varro might have been influenced also by the identification of Saturn and Ops with Kronos and Rhea, which was current already at the time of Fabius Pictor, as we know from a fragment preserved by Dionysius of Halicarnassus: the statues of the gods were carried in procession during the *pompa circensis*¹².

b) Modern interpretations

Modern scholars of linguistics presented several different etymologies of the word *ops*. Whereas ancient etymologies are useful to understand the antiquarian conceptualisation of Ops in the Late Republic, the discussion of modern etymologies is useful for different reasons. Modern scholars of Roman religion widely employed modern etymologies elaborated by linguists in order to elaborate historical arguments. It is wrong, in principle, to elaborate such arguments, because a concept may have extremely different developments and meanings radically differing from mere etymology. In this section, however, I want to show how arbitrary the process has been with regard to Ops, and

⁸It is probably significant that for Tertullian Saturn is son of *Caelum* and *Terra* and, therefore, the couple Saturn/Ops seems to reflect the earlier couple *Caelum/Terra*.

⁹G. Rohde, RE 18 (1939) 757, discussed and then dismissed this option. See the appendix below.

¹⁰SVF II, fr. 1009 =, *The stoics reader. Selected writings and testimonia*, ed. B. Inwood, L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis 2008) 79-80.

¹¹6, 2; 6, 11; 6, 56; 9, 1; 10, 59

¹²FRomHist 1 F 15 = fr. 20 Chassignet = fr. 16 P.

how scholars of Roman religion tended simply to choose the etymology better fitting their assumptions.

The most popular etymology, and the one accepted by most students of Roman religion is that proposed by Alfred Ernout¹³. For Ernout *ops* is a root noun, in which an *-s* suffix is directly attached to the root. For this reason, he regards the alternative nominative form *opis* as secondary¹⁴. He argues that that the nom d'action radicale **op-* survives in *opus* and that this root, very much used in religious language, designs productive activity. He also thinks that the superlative *optimus/optumus* is related to *ops*¹⁵. These two points are worth discussing, because the first is used to argue the original meaning of the root, the second to show a deep connection between *Ops* and *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*. The relation between *ops* and *opus* and the etymology of *ops* are discussed in length in a recent book by Ivy Livingston¹⁶. Livingston argues that *opus* and *ops* probably come from different roots. She argues that *opus* and *epulum* must be related, because they both are strictly associated with ritual activity. The variation of an initial *o* and *e* implies the presence of a neutral laryngeal in the root, which must therefore be Indo-European **h₁ep*, whereas in the case of *ops* we would have **h₃ep* from a comparative study of Indo-European cognates, which would colour the vowel in *o* at a very early stage. If this is true, and *ops* is not related to *opus*, the interpretation of Ernout of *ops* as an active productive force is not correct, and therefore we must think of an original meaning probably close to the Indo-European cognates, like Hittite *happina-*, 'rich', Sanskrit *apnas*, 'wealth', and Avestic *afnavant-*, 'wealthy': *ops* is therefore 'a feminine root noun verbal abstract, originally meaning 'abundance', from a verbal root meaning 'to abound'¹⁷.

For the derivation of *optimus/optumus* from *ops*, Leumann proposed a completely different explanation: *optimus* may come from *ob*, and be a part of a series of comparatives and superlatives coming from spatial prepositions (cf. *summus*, *infimus*, *intimus* etc.)¹⁸. De Vaan agrees with Leumann, and proposed that *optimus* should be understood as 'foremost'¹⁹.

Modern reconstructions of etymologies present many uncertainties, and it is, therefore, essential to keep in mind how hazardous it is to employ them in order to formulate arguments of

¹³ A. Ernout, A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine, histoire des mots* (Paris 1951). 822-23.

¹⁴ Also M. De Vaan, *Etymological dictionary of Latin and the other Italic languages* (Leiden 2008) 431.

¹⁵ See also A. Walde, J. B. Hoffmann, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, II (Heidelberg 1954) 216-17.

¹⁶ I. Livingston, *A linguistic commentary on Livius Andronicus* (London 2004) 57-58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 57.

¹⁸ M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (München 1977) 317-18.

¹⁹ De Vaan, *Etymological dictionary of Latin* (n.14) 421. There is, however, a form *opituma* attested in a late republican funerary inscription (CIL 1² 1206 = 6 1958 = ILS 7460 d), but according to Leumann it is insignificant for the etymology.

historical nature. In this case, one can see how uncertain it would be to characterise Ops as a productive force associated with an epithet of Iuppiter on etymological bases.

II – The evidence

The evidence on Ops provides fascinating challenges. Ops had two festivals in the so called ‘Calendar of Numa’, i.e. the set of festivals which in epigraphic Roman calendars are inscribed in big capital letters. This group is invariable in all extant calendars, and it is believed to be associated with a very early organisation of the year, usually dated between the late sixth and the half of the fifth century BC²⁰. Therefore, it represents an exceptionally useful instrument to study early Rome. On the other hand, Ops is very poorly attested in other epigraphic material. The word ops may be attested in the famous archaic Duenos inscription, but this is very uncertain, because it would be in the most difficult part of the inscription, on which there is no consensus on word division²¹. Even if ops were attested in the inscription, it would be uncertain whether the goddess is implied or not. The other Roman inscriptions are much later and unequivocally refer to the Republican temple of Ops, which I shall discuss below²². Outside of Rome, Ops was not widespread. The Republican evidence is limited to a second century BC inscription from the region of the Marsi, and even here the reading is very uncertain²³. We also know of a first century BC marked brick bearing the inscription Ops from Pinna, which probably attests the existence of a Late-Republican temple of Ops, and another Late-Republican dedication to Ops from Ameria²⁴. In recent excavations at the site of Pietrabbondante, the team led by Adriano La Regina found some inscribed objects from a building they identify with a domus publica. One of them was a stone bearing the inscription **kúnsíf deívúz**, which La Regina believes must be interpreted as an Oscan equivalent to Ops Consiva, because an inscribed fragment of pottery from a later, Tiberian phase of the same building bears the personal name Opalis, probably a slave with a theophoric name²⁵. The rest of the evidence is late:

²⁰ T. J. Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome Italy and Rome from the bronze age to the Punic wars (c.1000-264 BC)* (London 1955) 103-05; L. Pedroni, ‘Ipotesi sull’evoluzione del calendario arcaico di Roma’, *PBSR* 66 (1998) 39-55; F. Coarelli, ‘Fasti Numani: il calendario dei Tarquini’, *AnnFaina* 17 (2010) 337-53; contra J. Rüpke, *The Roman calendar from Numa to Constantine: time, history, and the Fasti* (London 2011) 64-66.

²¹ CIL 1² 4. A recent discussion with bibliography can be found in M. Hartmann, *Die frühlateinischen Inschriften und ihre Datierung: eine linguistisch-archäologisch-paläographische Untersuchung* (Bremen 2005) 109-21; 248-51.

²² two military diplomas (CIL 16 3; 29).

²³ S. Panciera (ed.), ‘ILLRP’, in *Epigrafia. Actes du colloque en mémoire de Attilio Degrossi* (Rome 1991) 127.

²⁴ AE 1997, 460, AE 2000, 500.

²⁵ A. La Regina, *SE* 75 2009 (2012) 315-22, cfr. *Imagines Italicae*, *Terventum* 22. La Regina also used the inscription to integrate a previously published inscription 317, i.e. *Sabellische Texte*, Sa 28 = *Imagines Italicae*, *Terventum*, 1177. B.W. Fortson IV and M. Weiss interpreted the expression as something comparable to Latin *di consentes* in their review of *Imagines Italicae* (<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2013/2013-06-17.html>, consulted on 22/03/2014). In personal

there was a temple in Praeneste, and we know of a few dedications from Alba Fucens, Aesernia, maybe Fidenae²⁶. It seems to me, therefore, that the study of archaic Ops ought to be focused on Roman material and, in particular, on the cults attested in the capital letter *feriale*.

a) Ops Consiva in the *regia*

The cult of Ops Consiva in the *regia* is quite poorly documented. The main text is a short Varro passage (l.l. 6, 21):

Opeconsiva dies ab dea Opeconsiva, cuius in regia sacrarium quod ideo factum, ut eo praeter virgines Vestales et sacerdotem publicum introeat nemo.

The day Opiconsiva is named after the goddess Ops Consiva, whose chapel (*sacrarium*) in the royal house is so sacred²⁷ that no one accesses it with the exception of the Vestal virgins and the public priest.

What we can deduce from this text is only that the Opiconsivia were celebrated by the Vestals and the pontifex maximus (*sacerdos publicus*) in a *sacrarium*, a sort of chapel²⁸, inside the *regia*. We also know that only the Vestals and the pontifex could access the *sacrarium*, although it is perhaps not entirely clear whether this restriction was enforced only during the festival. We have already discussed the passage in Festus in which it is stated that Ops Consiva in *regia* colitur a populo Romano (p. 186 L.). In the same source it is also stated that some objects were used in the *sacrarium*: a *praefericulum*, some kind of bronze vase (p. 249 L.), and maybe a *secespita*, a ritual knife which we know from a very corrupt passage to have been used by the Vestals and the pontifex in a *sacrarium* (p. 348 L.). We have no further information on what the Vestals and the pontifex

correspondence, David Langslow pointed out to me that the interpretation of the inscription is far from clear: both words have several possible morphological interpretations, and it is hard to say which one is correct.

²⁶Praeneste: CIL 14 3007; Alba Fucens: CIL 9 3912 = ILS 3330; Aesernia: CIL 9 2633 = ILS 3329; Fidenae: ILS 3331.

²⁷ *Ideo factum* should probably be corrected with *adeo sanctum*, as argued by P.H.N.G. Stehouwer, *Étude sur Ops et Consus*, Gronigen-Djakarta 1956, p. 89 n.1. A close alternative is *adeo adytum* (E. Vetter, 'Zum Text von Varros Schrift über die lateinische Sprache', *RhM* 101 (1958) 268).

²⁸ Definitions of *sacrarium* are given by Servius, ad Aen. 12, 199: *sacrarium proprie est locus in templo, in quo sacra reponuntur*; Dig. 1, 8, 9, 2: *sacrarium est locus, in quo sacra reponuntur, quod etiam in aedificio priuato esse potest.*

maximus would do in the regia. We know the exact date from the epigraphic calendars: 25 August, where the fasti Arvalium also record the localization of the ceremony, in regia²⁹.

