

The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*: A New Interpretation*

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The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* has been criticized over the years for shortcomings in its style and a simple subject matter (the goddess's love affair with Anchises) which cannot justify its length.¹ On some occasions the poem has served as the ground for research on matters metrical and linguistic² and as an example of oral formulaic compositions;³ and on others, it has been interpreted as intended to praise the descendants of Aeneias.⁴ Peter Smith attempted an interpretation of the hymn in an extended study, according to which the central figure is Anchises and the hymn develops around the problem of mortality.⁵

In this paper I propose a new interpretation of the hymn which places more emphasis on the role of Zeus (overlooked in Smith's interpretation) and on that of Aphrodite. Zeus' role is emphasized also by Jenny Strauss Clay who tried, however, to see the hymn not so much as an individual and diachronic piece of literature, but as part of the corpus of *Homeric Hymns*, placed in the history of mankind at the end of the heroic era when Zeus puts an end to sexual union be-

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¹ T.W. Allen, R.W. Halliday and E.E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns*, 1936, 349f.

² J.R. Tebben, "A Metrical and Lexical Study of the Homeric Hymns", Ph.D. diss. Ohio State Un., Columbus 1971 and I.J.M. Venter, "A Semiolinguistic Investigation into the *Hymn to Aphrodite*", D. litt. thes. Stellenbosch Un. 1981.

³ P.G. Preziosi, "The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*: an Oral Analysis", *HSCP* 71, 1966, 171-204, M. Cantilena, *Ricerche sulla dizione epica: I. Per uno studio della formularità degli Inni omerici*, 1982, J.A. Fernandez Delgado, "Remarks on the Formular Diction of the *Homeric Hymns* (about a new Book)", *MPhL* 8, 1987, 15-29, N. Postlethwaite, "Formula and Formulaic: Some Evidence From the *Homeric Hymns*", *Phoenix* 33, 1979, 1-18, R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction*, Cambridge Classical Studies, 1982. For further bibliography by the oral-poetic school see Smith (n. 5), 3.

⁴ See n. 21.

⁵ Peter Smith, *Nursling of Mortality: a Study of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, Studien zur klassischen Philologie 3, 1981. Cf. C. Segal, "The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*: a Structuralist Approach", *CW* 67, 1974, 205-212.

tween gods and humans by chastising Aphrodite with an enforced affair with the mortal Anchises.⁶

The goddess's changing behaviour in the course of the myth determines its tripartite division, while, as a whole, the hymn is built up of a series of antitheses. The actions and purposes of these two deities penetrate the poem: all the details appear well-interwoven and not a single passage (short or long) looks like simply a formulaic embellishment designed to fill out the epic narrative.

My reading of the hymn sees in it not so much a problem of Anchises' (or indeed any human being's) unattainable immortality, but, rather, the question whether Aphrodite can still keep her position among immortals as a love goddess. The way the poet presents his material results in a piece of literature that is the most charming poem in the collection of *Homeric Hymns*.

The poem is in the form of a hymn and is developed with the normal tripartite division: (I) introductory invocation (1f.) where the Muse is called to sing Aphrodite's achievements (ἔργα); (II) the main body of the hymn (2-291); and (III) the closing farewell (292-3). The long middle part usually praises the deity by reference to birth, virtues or achievements. This part in the present hymn begins by commenting on the works of Aphrodite, namely her achievements in making gods, mortals and animals fall in love with beings of their own rank (2-6).⁷ One would have expected the rest of the hymn to be used to illustrate this feature of the love goddess. Instead, we first have what I call negative exemplification (7-33), where the poet describes in extended hymn form how Aphrodite is unable — despite her use of lawful and unlawful methods — to persuade three virgin goddesses (Athena, Artemis and Hestia) to fall in love with other gods: οὐ δύναται πεπθεῖν φρένας οὐδ' ἀπαῆσαι (7, 33). The two lines (7, 33) encircle the section underlining the goddess's inability.

