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## POST SCRIPTUM

### Sons, Mothers, and Sex: *Aeneid* 1.314-20 and the *Hymn to Aphrodite* Reconsidered

C.W. Gladhill

In *Vergilius* 57, S. Douglas Olson argued that Aeneas' encounter with Venus at *Aen.* 1.314-20 gestures in significant ways to the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, which adds yet another stratum to the Homeric allusions within this episode (Odysseus' entreaty of Nausikaa at *Od.* 6.149-52, of Athena at *Od.* 13.230-33, and the song of Demodocus at *Od.* 8.362-63). Olson points out that both Anchises and Aeneas, in their appeal to the unknown goddess, include Nymphs among the deities they liken to the disguised Venus. In addition, Anchises and Aeneas both promise the maiden that they will fulfill religious obligations—Anchises the building of an altar and Aeneas the performance of sacrifice—a request which is followed by Aphrodite-Venus' rejection of divinity. Beyond these narrative parallels, Olson argues that Vergil's *Sabaeum tus* (*Aen.* 1.416-17) is an intertextual reference to *hAphro.* 59, ἔνθα δέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυώδης where θυώδης refers to the smell of incense around the altar, which intimates that Vergil had the hymn in mind and not *Od.* 8.363 (ἐς Πάφον, ἔνθα τέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυήεις). While Olson translates θυήεις as "rich with the smell of sacrifice," a translation which stresses an unspecified olfactory experience, the LSJ defines the adjective as "smoking with incense, fragrant." In other words, *Sabaeum tus* can just as likely refer to θυήεις as it can to θυώδης. The synonymy between the two adjectives makes it difficult to figure out which text Vergil is invoking. The scholiastic tradition, however, is less assured than the LSJ on the definition of θυήεις. It is glossed as ὁ τεθυμιαμένος by Apollonius Sophistes (*lexicon Homericum* 89.9); βωμός, ἐφ' οὗ τὰ θυόμενα ἔκαιον, διὸ θυήεις λέγεται. ἐπεὶ καὶ θύος τὸ θυόμενον (*ad Il.* 4.704.4) and παρὰ τὸ θύος ἢ τὸ θύειν (*ad Od.* 1.303.36) by Eustathius; τεθυωμένος by Hesychius (*Lex.* 828.1), and θῦον γὰρ σημαίνει τὸ μυρεψικὸν ἄνθος (*Etymologicum Gudianum* 525.31), to name a few instances. It therefore could be the case that Vergil interpreted θυήεις as the scent of incense and not of burning meat. One might even suggest that *Sabaeum tus* is Vergil's way of cutting this Gordian knot in the *scholia* by offering an unambiguous reference to incense. In what follows I would like to explore *Sabaeum tus* in order to lend more support to Olson's claim that Vergil was in fact referring to θυώδης in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

It would be remarkable had Vergil not utilized the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, had he direct knowledge of it, and it has been generally assumed that he knew it in some capacity. Kenneth Reckford's statement is representative: "[T]hat Virgil used the Hymn directly and not, perhaps, just the *Cypria*, is unproveable. He does, however, seem to have observed the core sequence of disguise, lovemaking and revelation."<sup>1</sup> The questions Olson's argument raises are significant: how does one prove attestation between the *Aeneid* and the *hAphro.* and what is the significance of the reference within the narrative, if it is agreed that Vergil alluded to *hAphro.* in Aeneas' encounter with

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Reckford, "Recognizing Venus 1: Aeneas meets his Mother," *Arion* 3 (1995) 20.