This scarce amount of information should be compared with the archaeological evidence from the regia³⁰. The regia is a small trapezoidal building located near the aedes Vestae, between the slopes of the Palatine and the Roman Forum. It was first built towards the end of the seventh century BC (Cifani) or the beginning of the sixth (Scott) (first phase) and it consisted, from the very beginning, of a main courtyard and two smaller rooms, which were originally located on the north-west part of the building³¹. The regia was rebuilt four times during the course of the sixth century BC: widened a few years after the original construction (first phase bis), it was rebuilt with a different shape around 570 BC (second phase) and, again, around 530-525 BC (third phase). The third-phase building was richly adorned with architectural decorations, and an altar was erected in the courtyard. The regia was finally rebuilt again with a different shape at the end of the sixth century BC (fourth phase), the date usually associated with the beginning of the republic. There are two further republican phases, one at the beginning of the third century BC, when the building was widened but it kept the same shape of the previous phase, and one in 36 BC, which also respected the plan of the fourth phase regia. All through these subsequent reconstructions, the regia kept a basic scheme consisting of a courtyard and two rooms, although the position of the rooms changed. Coarelli and Brown hypothesized that the bigger of the rooms, which contains a hearth, may be the sacrarium Martis, whereas the smaller may be the sacrarium of Ops Consiva³². What is most important is that the regia shows an uninterrupted, impressive archaeological continuity from c. 600 BC to the end of the Roman republic. Coarelli argued that the continuity is especially impressive from c. 500 BC: after that date the organization of space and the shape of the building never changed. Whereas the sixth-century phases of the regia show many differences, which should be explained by the violent changes and instability of the monarchic period, the stability in the shape

²⁹Insc. It. 13, 2, p. 31. The fasti Vallenses (Id.149) record the festival in Capitolio, probably referring to the mid-Republican temple of Ops, where perhaps Ops Consiva also had a cult in later times according to Pouthier, *Ops* (n.4) 152-54. Coarelli, however, convincingly argued that the entry on the fasti Vallenses may be a mistake. F. Coarelli, 'Le Tyrannoctone du Capitole et la mort de Tiberius Gracchus', *MEFRA* 81/1 (1969) 148.

³⁰On the regia see F. E. Brown, 'The Regia', *MAAR* 12 (1935) 67-88; Id., 'New Soundings in the Regia', *Les origines de la République romaine. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 13 (1967) 47-60; Id., 'La protostoria della Regia', *RPAA* 47 (1974-1975) 15-36; C. Ampolo, 'Analogie e rapporti fra Atene e Roma arcaica. Osservazioni sulla regia, sul rex sacrorum e sul culto di Vesta', *PP* 26 (1971) 443-60; F. Coarelli, *Il Foro romano*, I (Roma 1983) 56-79; Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome* (n.20) 239-41; R. T. Scott, 'Regia', *LTUR* 4, 189-92; G. Cifani, *Architettura romana arcaica: edilizia e società tra monarchia e repubblica* (Roma 2008) 126-30.

³¹Recent excavations found earlier structures, whose general interpretation, and relationship with the later phases remain controversial. See *Il santuario di Vesta. La casa delle Vestali e il tempio di Vesta. VIII sec. a.C.-64 d.C. Rapporto preliminare*, ed. N. Arvantis (Pisa 2010); *La leggenda di Roma*, ed. A. Carandini, II (Milano 2010) 322-25. For the controversial nature of the archaeological data see C. Ampolo, 'Il problema delle origini di Roma rivisitato: concordismo, ipertradizionalismo acritico, contesti. I', *ASNSP* s. V, 5/1 (2013) 217-284, esp. 250-53.

³²Brown, 'New Soundings in the Regia' (n.30) 57; Coarelli, *Il Foro Romano* (n.30) 62.

of the building from c. 500 BC is considered to be a sign of ‘una sorta di ipostatizzazione e sclerotizzazione culturale’³³.

The main problem is, obviously, whether archaeological continuity necessarily implies functional continuity: different reconstructions of the same building might have been used for different purposes³⁴. We know that, probably, between the late monarchy and the early republic, the political and religious powers which formerly belonged to the rex were absorbed by a number of priests and magistrates. As for religious functions, the two main priests who are believed to have inherited the religious functions of the king are the rex sacrorum and the pontifex maximus. The modalities of this process, which probably already started before the end of the monarchy, remain obscure³⁵. The Athenian parallel of the Ἄρχων Βασιλεύς presents a similar set of interpretative problems and does not really help us with the rex sacrorum³⁶. However that may be, it is clear that the relations between priesthoods and political power underwent major changes between the final part of the monarchic period and the early Republic. For this reason, one has to be careful when considering the continuity of religious practices: it is reasonable to think that, if the relationship between the king, the rex sacrorum and the pontifex maximus changed, this may in turn be reflected in the ritual activity they were involved in, including the celebrations in the regia. It seems to me, however, very hard to doubt that there was a sacrarium of Ops Consiva in the regia from the sixth century BC: the archaeological continuity and the continuity of the structure of the building, with a main courtyard and two smaller rooms, are too solid.

It is also worth analysing what Pouthier called un dossier ‘structural’, referring to the theory of G. Dumézil: the cults of the regia may be explained according to a trifunctional scheme³⁷. As a matter of fact, the regia seems to have a threefold structure, with the main courtyard with altar and

³³ Coarelli, *Il Foro Romano* (n.30) 64.

³⁴ This was the original view of Brown, with the earlier phases of the building interpreted as a temple: Brown, ‘New Soundings in the Regia’ (n.30) 54-55.

³⁵ See K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (München 1960) 195-197; A. Momigliano, ‘Il rex sacrorum e l’origine della repubblica’, *Quarto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Roma 1969) 395-402; G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (Paris 1974²) 116-25; R. Seguin, ‘Remarques sur les origines des pontifes romains: Pontifex Maximus et Rex Sacrorum’, in *Hommages à H. Le Bonniec, Res Sacrae* (Bruxelles 1988) 405-18; Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome* (n.20) 232-36; F. Van Haepere, *Le collège pontifical* (Bruxelles – Rome 2002), esp. 88-96; E. Bianchi, *Il rex sacrorum a Roma e nell’Italia antica* (Milano 2010) 3-34. Festus writes that the rex (sacrorum?) is the highest in priestly hierarchy (Fest., p. 198 L.), whereas Livy informs that he was subordinated to the pontifex maximus (2, 2, 1). Servius said that the regia was formerly the house of the rex sacrorum, but then became the residence of the pontifex maximus: domus enim, in qua pontifex habitat, regia dicitur, quod in ea rex sacrificulus habitare consuesset (ad Aen. 8, 363). On the history of Roman pontificate also A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Les pontifes de l’ancienne Rome* (Paris 1871); G. Rohde, *Die Kultsatzungen der römischen Pontifices* (Berlin 1936).

³⁶ Arist., *Ath. pol.* 57, 1. Other sources and discussion in P. Carlier, *La Royauté en Grèce avant Alexandre* (Strasbourg 1984) 325-52; R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: a history* (Oxford 1996) 7-8.

³⁷ Pouthier, *Ops* (n.4) 65-67. For the interpretation of G. Dumézil see the appendix below.

the two sacraria of Mars and Ops Consiva. Let us see what it is known of the rituals of the regia and the priestly personnel involved.

We know that during the Agonalia on 9 January, the rex would sacrifice a ram to Ianus³⁸, and his wife sacrificed a lamb or a sow to Iuno during the Calendae³⁹. The flaminica Dialis sacrificed a ram to Iuppiter at the Nundinae⁴⁰. Moreover, we know that the pontifex maximus performed a sacrifice with the otherwise unknown virgines Saliae, apparently female counterparts of the Salii⁴¹. The spears of Mars (hastae Martis) and ancilia were kept in the sacrarium Martis⁴². These objects were touched by the officer leading the army before going to war. Finally, the regia had an important role in the complex ritual of the october equus, which was celebrated on 15 October, starting with a chariot race at the campus Martius. After the race, the leading horse of the winning chariot would be sacrificed and dismembered. Then the tail of the horse had to be brought to the regia, where the blood of the horse was sprinkled on its hearth. Two teams of Suburanese and Sacravienses would then compete for the possession of the head: if the Sacravienses won, the head was nailed on the walls of the regia, otherwise on the Mamilian tower⁴³.

An interesting thing to notice is that most of these rituals are regularly performed at a definite time of the month and of the year. The January Agonalia are probably connected with the beginning of the year (see infra), the Calendae with the beginning of the month, the nundinae occurred every nine days and were the closest thing Romans had to a weekend, the October equus marked the end of the war season. There are two exceptions. One is the ritual involving the virgines Saliae: we have no idea when it happened, but I think it is reasonable to argue that it might have

³⁸Varr., l.l. 6, 12: Dies Agonales per quos rex in Regia arietem immolat, dicti ab 'agon,' eo quod interrogat minister sacrificii 'agone?': nisi si a Graeca lingua, ubi agon princeps, ab eo quod immolatur a principe civitatis et princeps gregis immolatur. Ovid., Fast. 1, 333-334: utque ea non certa est, ita rex placare sacrorum; Paul. Fest. p. 9 L.. On the association with Ianus see Ovid., Fast. 1, 318: Ianus Agonali luce piandus erit.

³⁹Macr., Sat. 1, 15, 19: Romae quoque Kalendis omnibus, praeter quod pontifex minor in curia Calabria rem divinam Iunoni facit, etiam regina sacrorum, id est regis uxor, porcam vel agnam in regia Iunoni immolat.

⁴⁰Macr., Sat. 1, 16 30: Ait enim nundinas Iovis ferias esse, siquidem flaminica omnibus nundinis in regia Iovi arietem solet immolare.

⁴¹Fest. p. 329 L.: Salias virgines Cincius ait esse conducticias, quae ad Salios adhibeantur cum apicibus paludatas; quas Aelius Stilo scripsit sacrificium facere in Regia cum pontifice paludatas cum apicibus in modum Saliorum.

⁴²Serv., ad Aen. 7, 603: nam moris fuerat indicto bello in Martis sacrario ancilia commovere, unde est in octavo 'utque inpulit arma'. Id. 8, 3: hoc ad pedites. est autem sacrorum: nam is qui belli susceperat curam, sacrarium Martis ingressus primo ancilia commovebat, post hastam simulacri ipsius, dicens 'Mars vigila'. Gell., NA 4, 6, 1: Ut terram movisse nuntiari solet eaque res procuratur, ita in veteribus memoriis scriptum legimus nuntiatum esse senatui in sacrario in regia hastas Martias movisse. Iul. Obs. 6; 36; 44; 44a; 47; 50.

⁴³Fest. p. 178 L.: October equus appellatur, qui in campo Martio mense Octobri immolatur quotannis Marti, bigarum victricum dexterior. De cuius capite non levis contentio solebat esse inter Suburanese, et Sacravienses, ut hi in regiae pariete, illi ad turrim Mamiliam id figerent; eiusdemque coda tanta celeritate perfertur in regiam, ut ex ea sanguis destillet in focum, participandae rei divinae gratia. See also Plut., Quaest. Rom. 97; Cas. Dio. 43, 24. See G. Dumézil, Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne (Paris 1975) 204-10; G. Radke, 'October equus', Latomus 49 (1990) 343-51; J. Rüpke, 'October equus und ludi Capitolini: Zur rituellen Struktur der Oktober-Iden und ihren antiken Deutungen', in Antike Mythen. Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen, ed. C. Walde, U. Dill (Berlin 2009) 96-121.

been in March or October, when the male *Salii* were active, in relation to the opening and the closing of the war season⁴⁴. Another ritual without a fixed date was performed by the official in charge of leading the war in the *sacrarium Martis*. However, one has to imagine that in early Rome the ritual must have happened in March, at the beginning of the war season. If this is true, all the rituals in the *regia* seem to mark the beginning or the end of a cycle (the year, the *nundinal* cycle, the month, the war season). It is, therefore, reasonable to think that also the festival of *Ops Consiva* should hold a similar value. I shall discuss this hypothesis when considering the festivals of *Ops* and *Consus* and their relation.