The only positive exemplification of her achievements mentioned in the poem is when Zeus is said to have had love affairs not with other deities, but with unnamed mortal women (33-44). Her methods in this case were unlawful, as she had to deceive Zeus: (Ζηνὸς) ... φρένας ἐξαπαφοῦσα (38). The brief mention of Zeus' affairs (just four lines),⁸ the anonymity of his mortal lovers, the lack of any reference to the god's mortal offspring, and the use only of deceitful methods by Aphrodite undermine this achievement and, contrary to Clay's view, show the poet's fear of shaking the Olympian hierarchy.⁹ In consequence, we cannot interpret the section as pure praise for the goddess. Its main purpose, I think, is to provide a reason for the inclusion in the poem of the next section (45-167),

⁶ Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus*, 1989, 152-201.

⁷ The clear-cut division of the three groups (gods, men, animals) does not allow us to interpret the section otherwise, namely as referring to mixed love affairs, as will occur in succeeding sections.

⁸ The rest of the section (41-44) is spent on praise of Hera, the god's lawful wife.

⁹ Clay (n. 6), 163, 165f.

Zeus' revenge. The god wants to teach Aphrodite a lesson by leading her to fall in love with a mortal and, what is worse, to have mortal offspring.¹⁰

What we may infer from section A (2-44) is that, despite Aphrodite's methods, her active and dominant role in the love affairs of all beings (gods, mortals, animals) is overshadowed by her failure with the three goddesses; and at the same time her achievement with Zeus is undermined.

The active role of Aphrodite and the passive role of Zeus in 33-44 are reversed in the following section (45-57), with Zeus' counter-attack on behalf of all gods — male and female alike — for what Aphrodite has done to them. As a result she will never again boast mockingly among them of her achievements, having herself fallen into the same trap. In other words, what above all annoys Zeus, and all the gods, is not their affairs with mortals — which after all they very much enjoy — but the pleasure Aphrodite takes in publicly making fun of them: ἐπευξαμένη εἶπῃ μετὰ πᾶσι θεοῖσιν ἡδὺ γελοῖησασα (48f.).¹¹ Zeus uses the same method, but without recourse to deceit, by awakening love in her for an unnamed mortal: γλυκὺν ἕμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ ἀνδρὶ καταθνητῷ μιχθῆναι (45f.) and then specifically for Anchises: Ἀγχίσεω (53). Zeus' method (γλυκὺν ἕμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ 45, 53) — not his usual form of attack — corresponds with Aphrodite's typical mode used for gods (γλυκὺν ἕμερον ὥρσε 2), animals (ἐν στήθεσσι βάλλ' ἕμερον 73) and men, as represented by Anchises (γλυκὺν ἕμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ 143). A third stage in her love process follows when she sees him. Her desire (ἕμερος) for him moves now from her heart (θυμός) to her brain (φρένας). She has totally surrendered to her passion. Hence, Zeus' active role is completed. From now on, she takes over in an attempt to fulfil her passion by winning Anchises for herself. For this, she needs to resume her deceitful methods which are now turned against herself. The personality of an Aphrodite in full command of her methods, as illustrated in the previous section, is now changed, as she becomes, in a way, a puppet in her own hands rather than 'the unwitting pawn of Zeus'.¹² Hereafter, we have a dichotomy in her personality, when she does what her ego does not really want to do, while Zeus takes the

¹⁰ There is a correspondence between 50-51 and 255: Aphrodite causes male gods to have mortal offspring and Zeus (as the most important representative of male gods) leads her to the same mishap. So she is not to be punished with the fate of female divinities (as shown in 52), but with that of her male counterparts. This is the reason why I think against Clay [Clay (n. 6), 192] that Aphrodite refers only to male deities in 250.

¹¹ This is exactly the reason for Aphrodite's distress, after her own affair, because, as she notes, not only can she no longer laugh with pleasure at the gods, but neither can she simply speak of their affairs: οὐκέτι μοι στόμα χεῖσεται ἐξονομῆναι τοῦτο μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν (252). On the textual problems of the line see the discussion in P.M. Smith, "Notes on the Text of the *Fifth Homeric Hymn*", *HSCP* 83, 1979, 29-50 (pp. 34-35) and J.K. Kamerbeek, "Remarques sur l' *Hymne à Aphrodite*", *Mnemosyne* 20, 1967, 385-395 (p. 392f.).