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Venus? Let us take the reference to the Nymphs. While it is true that both Anchises and Aeneas refer to Nymphs, their supplication of Aphrodite-Venus is instructively contrastive. Aeneas states, *o, dea certe / (an Phoebi soror? an Nympharum sanguinis una?), / sis felix . . .* (1.328-30), invoking only Diana and the Nymphs (in a highly periphrastic way). Anchises, on the other hand, has no clue who this goddess might be. He calls her Artemis, Leto, Aphrodite, Themis, Athena, and one of the Graces or Nymphs (*hAphro.* 92-97). Perhaps Anchises' all-encompassing embrace of female divinities is a product of Aphrodite's beautiful, but non-descript outfit (ἔσσομένη δ' εὖ πάντα περι χροῖ εἴματα καλὰ / χρυσῶ κοσμηθεῖσα φιλομειδῆς Ἀφροδίτη, 65-66), in contrast to Vergil's Venus who is carrying bows and arrows and wearing purple *coturni*.<sup>2</sup> At first sight, the list of divinities seems to distance the *Aeneid* from the Hymn. Nymphs normally, if not always, accompany Artemis, so their presence is consistently patterned on Aeneas' evaluation of potential divinities who might reasonably be encountered as huntresses, as Servius suggests (*ad Aen* 1.329). However, it is also notable that Artemis and the Nymph are the first and last divinities in Anchises' list. Vergil's allusion—if we can be so certain that Vergil is gesturing to the Hymn—is a marked syncopation of Anchises' list of goddesses, which lends support to Olson's claim. This syncopation is accompanied by a marked focus on Venus' huntress disguise, which, in effect, becomes a motif as the narrative continues, first in reference to Penthesileia (1.490-94) in the first ecphrasis of the epic and then to Dido, who is specifically compared to Diana.<sup>3</sup>

Olson's second argument, that *Sabaeo / ture calent arae* (*Aen.* 1.416-17) is a reference to *hAphro.* 59, ἔνθα δέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυώδης, clinches the argument of Hymnic rather than Homeric allusion. Above, I showed that this claim is not as solid as it may appear, the key to proving Olson's claim is the underlying implication of *Sabaeum tus* at this moment in the narrative. Olson raises the important point that the time, place, and process of the transmission of the *Homeric Hymns* into Latin literature is anything but clear. He adduces a few references to the Hymns in Callimachus and Apollonius. Callimachus' *Hymns* are significant and underappreciated reformulations of the *Homeric Hymns*. In Latin literature Ovid seems to have been the first author to refer to the Hymns in any kind of systematic way. Olson refers to Alessandro Barchiesi's claim that the Hymns were transmitted as a collection by the time the *Metamorphoses* were published.<sup>4</sup> Stephen Hinds, as Olson points out, made a thoroughly convincing case

<sup>2</sup> It is notable that these lines recall *Od.* 364-66, which suggests that Aphrodite's clothing in the Hymn is a *thauroma* (ἔνθα δέ μιν Χάριτες λοῦσαν καὶ χρίσαν ἐλαίῳ, / ἀμβρότω, οἷα θεοῦς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἔόντας, / ἀμφὶ δὲ εἴματα ἔσσαν ἐπήρατα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι).

<sup>3</sup> It is notable that the final scene of the ecphrasis (*Ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis / Penthesilea furens, mediisque in milibus ardet, / aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae, / belatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo*) ends with Penthesileia alive, rushing into battle with men. Every other image of the ecphrasis focuses on Achilles' victory over a Trojan. Could the epic cycle in Carthage end with a victorious Penthesileia or does Aeneas stop viewing the ecphrasis before her death, which also has important implications?

<sup>4</sup> Alessandro Barchiesi, "Venus' Masterplot: Ovid and the Homeric Hymns," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and Its Reception*, Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds, eds., Cambridge Philological Society Supplementary Volume 23 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 112-26.

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that in book five of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid worked from a manuscript of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*.<sup>5</sup> Barchiesi and Hinds are on solid footing for the intertextual and narrative echoes between the texts, which necessitate a thorough knowledge of the language of the Hymns beyond just the general features of their plots. We can state quite assuredly that by the beginning of the Common Era the Hymns were read by Roman poets. Did Vergil read the *Hymn to Aphrodite* twenty or even thirty years earlier? It is more than likely, but can *θυώδης* alone suffice to prove this argument, especially when *θυήεις* at *Od.* 8.362-63 makes just as strong a case for Vergilian allusion?