We can focus on the gods of the *regia*: *Ianus*, *Iuppiter*, *Iuno*, *Ops Consiva*, *Mars*. It is easy to notice that all these divinities have epithets attesting relations to each other. *Iuppiter* is called *Opitulus* or *Opitulator*⁴⁵, *Iuno* *Opigena*⁴⁶ (and here the sources propose an etymology from *opem ferre*, ‘to bring assistance’), *Ianus* *Iunonius*⁴⁷ and *Consivius*⁴⁸. Finally, *Mars* and *Ianus* share the epithet *Quirinus*⁴⁹. Most of these epithets are only attested in late sources. However, such a strong interchange of cultic epithets of divinities worshipped in the *regia* may not be accidental, and it is possible that the epithets may come from the common religious practice linked to the *regia*. *Ops Consiva* and *Ianus* seem to be at the centre of the system: the first is associated with *Iuppiter Opitulus* and *Iuno Opigena*, the latter with *Iuno* and *Mars*. Moreover, the two are similarly associated with *Consus*, as *Ianus Consivius*⁵⁰ and *Ops Consiva*. I shall discuss the connection between *Ops* and *Consus* in the section on festivals. It is easy to notice that the epithet *Opigena* has a clear genealogical sense. Although these genealogies may have later origins, connected with Greek myth on one hand and to the presence of the mid-republican temple of *Ops* on the Capitol on the other, it may also be possible that they originated from mythical genealogies originally attached to the *regia*. In any case, these possible relations between the gods of the *regia* do not fit well with the threefold theology of Dumézil, which appears to be overly schematic.

⁴⁴R. Cirilli, *Les prêtres danseurs de Rome, étude sur la corporation sacerdotale des Saliens* (Paris 1913) 97-136; L. Gerschel, ‘Saliens de Mars et Saliens de Quirinus’, *RHR* 138/2 (1950) 145-51; S. Estienne, ‘Saliens’, *ThesCRA* 5 (2005) 85-87. The activity of *Salii* was also probably connected with the beginning and the end of the war season.

⁴⁵Paul. Fest. 184 L.: *Opitulus Iuppiter et Opitulator dictus est, quasi opis lator*; Aug., *Civ. Dei.* 7, 11: *dixerunt eum... Opitulum... quod opem indigentibus ferret.*

⁴⁶Paul. Fest. 200 L.: *Opigenam Iunonem Matronae colebant, quod ferre eam opem in partu laborantibus credebant.*

⁴⁷Macr., *Sat.* 1, 15, 19: *a qua etiam Ianum Iunonium cognominatum diximus, quod illi deo omnis ingressus, huic deae cuncti Kalendarum dies videntur adscripti.*

⁴⁸Tert., *ad Nat.* 2, 11; Macr., *Sat.* 1, 9, 16; Lyd., *Mens.* 4, 1.

⁴⁹Mars: Serv., *ad Aen.* 1, 292; 6, 859. *Ianus*: Macr., *Sat.* 1, 9, 13; Liv. 1, 32, 9.

⁵⁰G. Capdeville, ‘Les épithètes cultuelles de Janus’, *MEFRA* 85 (1973) 432-35. Macrobius explains *Consivius* a *conserendo*, Lydus as *boulaios*.

b) Ops during the Opalia

Ops had a second festival, the Opalia, which is mentioned in only four literary texts: Festus (p. 185 L.) says that Opalia dies festi, quibus supplicatur Opi, appellantur; Varro adds that the festival happened in the third day of the Saturnalia⁵¹; Macrobius (Sat. 1, 10, 18) and Ausonius (7, 24, 15) also underline the strong connection between the Opalia and the Saturnalia. The calendars confirm that the festival was celebrated on 19 December. The fasti Amiternini, in particular, add that the festival was consecrated Opi ad forum (Insc. It. 13, 2, p. 199). Now, it is assumed by Pouthier that ad forum should mean a specific location⁵². According to Pouthier's argument, in the same calendar ad forum is used to describe the location of the temple of Saturn (Insc. It. 13, 2, p. 199). Therefore, ad forum may signify a location between the slopes of the Capitol and the north-west side of the Forum, where we have Comitium, Curia and temple of Concordia. I can add that this seems to be confirmed by the only Latin passage I was able to find in which ad forum is used without expressing motion, apparently to signify a localization: at the beginning of *Res rusticae* (1, 1, 4), Varro writes that he wants to write his work evoking 'the twelve dii Consentes' (duodecim deos Consentis), then specifying 'not those in the city, whose golden statues are near the forum, six males and six females' (neque tamen eos urbanos, quorum imagines ad forum auratae stant, sex mares et feminae totidem). In a remark on plural genitive in *De lingua Latina*, Varro also informs us of the existence of an aedes deum Consentium (8, 71), which was most likely the porticus containing images of the twelve gods restored by Vettius Praetextatus in AD 367 (CIL 6 102, ILS 4003)⁵³. This building is located near the temple of Saturn. Therefore, if the simulacra restored by Vettius are the same as those referred to by Varro, this would confirm that the expression ad forum may refer to a specific area at the slopes of the Capitol.

However, this remains deeply uncertain. In the same fasti Amiternini, and also in the fasti Allifani, ad forum is also used to design the location of the temple of Caesar (Insc. It. 13, 2, p. 191, 181). Finally, the same expression is used to designate the temple of Castor and Pollux in the fasti Verulani (Insc. It. 13, 2, p. 161). Now, whereas it can be argued that the temple of Castor and Pollux is approximately in the same area, the same cannot be said for the temple of Caesar, which

⁵¹ I.1. 6, 22: Saturnalia dicta ab Saturno, quod eo die feriae eius, ut post diem tertium Opalia Opis.

⁵² Pouthier, *Ops* (n.4) 81.

⁵³ L. Richardson, *A new topographical dictionary of ancient Rome* (Baltimore-London 1992) 313; G. Nieddu, 'Dei consentes, aedes,' *LTUR* 4 (1999), 90-91.

was on the other side of the Forum, near the regia⁵⁴. Pouthier argues that the location ad forum for the temple of Caesar is due to a later organization of the space, but this seems to me somehow forced: the temple of Caesar is said to be ad forum in exactly the same calendar that locates Saturn and Ops ad forum⁵⁵. In conclusion, it seems to me there are three options: 1) Ops ad forum was in the same area as Saturn ad forum, between the slopes of the Capitol and the Forum; in this case one might think Ops had some otherwise unknown minor place of worship, like an altar or similar; 2) Ops ad forum was in the same area as the temple of Caesar ad forum; in this case it would be attractive to think that the Opalia were celebrated in the sacrarium of the regia; 3) the expression ad forum simply means ‘a marginal area of the forum’; in this case it would be impossible to determine where the festival was celebrated. Given the uncertainty of the evidence, it seems to me arbitrary to pick any of these options. Macrobius says that the Opalia were originally a joint celebration of Saturn and Ops, and this may be the only reason for preferring the first option⁵⁶. As Versnel suggested, this may have something to do with the sacellum Ditis et Proserpinae mentioned by Macrobius (1, 16, 17) which must be identified with the mundus⁵⁷. This also remains, however, uncertain: the days in which the mundus was open are identified by Festus as 24 August, 5 October and 10 November, and there is nothing suggesting that the mundus had anything to do with the Opalia or the Saturnalia, as Macrobius himself makes clear⁵⁸. It is also possible that Macrobius believed that the Opalia were originally a common festival of Ops and Saturn because of the Stoic theological doctrine I mentioned above, seeing in Ops and Saturn a divine couple of a Heaven god and an Earth goddess. Finally, there might have been a different ritual reason: as I observed above, Ops and Saturn were probably considered a divine couple already the time of Fabius Pictor, who reports that their statues were carried in the Circus during the pompa circensis⁵⁹.

III – Ops and Consus

⁵⁴ App., BC 2, 148. Cfr. P. Gros, ‘Iulius, divus, aedes’, LTUR 3 (1996), 116-19; L. Richardson, A New Topographical Dictionary (n.53) 213-214.

⁵⁵ Pouthier, Ops (n.4) 81.

⁵⁶ Sat. 1, 10, 18: Ex his ergo omnibus colligi potest et uno die Saturnalia fuisse et non nisi quarto decimo Kalendarum Ianuariarum celebrata: quo solo die apud aedem Saturni convivio dissoluto Saturnalia clamitabantur: qui dies nunc Opalibus inter Saturnalia deputatur, cum primum Saturno pariter et Opi fuerit ascriptus.

⁵⁷ H. S. Versnel, Transition and reversal in myth and ritual (Leiden – New York – Köln 1999) 175-176. On the location of the mundus and the ara Saturni, see Coarelli, Il Foro Romano (n.30) 199-226.

⁵⁸ Sat. 1, 16, 16-17: Nam cum Latiar, hoc est Latinarum sollemne, concipitur, item diebus Saturnaliorum, sed et cum Mundus patet, nefas est praelium sumere: quia nec Latinarum tempore, quo publice quondam induciae inter populum Romanum Latinosque firmatae sunt, inchoari bellum decebat, nec Saturni festo, qui sine ullo tumultu bellico creditur imperasse, nec patente Mundo, quod sacrum Diti patri et Proserpinae dicatum est: meliusque occlusa Plutonis fauce eundem ad praelium putaverunt. For the days in which mundus patet Fest. 126, 44 L.

⁵⁹ FRomHist 1 F 15 = Fr. 20 Chassignet = fr. 16 P.

The information we possess on the Ops makes clear that she was certainly a goddess of great importance, receiving offerings in the regia along with divinities such as Iuppiter, Iuno, Mars and Ianus, and honoured with two festivals in the ancient *feriale*. It should be noted that Ops does not seem to be involved in any way with agriculture. At this point, it will be necessary to analyse the August and December cycles of festivals. However, before doing so, I should like to look briefly at the evidence on Consus. The reason why a discussion of this god is preliminary to any understanding of the festivals is that Ops is considered to be an agrarian divinity because 1) she is associated with Consus; 2) Consus is thought to be the god of *condere* and of the stored corn. If Consus, therefore, was not the agrarian divinity of *condere*, the whole agrarian interpretation of Ops and the festivals would have to be rejected.