¹² Clay (n. 6), 175.

role of a spectator in her drama,¹³ the tragic results of which Aphrodite is, for a while, totally unaware of.

Her dressing up in Cyprus is the first step she takes to fulfil her passion (58-65). Her appearance is expected to arouse Anchises' desire. The poet's description is in three progressive stages, first when the Graces bathe, dress and adorn her in Cyprus, next when she meets Anchises (81-90) and finally when she undresses before coition (162-66).

On her trip to meet Anchises on Mount Ida (66-69), she encounters animals and casts desire for mating into their hearts. The *excursus* on the mating of animals (69-75) serves as illustration of lines 4-5 and takes us back to the beginning of the poem. However, she no longer cultivates those feelings of dominance and triumph over mortals and animals attested there in the verb ἑδαμάσσατο (3). Instead, here the poet uses more tender phraseology, similar to that which he used earlier (2) when Aphrodite is said to arouse the gods' desire for one another: θεοῖσιν ἐπὶ γλῆκιν ἔμερον ὥρσε (2) ~ ἐν στήθεσσι βάλλ' ἔμερον (73). On her way to Anchises the love-struck goddess cannot be anything but tender even with the wild beasts. The mating scene provides also a useful element of suspense in the development of the story in preparation for the goddess's imminent intercourse with Anchises. These are enough reasons for the inclusion of the scene in the poem. Hence, there is no great need to relate Aphrodite to the Mistress of Beasts.¹⁴ The goddess still retains her divine appearance and power. To Anchises, however, she will appear transfigured into a young mortal. Her transfiguration is the second step she takes to ensure the success of her plan to win his love.

By poetic concession, that day Anchises did not join his comrades, but stayed behind alone in the hut playing his lyre (76-80). On seeing Aphrodite in all her beauty, he is instinctively aroused: Ἀγχίσῃν ἔρος εἶλεν (91). This is, however, only the first stage in his love for her. Her appearance seems to have had an effect on him, but Anchises is not yet ready to surrender. He still has control over his feelings and before expressing them to her he wants to find out who she is. The first dialogue between the two (92-154) opens with him addressing her in hymn form (the fourth hymn in the poem) as a goddess and promising her gifts in return for the fulfilment of his requests for prosperity among men and for a descendant. With this latter request, he is unaware that he is foretelling what will follow in line 196 when the goddess announces the birth of his son Aeneias. Aphrodite's exquisite appearance did indeed rouse Anchises, but it also made him take her for a goddess. From what he says later about the misfortune of mortals after intercourse with gods (188-90), it appears that he was determined to suppress his feelings if she proved to be a goddess, as he had thought at first. So Aphrodite's excessive emphasis on her appearance seems not to have furthered her design.

¹³ This position is adopted by N. van der Ben, "Hymn to Aphrodite 36-291: Notes on the Pars Epica of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite", *Mnemosyne* 39, 1986, 1-41, (pp. 19, 30). Cf. Smith (n. 5), 2.

¹⁴ On this see e.g. Ben (n. 13), 8f. and Smith (n. 5), 43.

She needs, therefore, to try hard to persuade him of her mortality and the need to marry her. For this reason she takes a third step by relating a false story with a lot of details that aim at confirming the truth of her words (107-42). In it she gives details of her parenthood and place of origin, but cleverly avoids revealing her identity. Next, she relates how Hermes abducted her and brought her unwillingly to Anchises with an order to become his wife and bear him children. Without realizing it Aphrodite here tells the truth. She does indeed go to Anchises not out of her own free will, but in accordance with that of Zeus. The correspondence with reality of her false story appears to be deliberate on the part of the skillful poet. To make her story even more persuasive it is her turn to beg Anchises in the name of Zeus and his parents (σε πρὸς Ζηνὸς γουνάζομαι ἡδὲ τοκῆων ἐσθλῶν, 131f.) to take every step necessary for the marriage to go ahead, reassuring him for instance that her parents will send him a rich dowry which he is urged to accept as ἄποινα (140).¹⁵ Again indirectly, Zeus is recalled to assist her in her plans, as he will be recalled later by Anchises when begging her to spare his life (187).¹⁶