I think the answer is yes, but first let us offer other reasons why Vergil may have used *Sybaeum tus*. Vergil introduced the adjective *Sabaeus* into Latin (see *G.* 1.57, *molles*... *Sabaei*, in regard to climates, ethnicities, and the crops most suitable to them, *G.* 2.117, and *A.* 8.706, the fleeing allies of Cleopatra). Vergil's portrayal of Sabaea as an Arabian enemy outside of Roman *imperium* as well as the cultivator of incense was cemented in Augustan literature. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Myrrha flees to Sabaea (10.480), whereas at *Odes* 1.29.3 Horace refers to the never-before-conquered kings of Sabaea. After the Augustan period, after the *Res Gestae* advertised in *Arabiam usque in fines Sabaeorum pro[cess]it exerc[it]us ad oppidum Mariba* (5.23), the *Sabaei* become associated with incense cultivation alone. In the *Homeric Hymn* and various *scholia* there is no reference to the geographic or ethnographic origins of *θυώδης*. It seems that Vergil is demarcating the *Aeneid's* geography according to Roman geopolitics and commerce with *Sybaeum tus*. It is more than assured that Venus' altars on Paphos were scented with Sabaeian incense during the Roman period, and it is just as certain that the reference to the smoking, scent-filled altars, wafting with the aroma of fresh garlands, is designed to draw a contrast to Juno's sense of loss of her own cultic activity (*Aen.* 1.48-49). One even wonders if the various temples to Venus (and other gods) in Rome could have been described in ways similar to Vergil's depiction of her shrine at Paphos.

None of this disproves Olson's assertion. It only suggests that *Sybaeum tus* is a particularly Vergilian phrase whose origins can be traced to the *Georgics*, and its usage has a particularly Roman, geopolitical flare. Yet, *Sybaeum tus* does read something like a scholastic elaboration of *θυώδης*, once the many correspondences between the *Aeneid* and *hAphro.* are evaluated.

ἔς Κύπρον δ' ἔλθοῦσα θυώδεα νηὸν ἔδυνεν  
ἔς Πάφον· ἔνθα δέ οἱ τέμενος βωμός τε θυώδης·  
ἔνθ' ἢ γ' εἰσελθοῦσα θύρας ἐπέθηκε φαεινάς.  
ἔνθα δέ μιν Χάριτες λοῦσαν καὶ χρίσαν ἑλαίῳ  
ἀμβρότῳ, οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἑόντας,  
ἀμβροσίῳ ἔδανῶ, τό ῥά οἱ τεθυωμένον ἦεν. (58-63)

*ipsa Paphum* sublimis abit sedesque revisit  
laeta suas, ubi templum illi, centumque Sabaeo  
ture calent arae sertisque recentibus halant. (1.415-17)

Vergil's *sedesque revisit* is a metatextual signpost for his readers to revisit the original *sedes* of these lines. The underlined portions exemplify the close relationship between

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-Conscious Muse*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge, 1987).

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the two texts, and this similarity marks out *Sabaeo*, which is in the same metrical *sedes* as θυώδης.<sup>6</sup> I believe Vergil is making an important distinction in using *Sabaeo* here, one that lends support to Olson's argument.

While Aphrodite and Venus both travel to Paphos, the *Hymn to Aphrodite* locates this episode prior to her meeting with Anchises, while the *Aeneid* sets it after she leaves Aeneas, which connects this episode structurally to the final, closing lines of Demodocus' song at *Od.* 8.363-66, lines that cap his erotic tale of Aphrodite and Ares.<sup>7</sup> It seems that Vergil has utilized Demodocus' narrative structure for Venus' encounter with Aeneas, which provides evidence for θυήεις as the referent for *Sabaeo*. In the *hAphro.*, Aphrodite enters the temple in order to prepare herself for the seduction of Anchises. The Graces wash and anoint her with ambrosia, which is described as τό ῥά οἱ τεθυωμένον ἦεν. The Hymn draws a parallel between the aroma around the altars and the ambrosial perfume Aphrodite wears. From this perspective the fragrant altar anticipates Aphrodite's own preparation for the seduction scene, and the aroma of the sacred precinct captures, on the human plane, something of the divine smell of Aphrodite, allowing for the audience of the Hymn to access the sensory experience awaiting Anchises. *Sabaeo*, on the other hand, is localized only within a religious context. It *seems* divorced from the erotic imagery of Aphrodite's behavior in her temple at Paphos as the narrative ends prior to the Graces' washing of her body and anointing her with fragrant perfume. Vergil has submerged the overt erotic potential of Venus' encounter with Aeneas beneath the interplay of textual correspondences.