What did the Romans think about Consus, then? Looking at our sources, there was not much dispute: Consus was the *deus consilii*. This interpretation of the god is first implied in Dionysius of Halicarnassos (2, 31, 2-3): Dionysius first says that Consus corresponds in Greek to Poseidon *σεισίχθων*, or ‘earth shaker’, and he has a subterranean altar ‘because the god holds the earth’ (31, 2: *ὅτι τὴν γῆν ὁ θεὸς οὕτως ἔχει*); then he adds that he heard another opinion, i.e. that the horse races and the festivals are held in honour of Poseidon *σεισίχθων*, whereas the subterranean altar was dedicated to ‘an unnameable divinity, who leads and watches over secret counsels’ (31, 3: *δαίμονι ἀρρήτῳ τινὶ βουλευμάτων κρυφίων ἡγεμόνι καὶ φύλακι*). The second interpretation proposed by Dionysius must be connected to an interpretation of Consus as the god of *consilium*. It has been argued that also Cicero and Livy allude to this explanation of the god. When Cicero writes about the foundation myth of the *Consualia* (*De rep.* 2, 12), associated with the rape of the Sabine women, he defines Romulus’ actions a *subagreste consilium*⁶⁰. When Livy narrates the same story, he specifies that Romulus acted *ex consilio patrum* (1, 9, 2)⁶¹. The connection between the myth of the rape and the *Consualia* is consistent and ancient: it was probably implied also in Fabius Pictor (*FRomHist* 1 F 6 = fr. 7 Peter = fr. 9 Chassignet), who dated the rape of the Sabine women four months after the foundation of the city, clearly alluding to the *Consualia* on 21 August, 4 months after the ‘traditional’ foundation of the city on 21 April (*Parilia*). A great number of later sources, from Festus to Augustine, explicitly describe Consus as the god of *consilium*⁶². It is easy to imagine that this interpretation of the god could have been elaborated by antiquarians in the first century BC, but

⁶⁰ J.E.G. Zetzel, *Cicero De re publica. Selections* (Cambridge 1995) 170.

⁶¹ J. D. Noonan, ‘Livy 1.9.6: The Rape at the *Consualia*’, *Classical World* 83/6 (1990) 496-98.

⁶² Paul. Fest. p. 36 L.: *quos in honorem Consi faciebant, quem deum consilii putabant. Tert., Spec. 5: quod ea Conso dicaverit deo, ut volunt, consilii; Id., Nat. 2, 11: a consiliis Consum; Plut., Rom. 14, 3: ὠνόμαζον δὲ τὸν θεὸν Κῶνσον, εἴτε βουλαῖον ὄντα (κωνσίλιον γὰρ ἔτι νῦν τὸ συμβούλιον καλοῦσι καὶ τοὺς ὑπάτους κώνσουλας οἷον προβούλους); Cipr., Idol. 4; Arnob., Ad nat. 3, 23: *Salutaria et fida consilia nostris suggerit cogitationibus Consus; Serv, Ad Aen. 8, 636: Consus autem deus est consiliorum; Aug., De civ. 4, 11: deus Consus praebendo consilia (= Varr., Ant. rer. div. fr. 140 Cardauns).**

it might have been already in Fabius Pictor. It clearly has an aetiological flavour insofar it connects the name of Consus with the consilium of Romulus. It must be underlined, however, that Consus as a god of consilium is the only explanation of the meaning of Consus attested in ancient sources: not a single ancient text associates Consus, condere and stored harvest.

The etymology of Consus from condere, which has been almost universally accepted by modern scholars, is possible, but quite suspect⁶³. The scholar who established this etymology with the weight of his unquestionable authority was Theodor Mommsen in his commentary on Roman epigraphic calendars, which appeared in the first edition of the CIL in 1863. Mommsen does not illustrate his theory with parallels, he only writes that "Consus, therefore, is the god of that which must be buried (*deus condendi*), which means the harvest and the barns, whence his altar used to be hidden under the earth, and according to a very ancient custom the crops were likewise buried. The altar was not opened except during his festivals. *Ops Consiva*, moreover, is the earth, whose powers are employed for the received seeds and when the produce is returned"⁶⁴. Consus from condere has been accepted by most scholars (see the appendix below), but one should consider how this etymology was first formulated. As a matter of fact Mommsen was following a reconstruction proposed in the eighteenth century by G.H. Nieupoort in his *Rituum qui olim apud romanos obtinuerunt succincta explicatio*, whose first edition was published in Venice in 1731. This book was hugely popular, had several editions in the course of the century, and it was still reprinted in the Latin original and in French translation at the beginning of the nineteenth century⁶⁵. Nieupoort explained the name Consus as an "ancient participle of the verb *condo*, for which today we say *conditus*, whence we now say *absconsus* for *absconditus*" (184: *participium antiquum (...) verbi condo, pro quo hodie dicimus conditus, unde hodieque absconsum, pro absconditum dicimus*). *Absconsus* is clearly the sole formal parallel in Latin, and it is very late: it is attested only from Tertullian⁶⁶, and rejected as incorrect by several ancient grammarians⁶⁷. This makes it controversial to use in support of an archaic derivation of Consus from condere. Although modern scholars were well aware that *absconsus* could not be used in this sense, they still reconstructed a connection between Consus and condere as a participle, but in the absence of a relevant formal parallel they were forced to do so using contextual evidence, which means the interpretations of Consus formulated by historians. So they have argued that Consus must come from condere because the god had a subterranean altar which was opened once a year, and he was the god of harvest of

⁶³ J. D. Noonan, 'Livy 1.9.6' (n. 61) 496 n. 7; 501 n. 14.

⁶⁴ CIL 1, p. 400 = CIL 1², p. 326.

⁶⁵ *Explication abrégée des coutumes et cérémonies observées chez les Romains*, Lyon 1829.

⁶⁶ Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (n.18) 587 cf. Tert., c. Iud. 11.

⁶⁷ TLL, s.v. *abscondo* c. 153, 1-34. See Serv., *Ad Georg.* 1, 135; *Diom., Gramm.* 1, 375, 25.

barns⁶⁸. The circularity of this whole interpretation is absolutely evident: historians take as a hard fact the etymology of Consus from *condere* and they use it to formulate agrarian interpretations of the god, which are in turn used by linguists as contextual evidence to formulate this etymology. The etymology is, in conclusion, rather hazardous and questionable because of the lack of a good formal parallel. The weakness of this etymology, and its wide, virtually universal acceptance in the scholarship on Roman religion is very telling of the willingness of modern scholars to forcefully ascribe agrarian concepts to early Roman religion.

An association between Consus and agriculture is equally doubtful in ritual activity. What we know about the cult of Consus is that he had a subterranean altar near the Circus Maximus, whose roof was uncovered during the festivals. As I mentioned above, the subterranean altar has been interpreted as evidence for the agrarian nature of the god, as it would represent the subterranean stores in which the harvest was kept. However, this is not an interpretation supported in any way by the sources: in the passage of Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentioned above (2, 31, 3), the subterranean altar of Consus is connected to the notion of secrecy, and secret counsels, not to agriculture. Tertullian speaks about an inscription carved on the altar: *Consus consilio, Mars duello, Lares + coillo potentes* (Spec. 5). Wissowa rightly argued that the form of the inscription cannot be ancient, and in a real inscription we would expect the names of the gods in the dative rather than the nominative, although there is no unanimity on the matter⁶⁹. However, if the quoted inscription is not completely a forgery it proves that, at least in the late second century AD, Consus was regarded as a god of *consilium* even in a cultic context, and the association might have been more than a mere antiquarian invention. Again, it is difficult to see why the races taking place during the *Consualia*, or the liberation of working animals, should be interpreted as proof of the agrarian nature of the festival⁷⁰. Another fact important for the understanding of Consus is his identification with

⁶⁸ Walde and Hofmann (n. 16) 266: Consus is defined an 'altrömischer Gott des Ackerbaus, unter dessen Schutz das Bergen der Feldfrucht stand', then, unsurprisingly, the name is said to come from *condere*, although 'absconsus ist junge Neubildung für -ditus'; J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern, München 1959) 236: in the list of meanings of *condere* there is *bedecken* 'to cover, to occult', and Pokorny adds 'dazu Consus (...) Gott des Ackerbaues'; A.M. Keaney, 'Three Sabine Nomina: Clausus, Cōnsus, *Fisus', *Glotta* 69 (1991) 202-14, esp. 207-8: the argument is that 'Consus was a god, linked variously with the underworld, counsel-giving, and vegetation (...) [h]is nomen, associated with the verb *condere* (...)'; M. Weiss, *Outline of the Historical and Comparative Grammar of Latin* (Ann Arbor – New York 2009) 113: he bases the extension of a sound law on the assumption that that 'Consus (Roman god of grain storage)' is from **kom-d^h1tu-* 'putting together' (I owe this reference to David Langslow). Ernout and Meillet include Consus in the list of derivatives of *condo*, but preceded by a prudent *peut-être* (*Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (n.13) 320).

⁶⁹ G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (München 1912²) 201 n.7; see now S. Dušanić, Ž. Petković, 'The Flamen Quirinalis and the Consualia and the Horseman of the Lacus Curtius', *Aevum* 76 (2002) 63-75, the authors go as far as basing their interpretation of the *Consualia* on this inscription.

⁷⁰ P. Ciancio Rossetto, 'Consus, Ara', *LTUR* 1 (1995) 322, thinks that the agrarian characteristics of Consus are 'ben evidenti [...] nel tipo di manifestazioni che caratterizzavano i Consualia: corse di cavalli, corse di carri, corse a piedi e salti sulle pelli di bue unte, inoltre gli animali da lavoro erano lasciati in libertà e incoronati con fiori', but does not formulate any argument.

Neptunus Equestris/Poseidon Hippios⁷¹. This, however, says nothing about the alleged agrarian nature of Consus.

I am not arguing that Consus was an archaic *deus consilii*. I believe, however, that this consistent explanation of the god in the ancient sources deserves to be considered seriously. It may suggest that the god might have had some kind of political meaning, as Consus propitiated the birth of a complete Roman community during the story of the rape of the Sabine women. This was probably how the god was interpreted from Fabius Pictor. It is of course impossible to verify how old this interpretation is, and it must be taken with a pinch of salt because of its aetiological tone. Although I do not argue that Consus as a god of *consilium* can be accepted, I believe that there might have been good underlying reasons why this interpretation was formulated and so constantly proposed in ancient sources. This probably implies an awareness of political implications in the worship of Consus, for which he might have been considered a god important to the existence of the community.

In any case, it seems to me that the evidence supporting a connection between Consus and agriculture is very weak, and it basically lies in the assumption of modern scholarship that ancient Roman religion must be, as Mommsen said, characterized by ‘naked primordial rigidity’⁷². If this is true, it seems to me prejudicial to look for an agrarian explanation of the festivals with the assumption they must have something to do with the production of spelt or corn. In general, it is reasonable to think that an ancient calendar has connections with agricultural practices, but in the specific case of this group of festivals it does not seem to be so. December is a sleepy month for agricultural work and, if the etymology of Consus from *condere* cannot be accepted, all the interpretations associating the *Consualia* and the festivals of Ops with stored harvest and its release from the barns, like those of Dumézil and Versnel, must also be rejected⁷³.