Having finished her speech, she sheds desire (ἔμερον) in Anchises' heart and his earlier instinctive love, which was unstable due to her godlike appearance, is again resumed (Ἀγχίστην δ' ἔρος εἶλεν 144), possibly increased to a further degree, but it is again not enough to overpower him. The phrase Ἀγχίστην δ' ἔρος εἶλεν is the same in lines 91 and 144. Its repetition is not the result of mere formulaic techniques, so common in oral compositions. Instead, it is needed to denote the change in the kind of love Anchises feels for Aphrodite. Although the same in form, the two phrases differ in meaning. As we have seen, the first denotes the instinctive, superficial and involuntary love caused by Aphrodite's appearance. But after the goddess's story and the desire she sheds in his heart, his love becomes more conscious, serious and voluntary. Anchises stresses in his reply that Aphrodite can be his wife (ἐμὴ δ' ἄλοχος κεκλήσεται ἡματα πάντα 148) on condition that she *is* mortal and *has* come to him *led* by Hermes. Presumably, these words of his are met with a nod by Aphrodite, which gives him the reassurance he needs and the determination to have intercourse with her immediately (σὴ φιλότῃ μιγῆναι αὐτίκα νῦν 150f.), before getting married to her. His decision is contrary to what the transfigured Aphrodite appears to have

¹⁵ In the context of the supplication the word is taken to mean 'compensation': see J.J. Keaney, "Hymn. Ven. 140 and the use of ἄποινα", *AJP* 102, 1981, 261-64. Whether in this sense, or simply in the sense of 'dowry' (Allen-Halliday-Sikes [n. 1], ad loc.), the choice of the word is deliberate. It recurs in line 210 where it denotes the ransom Zeus was forced to pay in order to keep Ganymede. The contrast between the two passages is clear: Anchises is expected willingly to receive a dowry for accepting Aphrodite as his wife; while Zeus unwillingly pays out a heavy ransom to keep Ganymede.

¹⁶ This is another example where the correspondence of the two lines (131, 187) cannot be simply the result of an oral poem's formulaic composition.

desired from him in her earlier speech.¹⁷ Such is his determination for coition that not even Apollo's fatal arrows — he declares — could prevent him from fulfilling his desire. Willingly, he is prepared to die soon after it. It is ironical to think with Clay that Anchises is unaware that Zeus — and indeed all the gods — do very much want and bless this intercourse.¹⁸

Both lovers in their respective speeches use phraseology that gives the lead to the other. For instance, Anchises says in his final speech (145-54) that Aphrodite is to be named *his* wife (as though he has no right to be called her husband), he speaks of *her* love (and not of his), and of *her* bed (and not of his), as if he wants to give her a leading role and, unconsciously, admit her divine superiority.¹⁹

In the section on intercourse (155-67) their relation is reversed when Anchises takes the leading role of the male lover: he guides her firmly²⁰ to bed, which is described at some length, undresses her and sleeps with her. In all cases *he acts* and *she receives* his actions. Intercourse is not described. What interests the poet is not the act itself, but to remind us that through the act of love the gods' revenge is partly completed: ὁ δ' ἔπειτα θεῶν ἰότητι καὶ αἰσῇ ἀθανάτη παρέλεκτο θεῶ βροτός (165f.) It will be completed only when Aphrodite reveals the birth of Aeneias. With this, she will have fully imitated her fellow gods and will have been paid back for deceiving them into mixing with mortal women and begetting mortal sons (50f.). Reference to the gods' revenge takes us back to the beginning of section B (45-167) and rounds off its topic.

In the scene, the two lovers are juxtaposed anonymously, as if they represent their respective classes of mortals and immortals (θεά, βροτός). Both of them have been deceived in their actions: Aphrodite by her fellow gods, in the person of Zeus, and Anchises by Aphrodite. To illustrate this double-faced deceit, the poet ends the section with the key phrase 'not clearly knowing' (οὐ σάφα εἰδώς 167). Its grammatical subject is Anchises, although in sense it is meant to refer also to Aphrodite. The fulfilment of Zeus' revenge in this scene, which is placed almost in the middle of the poem, must be the central theme and not, for instance, the glorification of the descendants of Aeneias.²¹

On the other hand, the *excursus* on the description of the bed (155-61) can not pass without comment. The animal skins with which it is covered — the re-

¹⁷ There, she wishes to be presented as virgin and inexperienced in love affairs (ἀδμήτην ... καὶ ἀπειρήτην φιλότητος 133) to Anchises' parents and brothers, and to have an honourable (τίμιον 142) marriage after her parents send her rich dowry. The word τίμιον most likely denotes marriage without prior intercourse.