The religious reading of *Sabaeum tus* is already anticipated by Servius, who is more than likely following a lexicon of sorts (see *fragmenta Bobiensa, de nomine* 544.14). He states: *SABAEO Arabico. Arabiae autem tres sunt: inferior, petrodes, eudemon, in qua populi sunt Sabaei, apud quos nascitur tus. dicti autem Sabaei ἄπὸ τοῦ σέβειν, id est venerari, quod deos per ipsorum tura veneramur.* The Roman lexical tradition derives *Sabaeum* from σέβειν: to worship, revere, or behave piously. It is enticing to see a connection here between *pietas* and *Sabaeum tus*, but we should be chary of reading Servius into the *Aeneid* here, where Vergil may not have utilized such an etymology. In any case, Vergil's *Sabaeum tus* describes the type of incense commonly used during the imperial period in religious precincts. The *hAphro.* uses the smell of incense to characterize Aphrodite's altar on Paphos, but this feature of the cult is then transferred to the perfuming of the goddess herself during her erotic arming scene, the precise scene Vergil excises.<sup>8</sup> The problem is that Vergil has transferred Venus' erotic primping in the Hymn to her fleeting epiphany, in all its erotic glory, at the moment Aeneas recognizes her.<sup>9</sup> This precise moment gestures simultaneously to both of the formulaic lines in the *hAphro.* and Demodocus'

<sup>6</sup> It must be acknowledged that an analysis of *Od.* 8.362-63 would look nearly identical to that of lines 58-59 of the *hAphro.* The key to disambiguation is that the reference to the *hAphro.* through *Sabaeum tus* results in more productive interpretations.

<sup>7</sup> It is notable that this parallel also aligns the song of Demodocus with Venus' song of Dido's biography.

<sup>8</sup> It is precisely this erotic quality of the incense which accounts for Vergil's use of *molles* . . . *Sabaei* at *G.* 1. 57).

<sup>9</sup> On the sexual implications of this moment see Reckford (1995).

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song, which either inaugurate (Anchises) or cap (Ares) an erotic encounter between Venus and a lover. The reader cannot help but linger upon the erotic potential of this episode when Venus returns to Paphos.

The *hAphro.* seems to be playing a more significant role in the narrative than Demodocus' song; the Hymn brings to light important potentialities in Aeneas' encounter with Venus which all hang upon the interpretation of *Sabaeum*. The narrative echo of the *hAphro.* raises the narrative possibility that Venus' encounter with Aeneas could follow the trajectory of the *hAphro.* Could Aeneas have been seduced by his own mother? Even more to the point, was he?<sup>10</sup> Venus' portrayal of herself as a huntress, who is likened by Aeneas to Artemis and the Nymphs, is replete with its own dangerous potentiality. Encounters with Artemis or Nymphs do not often end well for mortals. Perhaps Aeneas' prayer that this mysterious goddess be *felix* functions to allay Aeneas' own fears in this regard. While Venus strikes Aeneas as a virgin goddess, she is nonetheless highly attractive. Donatus (*IV* 68) points out that, *ecce quanta inritamenta libidinis Aenean non moverunt: nam fuit pulchra, bene vestita, capillis diffusis et genu nuda, dehinc quod se in illa solitudine ad conferendas cum viris fabulas prior ingessit.*<sup>11</sup> There is erotic potential in this meeting, regardless of Venus' virginal impression. Rather than disguising herself as an old woman as Demeter does in her Homeric Hymn, Hera in her encounter with Jason, and Allecto in her encounter with Turnus in Book 7, Venus appears as a highly eroticized huntress, an image Seneca fully exploits with his Phaedra. This encounter catalyzes the actions of Books 1 and 4 where Dido is compared to Diana (1.494-505), then later copulates with Aeneas during a hunting expedition. The text raises the question of what impact Aeneas' encounter with the Goddess of Love in a titillating hunting disguise had on his later relationship with Dido. It is possible that the erotic potential first introduced in Venus' encounter with Aeneas motivated his desire for Dido. From this perspective, Aeneas' fate is comparable to Dido's amatory infection by Cupid later in Book 1. It is notable that *laeta* describes first Venus at 1.416 upon her return to Paphos and Dido at 1.503 after she is compared to Diana, which effectively triangulates Dido, Diana, and Venus.<sup>12</sup>