A way forward may be to put the festivals in the context of the respective months. It was noticed that the months of August and December seem to share a number of characteristics in the Roman calendar. Both have the same number of festivals inscribed in capital letters: in August we find the *Portunalia* on the 17th, the *Vinalia* on the 19th, the *Consualia* on the 21st, the *Volcanalia*

⁷¹On this association between the *Consualia*, Romulus, Consus and Poseidon Hippios and, in general, on the festival, see F. Bernstein, ‘Verständnis- und Entwicklungsstufen der Archaischen *Consualia*. Römisches Substrat und Griechische Überlagerung’, *Hermes* 125/4 (1997) 413-446. Bernstein argued that on the foundation of the *Consualia* there were two opposing tradition, one centred on Romulus and one on Evander (attested in *Dion. Hal.* 1, 33, 2).

⁷²T. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, I (Berlin 1856²) 152.

⁷³The association between Consus and barns was already proposed, as I have observed above, by Mommsen. See the appendix below for further references. See also A.K. Michels, ‘The *Consualia* of December’, *Classical Philology* (1944) 50, an attempt to keep an agrarian interpretation of Consus arguing that the stored product were olives, in order to answer the difficulty of finding an agricultural product associated with August and December.

on the 23rd, the Opiconsivia on the 25th, and the Volturnalia on the 27th; in December the Agonalia on the 11th, the Consualia on the 15th, the Saturnalia on the 17th, the Opalia on the 19th, the Divalia on the 21st, and the Larentalia on the 23rd. It was also noticed that the similarities go deeper than that. In Altheim's words, 'we remember the day of Consus on 12 December and 21 August, the day of Ops on 19 December and 10 August, that of Tiberinus on 8 December and 17 August, that of Diana on 23 December and 13 August, and finally that of Sol on 11 December and 9 August'⁷⁴. Even more similarities were detected and usefully summarized in a table by C. Koch⁷⁵:

August	December
9 Sol Indiges in c. Qu.	11 AGON. IND.
10 Ops et Ceres in v. Iug. s. ann. Cereris	12 Consus in Avent. 13 lectist. Cereris
17 PORT. (Tiberin. Philoc.)	8 Tiberinus in ins.
21 CONSUALIA	15 CONSUALIA
14 mundus patet Luna in Graecostasi	23 LARENTALIA fer. Dianae
25 OPICONSIVIA	19 OPALIA
28 Sol et Luna i. circ. max.	25 Sol Invictus

The main problem of this scheme is evident: it is an abstraction, made of diverse elements established at different times and in different circumstances in the course of several centuries: archaic festivals in capital letters, mid-republican temples like that of Consus dedicated by L. Papirius Cursor in the third century BC, probably Augustan cults like those of Ops and Ceres at the vicus Iugarius, and imperial cults like that of 25 December.

It seems to me much better to stick to the festivals in capital letters and, if the interpretation of Ops depends inexorably on Consus, the two festivals of the god must be discussed in some detail. Unfortunately, our sources rarely distinguish between August and December festivals when they describe the Consualia, and it is uncertain whether the descriptions in the sources apply to both

⁷⁴ F. Altheim, *Terra Mater. Untersuchungen zur altitalischen Religionsgeschichte* (Giessen 1931) 152-153. See also A. von Domaszewski, 'Die Festcyclen des römischen Kalenders', *AR* 10 (1907) 334-37.

⁷⁵ C Koch, *Gestirnverehrung im alten Italien. Sol Indiges und der Kreis der di Indigetes* (Frankfurt am Main 1933) 73.

festivals. Varro (l.l. 6, 20) simply says that the Consualia are celebrated in the Circus Maximus and are connected with the rape of the Sabine women. Paulus informs us that during the Consualia chariot races with mules were celebrated (p. 36, 135 L.). Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes that the Consualia were founded by Evander, and that during the festival mules were able to rest and were crowned with flowers (1, 33, 2). Elsewhere, Dionysius speaks about the Consualia at greater length, in connection with the rape of the Sabine women, this time mentioning chariot races (2, 31). Plutarch also speaks about the Consualia in connection with the rape (Rom. 14): he reports that, according to Fabius Pictor, the Consualia were celebrated four months after the foundation of the city (21 August, four months after 21 April), and speaks about chariot races during the festival. Plutarch, however, gives the wrong date for the festival, saying it was celebrated on 18 August (Rom. 15, 5). Tertullian speaks about the Consualia in his *De spectaculis* (5, 5). He does not explicitly mention horse races, but it is implicit in the context that games were celebrated during the festival. He also mentions dates: he says that the sacrifices of the Consualia were celebrated by state priests (*sacerdotes publici*) on 7 July and by the *flamen Quirinalis* and the Vestals on the 21 August. This is the only source mentioning sacrifices to Consus on 7 July. Ausonius writes that the Consualia were celebrated *navigiis aut quadrigis* (*De fer. Rom.* 21). A particularly important piece of evidence is a note on the *fasti Praenestini* regarding Consualia on 15 December, which Mommsen reconstructed as: ‘horses and mules are crowned with flowers, which in his protection (...) accordingly the king is carried by a horse’ (CIL 1², p. 237 = *Insc. It.* 13, 2, p. 137: *Equi et [muli flore coronantur] | quod in eius tu[tela - - -]. | Itaque rex equo [vectus - - -]*). The reconstruction may be tentative, but it seems certain that horses were involved in the December Consualia and that the rex was celebrating them.

It is unclear whether or not horse and chariot races occurred at each Consualia. If the reconstruction of the *fasti Praenestini* proposed by Degrassi is right, it may be that the races were held in August, whereas the crowning of mules and horses with flowers occurred in December. This is, however, uncertain, and it may well be that the races occurred in both festivals, as Scullard thought⁷⁶. The officiants of the rituals are the only difference we can be more certain about: *flamen Quirinalis* and Vestals on 21 August, rex on 15 December. One may speculate that with his reference to otherwise unknown rituals performed at the altar of Consus by *sacerdotes publici* on 7 July, Tertullian might have mistaken the date, and was referring to the 15 December festival. However, this would be a gross mistake, quite difficult to understand.

⁷⁶ H.H. Scullard, *Festivals and ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (London 1981) 178.

A reasonable thing to do at this point is to discuss my earlier hypothesis regarding Opiconsiva (supra): if most of the rituals performed in the *regia* were connected with the beginning or the end of a regular time cycle, it seems reasonable to suppose that Opiconsivia in August might have a similar meaning. To keep a unity of interpretation of August and December festivals, I hypothesize that the December festivals may also have a similar value. As they are yearly festivals, I should suppose that the cycles involved are also yearly.

It is not that difficult to find a yearly cycle starting from August. Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus report that, on two different occasions, both during the early 5th century BC, the consular year started on 1 August⁷⁷. The beginning of the consular year during the republic varied considerably, and this information would not be especially significant if Livy had not explained his report *ut tunc principium anni agebatur*⁷⁸. Angelo Brelich, working on an early intuition of von Blumenthal, noticed that there seem to be several beginnings in the Roman year: January, March and August⁷⁹. As Rüpke noticed, there can be several competing New Years in the same calendar⁸⁰.

If this is true, it is possible that the festivals of Consus and Ops Consiva of August might have been associated with the beginning of a new year, whereas the festivals of Consus and Ops of December with the end of an old year. As a matter of fact, for December this interpretation seems to be particularly strong, and it was already proposed by Altheim and Brelich, although they wrongly believed Consus to be the god associated with *condere annum*⁸¹. It must be noted that the December Consualia are the last known ritual act of the *rex* before the January Agonalia and, if the latter are interpreted as a ritual opening of the new year, the former might have been a ritual closing of the old one. Royalty seems to be the most obvious connection between the August Opiconsivia, celebrated in the *regia*, and the December Consualia, in which a ritual was performed by the *rex*. It is also useful to remember that the December Opalia ad forum might have also been celebrated in the *regia*, although there can be no certainty about that.

IV - Republican developments

⁷⁷Liv. 3, 6, 1: *Kalendis Sextilibus*; Dion. Hal. 9, 25, 1: *περὶ τὰς θερινὰς μάλιστα τροπὰς Σεξτίλιου μηνὸς*. The reference to summer solstice is quite puzzling.

⁷⁸For the beginnings of the consular year during the early Republic see O. Leuze, *Die römische Jahrzahlung*. Ein Versuch ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung zu Ermitteln (Tübingen 1909) 363-64.

⁷⁹A. von Blumenthal, 'Zur römische Religion der archaischen Zeit II', *RhM* 90 (1941) 312; A. Brelich, *Tre variazioni romane sul tema delle origini* (Roma 2010³) 138, 167-68; Id., *Introduzione allo studio dei calendari festivi*, II, (Roma 1955) 154-161.

⁸⁰Rüpke, *The Roman calendar* (n.20) 6. He does not mention August.

⁸¹*Infra*, appendix.

We know that Ops had a temple on the Capitol, for which the evidence is terribly fragmentary and controversial⁸². It consists of four entries in epigraphic calendars, a passage of Livy, and one of Pliny. Anna Clark recently drew attention to the extremely controversial nature of this evidence⁸³: the passage of Livy (39, 22, 4) refers that the temple of Ops on the Capitol was struck by lightning in the year 186 BC, where the parallel passage of Obsequens (3) speaks about the temple of Iuppiter, and there might be textual confusion between aedes Iovis/Opis. The passage of Pliny (HN 11, 174) mentions a Metellus pontifex, who was so inarticulate that he had to practice a long time before he dedicated the temple of Ops Opifera, with the name of the goddess corrupted in the manuscripts. With regard to calendars, the *fasti fratrum Arvalium* have for the Volcanalia of 23 August an Opi Opifer(ae) [in - - -], the *fasti Vallenses*, under the Opiconsivia of 25 August, have Op[i] in Capitolio.

