

At *Aen.* 1.314–417, Aeneas briefly comes face-to-face with Venus, who then escapes to Cyprus. Williams (1972; cf. Knauer (1964); Nelis (2001)) describes this section of the poem as “quite often based on *Odyssey* 6 and 7,” and the reworking of *Od.* 6.102–8 (where Nausicaa among her slave-girls is compared to Artemis hunting boars and deer in the company of the mountain nymphs) in the description of Dido at *Aen.* 1.498–502 leaves no doubt that Vergil had the encounter between Odysseus and the Phaeacian princess in mind when he composed Book 1. But a number of telling details suggest that the Roman poet's more immediate model for his account of Aeneas' interaction with Venus at 1.314–417 was Anchises' initial meeting with Aphrodite on the slopes of Mt. Cithaeron in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

When Aphrodite appears to Anchises in the *hAphr.*, he immediately hails her as a goddess (92–7, 99). Odysseus refers to nymphs in his soliloquy at *Od.* 6.122–4, but makes no mention of them in his initial speech to Nausicaa, as Vergil's Aeneas and the *Hymn's* Anchises both do. Nor does Odysseus press the suggestion that Nausicaa might be a goddess, much less propose offering her sacrifice, and she accordingly has no need to protest that she is only a simple mortal creature. But Anchises and Aphrodite in the *Hymn*—like Aeneas and Venus in *Aeneid* 1—do precisely this. So too *Od.* 8.362–3—which might otherwise appear to be the direct model for the description of Venus' flight to Cyprus at *Aen.* 1.415–17, does not mention a temple there, but the virtually identical *hAphr.* 58–9—and the *Aeneid*—do. Even more significant, at *Od.* 8.363 Aphrodite's altar on Cyprus is described as θυήεις (“rich with the smell of sacrifice”), whereas at *hAphr.* 59 it is θυώδης (“fragrant with incense”), and it is patently the latter adjective that lies behind Vergil's *Sabaeco / ture calent arae* (*Aen.* 1.416–17). Venus' emotionally fraught encounter with her son in *Aeneid* 1 is thus modeled on her similarly brief idyll with Anchises a generation earlier, which led to the birth of Aeneas himself.

The *hAphr.* appears to have been known to Callimachus and Apollonius Rhodius. Beyond that, it has left almost no trace in the literary or historical record. But it was the most extensive ancient poetic account of the supposed origins of the Julian family (cf. *Aen.* 1.286–90), and if a copy of it existed anywhere in the Roman world in the late 1st century BCE—as it certainly did, since it has survived to us today—it is impossible to believe that it did not make its way to Augustus and from him, presumably, to Vergil. Hinds (1987) argued that Ovid was intimately familiar with the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Vergil a generation or so earlier, at any rate, knew the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and used it in composing his *Aeneid*.

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Vergil's *Aeneid* and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

1. *Aen.* 1.327–30, 334

*o quam te memorem, virgo? namque haud tibi vultus
mortalis, nex vox hominem sonat; o, dea certe
(an Phoebi soror? an Nympharum sanguinis una?),
sis felix nostrumque leves, quaecumque, laborem ...
multa tibi ante aras nostra cadet hostia dextra.*

But how should I greet a young girl like you?
Your face, your features—hardly a mortal's looks
and the tone of your voice is hardly mortal either.
Oh a goddess without a doubt! What, are you
Apollo's sister? Or one of the breed of Nymphs? ...
Many a victim will fall before your altars,
we'll slaughter them for you!

2. *Aen.* 1.335–7

*Tum Venus: haud equidem tali me dignor honore;
virginibus Tyriis mos est gestare pharetram
purpureoque alte suras vincire coturno.*

But Venus replied: Now there's an honor I really don't deserve.
It's just the style for Tyrian girls to sport
a quiver and high-laced hunting boots in crimson.

3. *Aen.* 1.415–17

*ipsa Paphum sublimis ablit sedesque revisit
laeta suas, ubi templum illi, centumque Sabaeo
ture calent arae sertisque recentibus halant.*

But she herself, lifting into the air, wings her way
toward Paphos, racing with joy to reach her home again
where her temples stand and a 100 altars steam
with Arabian incense, redolent with the scent
of fresh-cut wreaths.