Vergil, in fact, gestures to the underlying narrative of incest and its outcomes in his initial description of Venus in disguise. While Aeneas likens Venus to Diana or a Nymph, Vergil offers another characterization:

cui mater media sese tulit obvia silva,  
virginis os habitumque gerens, et virginis arma  
Spartanae, vel qualis equos Threissa fatigat  
Harpalyce, volucremque fuga praevertitur Hebrum.  
Namque umeris de more habilem suspenderat arcum  
venatrix, dederatque comam diffundere ventis,  
nuda genu, nodoque sinus collecta fluentis (1.314-20)

The narrator compares Venus to either a Spartan maiden or Thracian Harpalyce.

<sup>10</sup> On the Oedipal potential of this episode, again see Reckford (1995) 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> See Reckford (1995) 20 as well.

<sup>12</sup> On the incestuous implications of this triangulation (and Aeneas' association to Apollo) see Philip Hardie, "Vergil's Ptolemaic Relations," *JRS* 96 (2006): 25-41.

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Besides the oddity of encountering in North Africa a girl who is dressed like a Spartan or Thracian huntress, the reference to Harpalyce demands comment. Hyginus (193) relates that Harpalyce was the daughter of Harpalycus. After her mother died, her father nourished her on the milk of cows and horses and trained her in warfare in order that she might succeed him as ruler of the Amymnei. In a battle she saved her father from Neoptolemus and put the enemy to flight. Later Harpalycus was murdered during a political uprising and Harpalyce fled into the woods where she plundered stables. She was at last killed by an onrush of shepherds. Why has Vergil specifically identified this Harpalyce in contrast to the unnamed Spartan maiden? Margaret Brucia has rightly argued that Vergil's readers are meant to understand two different Harpalycae, intimated by the use of the doubled *virgo* at line 315.<sup>13</sup> According to Hyginus 206 the other Harpalyce was bedded by her father Clymenus (*amore captus* in Hyginus' words) and gave birth to a son and brother whom she murders and serves as dinner to her father, resulting in her own death at his hands. Vergil gestures to this Harpalyce in *volucremque fuga praevertitur Hebrum* (1.317). As Burcia points out, the scholastic tradition is vexed over the use of *volucris* to describe a famously slow river. This incongruity is solved once it is realized that *volucris* actually refers to the metamorphosis of Harpalyce into a chalcis-bird. I think the doubled Harpalyce reflects two narrative potentials activated by the inclusion of the *hAphro*. While Venus' disguise is eroticized, both the narrator and Aeneas liken her to female huntresses who are dangerous, virginal daughters.<sup>14</sup> The allusion to the incestuous Harpalyce introduces another narrative trajectory embedded in the echo of *hAphro*. in Aeneas' encounter with his mother.

The theme of incest in this meeting of Aeneas and Venus has been discussed by Ellen Oliensis and, in particular, Philip Hardie.<sup>15</sup> *Sabaeum tus* reinforces this theme and offers conclusive evidence that Vergil, more than directing his readers' attention to the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, was gesturing to the conclusions one draws from the hymn's presence in the text. *Sabaeum*, here, could be interpreted as "incestuous incense." As I mentioned above, Myrrha flees to Sabaea at *Metamorphoses* 10.480. It is likely that Vergil's *Sabaeum tus* is a reference to Myrrha.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that Vergil is alluding to the *θυώδης* of the Homeric Hymn since this text (rather than the *θυήεις* at *Od.* 8.362-63) captures the incestuous implications of Venus' encounter with Aeneas. But *Sabaeum tus* is more than an intertextual gesture to *θυώδης*, which proves Vergil read and fully worked out the Hymn's ramifications in terms of Aeneas and Venus: it provides a possible narrative trajectory had Venus not fled (*fugientem* 1.406). It could very well be the case that the

<sup>13</sup> Margaret A. Brucia, "The Double Harpalyce, Harpies, and Wordplay at "Aeneid" 1.314-7," *CQ* 51 (2001) 305-308.