In spite of the confusing and controversial nature of the evidence, it seems possible to broadly accept the conclusions of Coarelli on the problems that this evidence poses, and on the identification of the founder of the temple, which can be summarised as follows: the entry of the *fasti Vallenses* is mistaken, and there was a temple of Ops Opifera in the Capitol, the same referred to by Livy and Pliny, whose *dies natalis* was on 23 August, as recorded in the *fasti fratrum Arvalium*. From Livy we know that 186 BC must be the *terminus ante quem* for the foundation of the temple, which implies (following Pliny) that the most likely founder of the temple would be L. Caecilius Metellus, cos. 251, 247⁸⁴. Pouthier believed that the founder of the temple had to be identified with A. Atilius Caiatinus/Calatinus, cos. 258, 254 BC⁸⁵. This supposition is based on the fact that Atilius dedicated temples also to Spes and Fides, the latter also on the Capitol, and so he might have dedicated the temple of Ops, which was nearby. This indemonstrable hypothesis is then used to reconstruct the characteristics of Capitoline Ops: the cult was Hellenising because the family of Atilius might have come from Caiatia in Campania (149-150); although the three temples of Ops, Fides, and Spes had different developments, a connection must be found ‘taking into

⁸² A. Degrassi, *Insc. It.* 13, 2, 501-02; Coarelli, ‘Le Tyrannoctone du Capitole et la mort de Tiberius Gracchus’ (n.29) 137-60, esp. 146-50; M. G. Morgan ‘Metellus Pontifex and Ops Opifera: a note on Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 11.174’, *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 35-41; A. Ziolkowski, *The temples of mid-republican Rome and their historical and topographical context* (Rome 1992) 122-25; J. Aronen, ‘Ops Opifera, aedes’, *LTUR* 3 (1996) 362-64; Clark, *Divine Qualities* (n.1) 300-05.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ The problem of this identification is that L. Caecilius Metellus was a famous orator, a piece of evidence which can be reconciled with difficulty with the story Pliny says. However, accepting one of the other possible Metelli pontifices, i.e. L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus, cos. 119 BC (A. Degrassi, *Insc. It.* 13, 2, 501-02; S. B. Platner, T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford 1929) 372) and L. Caecilius Metellus Diadematus, cos. 119 BC (Mommsen, *CIL* 1², p. 337), creates chronological problems. Coarelli (149 n.1) and Morgan (36-37) have good arguments to overcome this difficulty. Coarelli argues that Metellus pontifex in Pliny always implies the consul of 251 BC, whereas Morgan underlined that the vocabulary of Pliny implied that he did not believe in the story of Metellus being inarticulate (*accipimus... credatur*).

⁸⁵ Pouthier, *Ops* (n.4) 142.

account all the aspects of the enterprise - place, circumstances, and personality of the founder' (159). Moreover, Capitoline Ops was more political because "Calatinus represented the prosperity or the hope granted to the citizens by the gods, he was himself, under divine protection, a creator of prosperity or hope during a war which risked to deprive the Romans of them' (160). According to Pouthier, this implies that Ops is recognized as an active force, "maybe less personal than in the older times, because she becomes profoundly 'political' in the Greek sense, and becomes part of a religious system of protection of the city whose chief responsible is the god of the Capitoline temple' (Ibid.).

This is too hypothetical to be commented on in detail. As I observed above Ops was probably connected to a political concept before the foundation of the temple on the Capitol, whenever this happened and whoever the founder was. In the pages of Pouthier one can see how inadequate the category of 'abstract' and 'personal' divinities is: Ops had finally a temple, a cultic statue, and a festival whose nature was less secretive. There is no reason to believe that she was more or less 'personal' or 'abstract' than archaic Ops, but certainly a greater number of people could interact with the goddess after she received a temple in such a prominent place.

There is not much further evidence on the temple of Ops on the Capitol which would allow defining its nature, and most of the evidence is late republican or early imperial. In several passages Plautus implies that Iuppiter is the son of Ops and Saturn, and this genealogy is also found in Fabius Pictor⁸⁶. In a letter to Atticus, Cicero informs that, around 50 BC, there was a statue of Scipio Africanus in the upper part of the temple of Ops (Att. 6, 1, 17⁸⁷), and in 45 BC Caesar deposited a part of the state treasury in the temple of Ops, where it was later retrieved by Mark Anthony⁸⁸, and Iulius Obsequens records a prodigy which took place in the temple in 44 BC (the doors of the temple shut on their own). We also know that the temple of Ops was involved in the celebrations of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares in 17 BC: the epigraphic text of the proceedings of the Ludi is very fragmentary, but it is clear enough that a group of boys and women were involved in celebrations at the temple⁸⁹. This is mentioned immediately after the temple of Iuppiter. In AD 80 the Arval Brothers gathered in the temple of Ops for vota on the occasion of the rededication of the temple of

⁸⁶ Pl.; Miles 1081; Pers. 251-4; Cist. 512-5, see the comments in Pouthier, Ops (n.4) 164-66; R. Danese, 'La poesia plautina, forma linguistica di creazione', MD 14 (1985) 79-99; Fabius Pictor F^{RomHist} 1 F 15 = fr. 20 Chassignet = fr. 16 P.

⁸⁷ On which see Coarelli, 'Le Tyrannoctone du Capitole' (n.29) 145-46.

⁸⁸ Cic. Att. 14, 14, 5; Phil. 1, 17; 2, 35; 2, 93; 5, 15; 8, 26; Vell. Pat. 2, 60, 4.

⁸⁹ CIL 6 32323 = B. Schnegg-Köhler, Die augusteischen Säkularspiele (München 2002) 34: 71-75: Mulieres quoque quae sellist[ernia - - -] | sternere oportere ab ea pr[- - - (vacat?)] | Quae feminae et qui pueri sibi[- - -] | rent eos separatim a cetera[- - - ad aedem] | Opis in Capitolio positum erit[- - - (vacat?)].

Iuppiter by Titus⁹⁰. We also know that in the first century AD military diplomas were in the temple⁹¹. This does not really offer much to understand the nature of the Republican temple, and the elements of continuity or discontinuity with the archaic Ops.

The alleged founder of the temple, L. Caecilius Metellus, was the protagonist of the famous anecdote of the rescue of the Palladium from the temple of Vesta in flames (Cic., *Scaur.* 48; Dion. Hal. 2, 66, 4; Plin., *HN* 7, 139-141). However fantastic this anecdote may be, as a pontifex maximus he was in a good position to dedicate a temple to a goddess who might have been little known outside sacerdotal circles before that point. In the evidence we mentioned above we can see Ops getting closer to Iuppiter: we can see that in the presence of the portrait of Scipio Africanus, who had strong connections with Iuppiter Capitolinus⁹², in the coordinated celebrations of the *Ludi Saeculares* in 17 BC and the meeting of the Arval Brothers in AD 80. The episode regarding the money of Caesar and Mark Anthony indicates an interpretation of Ops as a goddess of abundance and wealth. The Republican temple clearly offered much in terms of the physical presence of Ops in the city, and probably paved the way for late republican cults of Ops elsewhere in Italy, like in Ameria and Pinna Vestina⁹³. It can hardly be a coincidence that we know about archaic cults from entries in the calendar and antiquarian sources, whereas we have inscriptions and casual references to the temple in other literature only for the republican temple.

Another notable republican development must have been the interpretation of Ops as a goddess of earth. As I already observed, this was probably based on the interpretation of Ops and Saturn as Rhea and Kronos, which must have been current already in the late third century BC, as we can infer from Plautus and Fabius Pictor, but which might have been considerably older than that. The sources in which Ops is explained as a goddess of Earth, however, are mostly late antiquarian sources. I have already discussed that they must be based on the acceptance of a variant of a Stoic philosophical doctrine, identifying a primordial couple of an earth goddess and a celestial god⁹⁴.

Conclusions

⁹⁰ J. Scheid, *Commentarii fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt. Les copies épigraphiques des protocoles annuels de la confrérie arvale (21 av.-304 ap. J.-C.)* (Rome 1998) 125, nr. 48.

⁹¹ CIL 16 3; 29.

⁹² Liv. 38, 56; ,Au. Gell., *NA* 6, 1, 1-6; Val. Max. 1, 2, 2; 8, 15, 2; App., *Ib.* 23.

⁹³ AE 2000, 500; AE 1997, 460.

⁹⁴ *Supra*, I b.

The evidence regarding the cult of Ops in the archaic period is scarce but relatively consistent. First of all, it is very hard to doubt that Ops had a cult in archaic Rome. Her presence in the *feriale* with capital letters, and also her cult in the *regia*, a place showing an impressive archaeological continuity, are all elements suggesting that Ops was a genuinely archaic Roman goddess.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Ops was not an agricultural goddess of fertility. This interpretation rests upon questionable etymologies of Ops and (especially) Consus. These etymologies have been at the basis of most of scholarly interpretations of the two divinities, and their acceptance show the biased character of scholarship on early Rome, and its tendency to overemphasise the agricultural aspects of Roman religion. This is particularly true for the etymology of Consus from *condere*, which is demonstrably improbable, but which has been accepted as a hard fact since Mommsen first proposed it in 1863.

Archaic Ops, on the contrary, seems to have been a deity of abundance, an abundance strictly connected with sovereignty and with the welfare of the state. The nature of Ops seems to have been public but not popular. This is testified by the secretive nature of *Opiconsivia*, but also by the rarity of epigraphic dedications to Ops. The connection with Consus, a divinity of obscure meaning, but virtually unanimously interpreted in ancient sources as a god of *consilium*, would also prove that Ops was thought to be a benefit with strong political implications. The exact nature of this connection remains unclear, although I am inclined to think it might have been genealogical: Ops seemed to have genealogical relationships quite early on, depending on her identification with Rhea.

It goes without saying that different conceptions of abundance do not necessarily have to conflict with each other. One of the main characteristics of conceptual divinities is that they are by definition open to different meanings and interpretations. In an archaic society, one would probably expect a concept of abundance to be connected also with agriculture and natural growth⁹⁵. It is possible that Ops as a goddess of abundance in archaic Rome also had connections with agriculture, but the fact that they left such scarce traces in our evidence makes even more impressive the political aspect of the goddess and her association with sovereignty, wealth and abundance.

This enquiry, as it often happens with archaic Rome, has perhaps been more successful in establishing what cannot be said on Ops and Consus in the archaic period. However, beyond a veil of uncertainty, which the nature of the evidence does not allow to fully lift, Ops has emerged as a

⁹⁵ One can think of the Athenian *ephebic oath* (P.J. Rhodes, R. Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404-323 BC* (Oxford 2003) n. 88 with commentary, bibliography and other sources), which has a clear political value and which includes amongst the divinities who guard over the oath divinities with transparent names as *Thallo* and *Auxo*.

goddess connected with a nuanced and politically significant concept of abundance, in which royal sovereignty seems to have had an important role.

Appendix: The Study of Ops in Modern Scholarship

In this article I have argued that Ops was not an agrarian divinity in archaic Rome, and that many previous studies on Roman religion assumed that she was so because they believed that Roman religion was primitive and conservative, whereas many other scholars probably built on the conclusions of scholars having made such assumptions, with the result that the agrarian interpretation of Ops has been virtually unchallenged. I have decided to introduce this section dedicated to a discussion of modern scholarship on Ops as an appendix because this allows me to critically outline and discuss the interpretations of my predecessors without heavily burdening the text with footnotes.

Ludwig Preller included Ops and Saturn in the section of *Römische Mythologie* (Berlin 1858) dealing with agrarian gods. In the pair, Ops was beyond doubt die gütige Mutter Erde (409). She was celebrated together with Saturn in their common temple on the slopes of the Capitolium in a festival in December. The proof that Ops was an Erdgöttin is that one should honour the goddess while sitting on the ground, keeping contact with the earth (417, cfr. *Macr., Sat.* 1, 10, 21). Ops was also considered the national goddess of Osci/Opsci. With the title Ops Consiva she was worshipped in the regia on 25 August, and she represents, more specifically, the goddess of crops and harvest (der Saaten und der Erndte).