4. *Od.* 6.149–52

γουνουῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις ἢ βροτός ἐσσι;
εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρύν ἔχουσιν,
Ἄρτεμιδί σε ἐγὼ γε, Διὸς κούρη μέγαλοιο,
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυὴν τ' ἄγχιστα εἶσκω.

I am at your knees, o queen. But are you mortal or goddess?
If indeed you are one of the gods who hold wide heaven,
then I must find in you the nearest likeness to Artemis
the daughter of great Zeus, for beauty, figure and stature.

5. *Od.* 8.362–3

ἢ δ' ἄρα Κύπρον ἴκανε φιλομειδῆς Ἀφροδίτη
ἐς Πάφον, ἔνθα τέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυήεις.

But she, Aphrodite lover of laughter, went back to Paphos
on Cyprus, where lies her sacred precinct and her smoky altar.

6. *hAphr.* 92–7, 99

χαῖρε, ἄνασσ', ἢ τις μακάρων τάδε δώμαθ' ἰκάνεις,
Ἄρτεμις ἢ Λητώ ἢ χρυσέη Ἀφροδίτη
ἢ Θέμις ἠυγενῆς ἢ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
ἢ ποῦ τις Χαρίτων δεῦρ' ἦλυθες, αἶ τε θεοῖσι
πᾶσιν ἐταίριζουσι καὶ ἀθάνατοι καλέονται,
ἢ τις νυμφάων, αἶ τ' ἄλσεα καλὰ νέμονται
καὶ πηγὰς ποταμῶν καὶ πίσσα ποιήεντα.

'Greetings, majesty, whoever of the blessed ones you are who have come to this house,
whether Artemis, or Leto, or golden Aphrodite,
or well-born Themis or grey-eyed Athena;
or perhaps you are one of the Graces come here, who keep company with all
the gods and are referred to as immortals;
or one of the nymphs who inhabit the lovely groves
and the rivers' springs and the swamp-lands full of grass.

7. *hAphr.* 100–2

σοὶ δ' ἐγὼ ἐν σκοπιῇι, περιφαινομένω ἐνὶ χῶρῳι,
βωμὸν ποιήσω, ῥέζω δέ τοι ἱερά καλὰ
ῶρησι πᾶσι

I will build you an altar on a high spot, in a
very prominent place, and I will make fine offerings to you
at all times of year.

8. *hAphr.* 108–12

Ἄγχισι, κύδιστε χαμαιγενέων ἀνθρώπων,
οὔ τις τοι θεός εἰμι· τί μ' ἀθανάτησιν εἴσκεις;
ἀλλὰ καταθητή γε, γυνή δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ.
Ἄτρεὺς δ' ἐστὶ πατήρ ὀνομάκλυτος, εἴ που ἀκούεις,
ὃς πάσης Φρυγίης εὐτειχέτοιο ἀνάσσει.

“Anchises, most distinguished of human beings born upon the earth—
I am no god, I assure you; why do you compare me to the immortal goddesses?
I am a mortal, and the mother who gave birth to me was a woman.
My father is the famous Otreus—perhaps you have heard of him—
who is the king of all of well-walled Phrygia.

9a. *hAphr.* 58–9

ἔς Κύπρον δ' ἐλθοῦσα θυώδεα νηὸν ἔδυνεν,
ἔς Πάφον· ἔνθα δέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυώδης.

She went to Cyprus and descended into her temple, fragrant with incense—
to Paphos; her sacred precinct and altar, fragrant with incense, are there.

9b. cf. *Aen.* 1.416–17 *Sabaeo / ture calent arae*

10. *Aen.* 1.375–6 *si vestras forte per auris / Troiae nomen iit* (“I by chance the name [of Troy]
has reached your ears”)

cf. *hAphr.* 111 εἴ που ἀκούεις (“perhaps you have heard of [him]”)