<sup>14</sup> This allusion to Harpalyce colors the reading of lines 1.407-8 (*quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis / ludis imaginibus*), which Ellen Oliensis (306) argues is derived from *Eclogue* 8.47-8. The cruel mother of this passage may be either Medea or Venus. It could also be Harpalyce. Ellen Oliensis, "Sons and lovers: sexuality and gender in Virgil's poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, Charles Martindale, ed. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1997) 294-311.

<sup>15</sup> Oliensis (1997) 306-307 and Hardie (2006).

<sup>16</sup> I owe this important insight to Sarah Spence.

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lack of overt intertextual references to the Hymn during the encounter is not a sign that Vergil had not read the *hAphro.*, but rather that he kept the narrative at arm's length, only to be approached through *Sabaeum tus* and its underlying connection to Myrrha.

If *Sabaeum tus* is a reference to the *hAphro.* and the theme of incest through Myrrha, what are the consequences of this allusion? For Oliensis, incest reflects a world order in which forward movement and progress are aborted; time, history and narrative regress as “women threaten to arrest not only the plot-line, but the life-line of their child-lovers.”<sup>17</sup> Incest, then, creates a closed loop of cyclical time between mother and child, in which action ceases to flow into the future as it becomes channeled through the mother's re- and de-generative potential. For Hardie, the incest theme is a precursor to the Ptolemaic undertones of brother-sister marriage in the Dido-Aeneas episode, effectively patterning an epic narrative on potential historical outcomes had Actium turned out differently. The allusion to Myrrha, however, realigns the incest theme and reveals another motivation for its presence here.<sup>18</sup> The allusion to the *hAphro.* suggests a triangulation of Anchises-Venus-Aeneas modeled on an Oedipal narrative. But the shadow of Myrrha also moves over this triangulation. Unlike Aphrodite in the *hAphro.* who is erotically compelled to mate with the mortal Anchises, or Oedipus, who unknowingly commits incest, Myrrha falls in love with her parent and surreptitiously seduces him. After her impregnation and consequent recognition by her father of his crime, Myrrha flees to Arabia where she transforms into a tree and gives birth to Adonis with whom Venus falls in love. The erotic paradigm Vergil constructs in alluding to the *hAphro.* and the Myrrha myth suggests a motivation for Venus' erotically charged disguise and revelation. Unlike the Oedipus myth, Venus reveals her identity, which occludes any unwitting erotic desire in Aeneas. While impersonation is a key theme that connects Venus, Aphrodite, and Myrrha, the presence of Myrrha at this point in the *Aeneid* situates Aeneas and Venus in a more ambiguous relationship. The underlying implication is that Aeneas, like Myrrha, might become erotically charged by a parent, even if he should recognize her.

Not all incest narratives are Oedipal, which is to say that a model not motivated by Oliensis' regressive plot-lines may be at play in the allusion to Myrrha. One obstacle in reading Aeneas as a Myrrha figure is the gendered shift from feminine desire of a father to a masculine desire of a mother. This gendered shift is so marked that one might incorrectly align Venus to Myrrha or construe this meeting according to an Oedipal model. As Philip Hardie has suggested in his commentary on *Aeneid* 9, Ascanius is reminded of his father (*ante omnis pulcher Iulus, / atque animum patriae strinxit pietatis*

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<sup>17</sup> Oliensis (1997) 306.

<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to assess the role Cinna's *Smyrna* might be playing here. It seems possible that the lines, *te matutinus flentem conspexit Eous / et flentem paulo vidit post Hesperus idem. / at scelus incesto Smyrnae crescebat in alvo* (*frag.* 6.1-7.1) shade one's reading of *Metamorphoses* 10.495 (*iamque gravem crescens uterum perstrinxerat arbor*) and 500 (*flet tamen, et tepidae manant ex arbore guttae.*), which means that this text was significant to, at least, one Roman poet's conceptualization of the Myrrha myth.