In his commentary on Roman festivals published in 1863, part the first volume the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Theodor Mommsen interpreted Ops a goddess of earth and fertility, whereas Consus was the god of condere, of crops and barns (CIL 1, p. 400 = CIL 1², p. 326). As I have observed above, this interpretation fits wonderfully with the primitive character that Mommsen attributed to Roman religion in his *römische Geschichte*, and it was also hugely influential on subsequent scholarship.

According to Georg Wissowa⁹⁶ Ops is "an incarnation of the rich abundance of the harvest" (eine Verkörperung der reichen Fülle des Erntesegens), and for this reason she is associated with Consus, god of crops. This relationship, he adds, it is sometimes obscured by the ancient authors who interpreted Ops as Rhea, and therefore associated her with Saturn (931-932). This interpretation, however, does not fit well with the evidence of the most ancient cults, in which Ops

⁹⁶ The quotations are from the entry "Ops" in *Lex. Myth.* 3. See also on the same subject G. Wissowa, *De feriis anni Romanorum vetustissimi observationes selectae* (Marburg 1891) IV-VIII (= *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur römischen Religions- und Stadtgeschichte* (München 1904) 156-62); *Id., Religion und Kultus der Römer* (n.65) 201-04.

is clearly associated with Consus: not only because in the *regia* she is called *Consiva* (which, Wissowa argues, may come from *condere*), but mainly because in the calendar the two festivals of Ops (25 Aug and 19 Dec) seem to be closely connected with the festivals of Consus (21 Aug and 15 Dec). Ops was not the Mutter Erde, and the ritual referred to by Macrobius should be interpreted as a reference to the Greek Rhea, and probably did not relate to the Roman goddess (c. 933). The *sacrarium* in the *regia* was the oldest place of worship of the goddess, followed by the Capitoline temple and by a temple *ad Forum*.

Warde Fowler agreed with Wissowa about the strong connection between Ops and Consus⁹⁷. He interpreted the *Opiconsivia* ritual of the *regia* as originating from a private household ritual, in which the *paterfamilias* and his daughters played the role of the *pontifex* and the *vestals* (212-214). For the *Opalia* in December, he noted that the location *ad Forum* suggests a connection with Saturn (273-274). He interpreted Saturn as an agrarian god, and argued that "[t]he close concurrence of *Consualia*, *Opalia* and *Saturnalia* at this time seems to show that some final inspection of the harvest work of the autumn may in reality have been coincident with, or have immediately preceded, the rejoicing of the winter solstice" (271).

Franz Altheim⁹⁸ described the August festivals of Consus and Ops as "devoted to the harvest and, therewith, to the fruits of the earth" (133). For the December festivals, he noticed that "we find correspondence in the rites paid to Consus and Ops" (133-134). However, he recognized that it is difficult to explain the cycle of festivals as related to agrarian work: whereas it is possible that the August festivals *Consualia* and *Opiconsivia* are related to "condere of the harvested fruit of the field [...] it is very much harder to explain the festival of the 15th of December that bears the same name" (196). The solution he proposed is that the December cycle of festivals should be interpreted as marking the conclusion of the old year (196-197).

In his article in Pauly-Wissowa (18 (1939), 749-758), Georg Rohde questioned Wissowa's opinion about the lack of a connection between Ops and Saturn in ritual (754-755). They are not only connected in the December cycle of festivals, but they are also mentioned in the list of Greek gods whose images were carried in procession during the *pompa circensis* (Dion. Hal. 7, 72, 13). Rohde argues that there is no reason to think that the aforementioned passage of Macrobius refers to Rhea rather than to Ops. Moreover, the identification between Ops and the Earth might be ancient, as it appears already in Varro (*Ant. rer. div. fr.* 106 *Cardauns: opem ferat nascentibus excipiendo eos sinu terrae et vocetur Opis*). He adds, however, that the Stoics tended to interpret all female

⁹⁷ W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic* (London 1899).

⁹⁸ F. Altheim, *A History of Roman Religion* (London 1938).

divinities as the Earth. He believes that Ops is a Personifikation, and he accepts Wissowa's opinion of that she personifies copia/abundance, but he also adds auxilium and opes as possible 'abstractions' (756). Finally, Rohde notices that if the festivals of December did not have an agrarian significance, as suggested by Altheim, it is possible that Ops and Consus were not agrarian divinities at all (c. 757). He concludes, therefore, that the Stoic interpretation of Ops as Mutter Erde is probably close to the truth.

In 1949 two studies were published on Ops by Brelich and Rose, coming to radically different conclusions⁹⁹. Brelich totally rejects the interpretation of Consus as an agrarian god: for him Altheim's interpretation of Consus as an agrarian god in August and a god of new year in December does not really work. He noticed that, for Dionysios of Halicarnassos, the altar of Consus might in fact be dedicated to an unnameable divinity of secret counsels (2, 31, 3: δαίμονι ἀρρήτω τινὶ βουλευμάτων κρυφίων ἡγεμόνι καὶ φύλακι). He maintains that Consus had connections with the cycle of the sun and with the underworld, in the sense that the sun dies and is reborn at the end of each year, and human beings are born from di parentes¹⁰⁰. Brelich argues that Ops is a divinity connected with the protection of the existence, the welfare and order of the State (45: die Existenz, das Gedeihen, die innere Ordnung des Staates) rather than with agrarian work. Ops, together with Consus, is considered to be a protective divinity of Rome (46). On the other hand, for Rose Ops is an absolutely agrarian divinity. Consus and she are 'Storer and Plenty' (75). The August festival is connected with the harvest, whereas the December festival may be associated with 'the very last gathering of all, the collection of the latest olives, for these are not got in all at once, but in successive stages at not inconsiderable intervals of time' (76). The connection between Ops and Saturn is considered to be the product of a Greek interpretation (99).

The first monograph on Ops and Consus is the doctoral dissertation of Petronella Stehouwer published in 1956¹⁰¹. Unfortunately, it is heavily influenced by contemporary attempts to link early Roman religion with mana, a Melanesian word that lies behind an anthropological theory of primitive religion advanced by the anthropologist and missionary Robert H. Codrington at the end

⁹⁹H.J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (London 1949); A. Brelich, *Die Geheime Schutzgottheit von Rom* (Zurich 1949). I am grateful to Giorgio Ferri for allowing me to read his Italian translation of this work, which should be published by Editori riuniti university press in the future.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 44 of the original text: "Condere significa seppellire; oltre al grano, al secolo e al sole si seppelliscono anche i morti. Come dal grano accumulato sotto terra nascerà il nuovo, dal secolo 'seppellito' sorgerà il nuovo, dal sole di dicembre quello di gennaio, così anche la vita umana si erge dai morti – di parentes. Non vi è alcuna demarcazione precisa tra i due campi: il rinnovamento dell'esistenza determinata dalla morte quale sua radice è l'esperienza comune di fondo di entrambi gli ambiti, che si intersecano reciprocamente".

¹⁰¹ *Étude sur Ops et Consus* (n.27).

of the nineteenth century¹⁰². At the time, *mana* was used to explain the ‘primitive’ phase of Roman religion and considered to be equivalent of *numen*, most notably by Rose and Wagenvoort, supervisor of Stehouwer's doctorate¹⁰³. With this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that for Stehouwer *Ops* is a personification of the power of growth, which was deified by primitive agrarian Romans, who were unable to understand the process of the *monde organique*, and is therefore closely connected with crops and agriculture: ‘Il est fort probable que les Latins, peuple au caractère primitif, [...] considéraient les grains comme un élément sacré au plus fort degré. *Ops*, au singulier, se cristallisa dans l'esprit des hommes comme 'énergie', source intérieure surtout, et en même temps *opes*, au pluriel, désignait, par un titre élevé, le blé adoré, consommé sous forme de germes mystérieux, agissants à l'intérieur: de là *opes* acquiert le sens de 'richesse', 'possessions' (73). The root *op-* should designate une sorte de substance divine known to primitive Italians (117). The other functions and characteristics of *Ops* are not denied, but are related to later sacerdotal regulations, whose enforcement is connected with *synoecism* (116, *passim*).

Georges Dumézil wrote several studies on *Ops*. The first was a paper published in 1954, on the relationship between the cults of the *regia* and his *idéologie tripartite*¹⁰⁴. For Dumézil, the cults of the *regia* are organized as follows: 1) the sacrifices offered to *Iuppiter*, *Iuno* and *Ianus* by *rex*, *regina* and *Flaminica Dialis* are related to the first function: "Jupiter est le dieu souverain et le dieu du souverain, et le «personnel royal» honore deux divinités qui «ouvrent» le temps, office auxiliaire mais essentiel de la souveraineté" (132. Dumézil is referring to *Ianus* and *Iuno* as the god of the beginning of the year and the goddess of the *calendae* respectively); 2) the ritual shaking of the *ancilia* and the spears of *Mars*, which the officer in charge of the army had to perform before leaving for war, is obviously related to the second function, war and protection; 3) the presence of the *sacrarium* of *Ops Consiva* represents the third function, agriculture, fertility and commerce. *Ops*, in particular, "est l'abondance agricole personnifiée, et son second nom l'associe à *Consus*, protecteur souterrain des moissons *conditae*"¹⁰⁵. Dumézil returns to *Ops* in more detail in one of the

¹⁰² The *Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folk-Lore* (Oxford 1891) esp. 118 ff. Fundamental for the popularity of the concept was also F.R. Lehmann, *Mana, der Begriff des 'ausserordentlich Wirkungsvollen' bei Südseevölkern* (Leipzig 1922). For a re-consideration of the meaning of *mana* amongst Melanesians see R.M. Keesing, 'Rethinking Mana', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 40 (1984) 137-56, whereas *mana* is argued to be a concept with many theological and metaphysical implications (not what one would call "primitive" in any case).

¹⁰³ Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (n.94) 12-22; Id., 'Numen and mana', *Harvard Theological Review* 44/3 (1951) 105-20; H. Wagenvoort, *Imperium. Studiën over het "Mana"-begrip in zede en taal der Romeinen* (Paris-Amsterdam 1941) (= *Roman Dynamism. Studies in Ancient Roman Thought, Language and Custom* (Oxford 1947)). For an early critic of the equivalence between *mana* and *numen* see the review of Rose's book by S. Weinstock, *JRS* 39 (1949) 166-67. Fundamental criticism also in Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (n.35) 36-48.