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*imago*, 9.293-4) when Euryalus requests that his mother be cared for if he should die.<sup>19</sup> For Ascanius, a mother-son relationship is a signifier of his own relationship with his father. This suggests that Aeneas has a more complex relationship with his son than is generally recognized. This alone is not strong enough evidence to connect Aeneas and Myrrha, but it does impact how one interprets the use of *pulcher* here to describe Iulus. *Pulcher*, as Servius pointed out, seems out of place. Hardie suggests that the adjective is formulaic and it represents that “one beautiful boy feels for another.” Within the economy of beautiful boys in the *Aeneid*, however, the adjective *pulcher* merely magnifies a connection made in Book 1 between Ascanius and the ultimate beautiful boy, Adonis, a point noticed by Janus Secundus in *Basium* 1 and Christopher Marlowe in the *Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage* (Act 3).<sup>20</sup> Both authors state clearly that Venus treats Ascanius as Adonis when she steals him away from Carthage in *Aeneid* 1.<sup>21</sup> The passage is as follows:<sup>22</sup>

At Venus Ascanio placidam per membra quietem  
inrigat, et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos  
Idaliae lucos, ubi mollis amarus illum  
floribus et dulci adspirans complectitur umbra. (1.691-4)

Venus takes Ascanius to Idalia on Cyprus, where according to Propertius (2.13.53-56) Adonis was killed by the boar and washed by Venus. Furthermore, Vergil is most likely alluding to Bion’s *Epitaphios Adonidos* in his description of Ascanius’ slumber:

καὶ νέκυσ ὦν καλὸς ἐστὶ, καλὸς νέκυσ, οἷα καθεύδων.  
κάτθεό νιν μαλακοῖς ἐνὶ φάρεσιν οἷς ἐνίαυεν,  
ᾧ μετὰ τεύς ἀνὰ νύκτα τὸν ἱερὸν ὕπνον ἐμόχθει  
παγχρυσέω κλινηῖρι: ποθεῖ καὶ στυμνὸν Ἄδωνιν.  
βάλλε δέ νιν στεφάνοισι καὶ ἄνθεσι: πάντα σὺν αὐτῷ,  
ὡς τῆνος τέθνακε καὶ ἄνθεα πάντα θανόντων.  
ῥαῖνε δέ νιν Συρίοισιν ἀλείφασι, ῥαῖνε μύροισιν:  
ὀλλύσθω μύρα πάντα: τὸ σὸν μύρον ὦλετ’ Ἄδωνις. (*Epitaphios Adonidos* 71-78)

<sup>19</sup> Philip Hardie, *Vergil: Aeneid Book 9*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1994) 25 and 126.

<sup>20</sup> On the theme of beautiful boys in the *Aeneid* see J.D. Reed, *Virgil’s Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid*. Princeton University Press (Princeton, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> *Cum Venus Ascanium super alta Cythera tulisset, / sopitum teneris imposuit violis, / albarum nimbos circumfuditque rosarum, / et totum liquido sparsit odore locum: / mox veteres animo revocavit Adonidis ignes, / notus et irrepsit ima per ossa calor. / O, quoties voluit circumdare colla nepotis! / O, quoties, ‘Talis,’ dixit, ‘Adonis erat!’ and “Venus: ‘Sister, I see you saour of my wiles, / Be it as you will haue for this once, / Meane time, Ascanius shall be my charge, / Whom I will beare to Ida in mine armes, / And couch him in Adonis purple downe.”*

<sup>22</sup> Lucretius *DRN* 41171-79 may stand in the background of these lines as well. *sed tamen esto iam quantovis oris honore, / cui Veneris membris vis omnibus exoriatur; / nempe aliae quoque sunt; nempe hac sine viximus ante; / nempe eadem facit et scimus facere omnia turpi / et miseram taetris se suffit odoribus ipsa, / quam famulae longe fugitant furtimque cachinnant. / at lacrimans exclusus amator limina saepe / floribus et sertis operit postisque superbos / unguis amaracino et foribus miser oscula figit.* Ascanius is analogized to the house approached by the *exclusus amator*.

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By alluding to both the *hAphro.* and the myth of Myrrha Vergil also gestures to Venus' only two mortal love interests, one which begets Aeneas, the other which ends in loss and grief. Vergil has merged Venus' two mortal sexual encounters in order to set Iulus in dialogue with Adonis. The analogies of Aeneas to Myrrha and Ascanius to Adonis result in a distancing of the regressive and degenerative temporal fixity described by Oliensis in her Oedipal reading of this episode. Within the sexual and thematic matrices of the Myrrha myth, Aeneas' activity in the first four books of the *Aeneid* are motivated by a displaced attraction for his goddess mother. Since the analogy of Aeneas to Myrrha has the further implication of connecting Iulus to Adonis, the incest theme coalesces, not around the character of Aeneas as an Oedipal reading motivates, but rather around Venus and her relationship to Ascanius. Venus replaces Ascanius with Cupid in order to obviate Iulus becoming another Adonis. While Secundus and Marlowe focus on the erotic potential of this episode, Vergil's reformulation of Bion suggests that Venus is attempting to channel the action of the epic from a poetics of lamentation to one of Roman genealogy and Julian panegyric. Instead, the Adonis narrative moves through every other beautiful boy in the *Aeneid*.

What kind of Venus are we encountering in this poem? Is this a goddess of the *hAphro.* or something else entirely?<sup>23</sup> At *Aeneid* 4.347 Aeneas states *hic amor, haec patria est*, a kind of love which is authorized by the poet himself in Book 7 in his invocation of Erato, who becomes the source of Italian and Roman epic, rather than the erotic muse of the *Argonautica*.<sup>24</sup> Does Venus desire Iulus in sexual terms? Is her love maternal? Does her protection of Iulus and Vergil's conflation of him with Adonis construct an erotic paradigm, or is the fear of loss and the experience of the pain of loss the catalyst of action? The text does not allow for such a clear reading, since the ontology of love and desire has yet to be fixed in the poem. That Aeneas can be construed as a mother, father, and son; Venus as a mother, grandmother, lover, and wife; and Ascanius as the son of Aeneas, the potential lover of Venus, or a dead boy, suggests that the incest theme blurs the lines between familial relations in ways which offer no clearly definable, interpretative categories. One even wonders if the interplay among these many texts and myths in this single episode is a kind of literary incest (interculturality).

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* is a significant text for a full appreciation of Venus' encounter with Aeneas. But rather than acting as a mere template upon which Vergil modeled this episode, the hymn actually accounts for why Venus chose to disguise herself as a virginal huntress. She is fully eroticized, but confined to virginal verisimilitude. When Aeneas laments: *'quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis/ ludis imaginibus? Cur dextrae iungere dextram/ non datur, ac veras audire et reddere voces?'* (1.407-9), he is unaware of the various incestuous narratives which are masked by her *falsae imagines*. Only the

<sup>23</sup> See Servius *auctus ad Aen.* 1.720 on the various Venus' in Rome. Few of her iterations have any resemblance to the Aphrodite in the *hAphro.*

<sup>24</sup> *Nunc age, qui reges, Erato, quae tempora, rerum / quis Latium antiquo fuerit status, advena classem / cum primum Ausoniis exercitus appulit oris, / expeditam, et primae reuocabo exordia pugnae. / tu uatem, tu, diua, mone. dicam horrida bella, / dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges, / Tyrhenamque manum totamque sub arma coactam / Hesperiam. maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moueo.* (*Aen.* 7.38-46).

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reader can hear the *verae voces*.<sup>25</sup> She only gives him a glimpse at the moment before she returns to Paphos: *Dixit, et avertens rosea cervice refulsit, / ambrosiaeque comae divinum vertice odorem / spiravere* (1.402-4), the very lines which recall *hAphro.* 61-63 (χρῖσαν ἐλαίω / ἀμβρότω, οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἔόντας, / ἀμβροσίω ἔδανῶ, τό ῥά οἱ τεθυωμένον ἦεν), and depict Aphrodite's initial preparations for her seduction of Anchises. Because of the hymn's presence at this moment in the narrative, the reader is privileged to move through the subtexts and understand more keenly than Aeneas himself the consequences, if his desires for his mother were allowed to be fulfilled.

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<sup>25</sup> *Crudelis* may have elegiac associations. See Propertius 1.8a.15-16 (*et me defixum vacua patiat in ora / crudelem infesta saepe vocare manu!*).