¹⁰⁴ G. Dumézil, 'Les cultes de la *regia*' (n.4).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 132.

essays published in the book *Idées romaines* (Paris 1969)¹⁰⁶. First of all, he states what he considers a few well-established facts: the connection between Ops and Consus is certain, both in the calendar and in the cults of the *regia*; the name Consus comes from *condere*; Consus is connected to agriculture and *condere*, in this context, means ‘l’engrangement, la mise en réserve des produits de la culture’ (292); in this ensemble, Ops should also have an agrarian meaning: ‘elle incarne et protège l’abondance [...] alimentaire, essentiellement l’abondance du grain’ (ibid.). According to Dumézil, the cult of Ops Consiva in the *regia* must be understood in connection with archaic kingship: as the abundance mise en réserve, Ops Consiva is essential for the life of the community, and as such she is *une chose royale* (295). He argues that there are Indo-European parallels for Ops: a Germanic virginal goddess Volla/Fulla, the Vedic Púrāmdhi and the Avestic equivalent Pārēndi (295-299). All these goddesses are said to be linked to the ‘third function’ (fertility, agriculture and richness), although they show relations with gods of the ‘first function’ (sovereignty): Dumézil compares them to Ops, a ‘third function’ goddess who also shows a connection with sovereignty (cult in the *regia*). After that, Dumézil studies the connection between the summer and the winter cycles of festivals. He observes that while in the August festival Ops Consiva is bound to a specific function by her strict relation with Consus, and is honoured in the secretive *sacrarium* of the *regia*, which could only be accessed by the Vestals and the *pontifex maximus*, in the December festival Ops is apparently free of such bounds and restrictions. This means that Ops in August is hidden and *mise en réserve*, under the protection of the king, whereas in December she is open to the public as a part of the social life of the community (301). This should correspond to one of the phases of the production of grain: Varro (*De re rust.* 1, 63; 1, 69) writes that during the winter certain kinds of grains are recovered from the store, parched, and made available for consumption. This is, therefore, the connection between the festivals of August and December: the stored grains start to be ‘freed’ and circulate, and therefore Consus is still the protector of the store, while Ops has a more general character. She ‘prendra en charge les grains libérés: elle ne sera plus l’Abondance en réserve’ qu’elle est depuis le mois d’août, abstraite, mystérieuse, jalousement enfermée dans la *Regia*; elle sera l’Abondance tout court, concrète, circulante, utilisable, et elle accompagne les grains *ad forum*’ (303). Finally, Dumézil’s researches on Ops are usefully summarized in his *La religion romaine archaïque*¹⁰⁷.

In the meantime, Le Bonniec had published his book on Ceres and Latte his *Römische Religionsgeschichte*. Le Bonniec analysed the relationship between Ceres and Ops: we know of two

¹⁰⁶ G. Dumézil, *Idées romaines* (Paris 1969) 289-304.

¹⁰⁷ (n.35) 168-69; 277-9 (the relation between the festivals); 181 (Ops as a part of the gods of Titus Tatius); 185-86 (the cults of the *regia*); 280 (Ops and the secret name of Rome).

altars dedicated to the goddesses in vicus Iugarius, probably in AD 7¹⁰⁸. Le Bonniec argues that this connection between Ops and Ceres might be older, and the Augustan cult a renewal of an ancient cult, relating to Ceres and Ops as forms of Mother Earth. Latte briefly studies the August and December cycles of festivals¹⁰⁹. He follows Wissowa for the most part: the identification with Rhea is somehow late and, depending on her identification with Terra Mater, also literary. Ops in early religion was a Verkörperung des Erntesegens, and later became the Gottheit des Reichtums¹¹⁰.

A second monograph on Ops was published by Pierre Pouthier in 1981: *Ops et la conception divine de l'abondance dans la religion romaine jusqu'à la mort d'Auguste (Rome)*. The first part of the book is dedicated to Ops in early Roman religion (19-135). After a chapter dedicated to the etymology of the goddess, in which Pouthier accepts Ernout's explanation of Ops as 'l'abondance considérée en tant que force active, productrice de richesses ou de prospérité', the author explores the relationship of Ops with *opes*, *copia* and *auxilium*, concluding that Ops is a 'productrice de l'abondance, mais essentiellement de l'abondance de la récolte' (25). The following chapter (31-47) is dedicated to the possible Sabine origin of Ops: in this, Pouthier mainly focuses on a discussion of Varro's list of Sabine gods (l.l. 5, 74). He argues, following Poucet, that the list of altars founded by Titus Tatius probably comes from a very ancient annalistic source (34-35; cfr. J. Poucet, *Recherches sur la légende sabine des origines de Rome* (Louvain 1967) 322-326). The Sabine nature of Ops, however, it is explained as a mythical characteristic: Romans might have tended to associate 'Sabinity' with rusticity and agriculture, in opposition to urban society, which is associated with 'Romanity'¹¹¹. In the following chapter, 'Ops et la carte géographico-religieuse de la Roma archaïque' (49-57), Pouthier argues that the difference between the two cults of Ops, that of the *regia* and that *ad forum*, may be explained on the basis of the topography of the Forum and, in particular, its division in two areas, separated by a brook. The left bank of the Forum, including the Palatine, the temple of Vesta and the *regia* is more strongly connected with urban culture and royal power, whereas the right bank of the Forum, including the Capitol, the area Saturni and the Volcanal should be more closely connected with symbolic 'Sabinity'. The following two chapters are dedicated to the cults of Ops. Here Pouthier closely follows Dumézil: in the *Opiconsivia* of August, celebrated in the *regia*, Ops represents the third function of the indo-european ideology tripartite, and it is, moreover, connected with the 'urban' aspect of Roman religion. The cult *ad forum*, celebrated during the *Opalia* of December, is topographically associated with Saturn and

¹⁰⁸H. Le Bonniec, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome. Des origines à la fin de la République* (Paris 1958) 193-95. We know from the *fasti Amiternini* that the altars were dedicated during the consulship of Creticus and Longus. See the commentary of Degraffi in *Insc. It.* 13, 2, p. 493.

¹⁰⁹K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (München 1960) 72-3.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹¹On this point see now A. Semoli, *Tarpeia e la presenza sabina di Roma arcaica* (Roma 2010).

Vulcan, and it consists of a rustic and joyful celebration, in which the power of Ops is unbounded. The December festival connections with Saturn are considered a probable Greek influence of great antiquity. In any case, the archaic Ops is considered a purely an agrarian goddess, associated with the abundance of crops. Ops is not considered to be a divine Virtue (as Fides and Spes are not, according to Pouthier): later she was artificially considered as such because she had a certain moral value (160). This process happened because, after the temple on the Capitol was built, Ops was inexorably attracted into the sphere of functions of Iuppiter, and thus assumed a political meaning, becoming a goddess of the material abundance of the state. Pouthier wishes to support his argument using as evidence the fact that Ops is always used as a proper name in nominative singular, whereas the concept of wealth is always in the plural opes (160-161). However, this is simply not true: we have a fragment of Accius in which ops is used in the nominative singular as a common name (Inc. 5 W.: quorum genitor fertur esse ops gentibus). This can only mean that in early Latin ops could be used in both ways, and the main argument Pouthier used to argue that Ops was not a divinity bearing the same name of a benefit does not work.

Henk Versnel dedicated a long chapter of his book *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden – New York – Köln 1993) to Saturn and the Saturnalia (136-227). A substantial part of Versnel's interpretation of the festival also involves Ops and Consus. Versnel underlines how the rituals of the Saturnalia are rituals of reversal, in which the usual social order is ritually turned upside down, to be established again at the end of the festival (150-163). Saturn is considered to be an originally agrarian god because his festival is between the agrarian December festivals of Consualia and Opalia, and because he is also a part of the mythically 'Sabine' gods whose cult, according to Varro, was established by Titus Tatius (164-165). Versnel accepts Dumézil's theory of the relationship between the August and the December cycle of festivals: they are connected with condere and promere the harvest. Moreover, he adds that this may also be supported by the presence conditor and promitor in the list of indigitamenta presented by Servius (ad Georg. 1, 21): '[i]f, then, the function of condere has its ritual celebration, it may be expected that this also holds for its counterpart' (168). Versnel, moreover, believes that the solution of the problem must be found confronting not only the two groups of festivals regarding Ops and Consus, but also those in between, regarding Vulcan (in August) and Saturn (in December). The two festivals would mark the moments of crisis between the storage (the two Consualia) and the manifestation of the abundance (Opiconsivia and Opalia). These festivals represent 'a moment in between the situation of the hidden supplies and the action of the production' (170). The moment of opening the barns, marked by the December cycle of festivals, is a particularly strong moment of crisis and ambivalence. Versnel believes that topographical evidence supports this reconstruction: near the temple of Saturn

was located the mundus, in which every year a boy would get in to prophesy the *proventus anni* '(cereal) yield of the coming year' (174). This custom must be interpreted as 'an image of the opening of the silos, the inspection of the stores and the concomitant atmosphere of tension and expectancy' (176). Moreover, the days in which *mundus patet* were also characterized by ritual reversal. The whole December cycle of festivals, and the Saturnalia in particular, are, therefore, to be considered as a ritual expression of the moment of anxiety between the opening of the stores and the unleashing of the abundance of the harvest.

The last contribution on the cult of Ops is an article by Bernadette Liou-Gille¹¹². Liou-Gille reconsidered the whole dossier on Ops, and argues that she should be considered one of the *Déesse-Mères orientales*. The relationship between Ops, Consus and the agrarian cycle would testify that she is a goddess of fecundity and fertility, whereas her relationship with Saturn, mythical king of Latium, and her connection with the 'gods of Titus Tatius' prove that she is a 'primordial' divinity. The importance of Ops Consiva in the *regia* and the tradition of Ops as the protective divinity of Rome suggest that she was connected with the welfare of the state, and this may be because '[l]es Grandes-Mères sont des divinités très puissantes' (168). Fragments of the archaic architectural decorations of the *regia* representing birds and felines may suggest that she was an ancient *Potnia Theron* (170-171). Liou-Gille argues that Roman Ops originated as *Oupis*, an epiclesis of Artemis of Ephesos attested in Callimachus' hymn to Artemis (240). Artemis of Ephesos is also considered 'une hypostase de la Magna Mater anatolienne', and, through the mediation of Massilia, she was introduced into Rome by Servius Tullius as Diana on the Aventine (173-174). Liou-Gille also notices that *Opis* is a mythical hyperborean virgin who received some kind of heroic cult in Delos and, therefore, she might originally have been not only an epiclesis of Artemis but an independent goddess. The conclusion is that Ops is the Roman version of *Oupis/Opis*. She is aware of the difficulty represented by the length of the first vowel, which in Ops is short, but she argues that the existence of the Latin common noun *ops/opes* altered the length of the first vowel¹¹³. Moreover, it is improbable that two different civilizations elaborated two almost identical divine figures (180-181). After that, the paper presents a long digression on the reception of Greek myths in archaic Rome, especially focusing on the myth of the Minotaur, famously attested in the terracotta decorations of the *regia*, and that of the Amazons (represented by the equestrian statue of Cloelia). Therefore, for Liou-Gille, 'Ops reproduit assez fidèlement l'archétype des *Déesse-Mères orientales*: divinité primordiale (*princeps*), protectrice de la fertilité et de la fécondité, elle assure en outre la sécurité de Rome' (194).

¹¹²Ops: une magna mater méconnue? *Légendes orientales dans la Rome archaïque*, PP 57 (2002) 161-95.

¹¹³Ops and Opis may be two different figures altogether. See G. Radke, 'Opis', RE 9 A 1 (1961) 928-29.