¹⁸ Clay (n. 6), 177.

¹⁹ ἐμὴ ἄλοχος κεκλήσεται (148), σὴ φιλότητι (150) and σῆς εὐνῆς (154). The first phrase in particular corresponds with the one Aphrodite uses later in line 242: ἡμέτερός τε πόσις κεκλημένος εἷης. On this see n. 38.

²⁰ And not with 'uncertain impetuosity', as Smith suggests (n. 5), 58.

²¹ See P. Smith, "Aineiadai as Patrons of Iliad XX and of the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*", *HSCP* 85, 1981, 17-58; idem (n. 5), 70 and 104 n. 5, and Ben (n. 13), 21f., and 9 n. 12.

sult of Anchises' hunting activities — relate negatively to the previous mating scene: there Aphrodite leads animals to preserve life by mating, while here Anchises brings about their death. Not only does the description add to the multiple interweaving of the topics within the poem, but it also offers a culminating suspense, just before the vital central scene of love-making.

Had the topic of the hymn been just the gods' revenge, the poem should have ended here and consisted of one section (A) on Aphrodite's achievements, and an opposing one (B) on Zeus' counter-attack. However, the poem continues with a third major section (C) on Aphrodite's reaction to her love affair (168-291). It is of equal length to the previous section and it is decorated also with deliberate and much needed *excursus*.

After a lapse of time —poetically denoted by a comment on the return journey of Anchises' fellow cowherds (168-69)— the goddess resumes her full consciousness and faces the harsh reality of her affair with a mortal. Her aim now is to reduce and, if possible, minimize its bad effects on her future status as a love goddess. She has no intention of continuing a love affair she was led to by the will of Zeus and did not undertake of her own free will. Besides, Zeus seems to be satisfied with the lesson he has taught her and has no intention of pushing it any further.

First of all, then, she gets dressed, resumes her divinity and wakes Anchises up. Their second dialogue (177-290), in which they speak in reverse order, is no longer set between two supposed equals who are characterized by mutual loving sentiments expressed with much flattery.²² Now her divine and dominant character takes over and is manifested in her imperative tone. Her short opening speech (177-79) calls him off the bed using his patronymic (Δαρδανίδη 177), and orders him to notice the change in her appearance. It is his turn now to open his eyes to the harsh reality of his much feared affair with an immortal.

At her epiphany he is filled with terror,²³ covers his head, and addresses her with a supplication in which he confesses that he realized her divine nature, but was deceived because she had not told him the truth. Finally, he feels that having enjoyed physical contact with an immortal, he can no longer thrive among his fellow human beings (βιοθάλμιος ἀνὴρ 189)²⁴, and hence he begs her in the name of Zeus²⁵ not to keep him feeble among mortals. This implies that instead he wants to be taken with her.²⁶ In their first dialogue mortal Aphrodite begged

²² In the first dialogue Aphrodite addressed Anchises as κύνιστε χαμαιγενέων ἀνθρώπων (108) in order to attract him.

²³ Terror is a common characteristic of attendants in scenes of epiphanies. See Pfister in *RE Suppl.* iv, 277f. s.v. 'Epiphanie'.

²⁴ There is a close interconnection between βιοθάλμιος which characterizes Anchises (189), and θαλερός and θάλος (104, 278) which characterize his son Aeneias. On this see Smith (n. 5), 66.

²⁵ The poet constantly mentions the god in order to remind us of his role in the development of the story — even if this role is indirect at most times.

²⁶ For the interpretation of 188-90 see Ben (n. 13), 19-21.

for his protection, now the order is reversed: mortal Anchises makes supplication to the goddess.

Anchises' speech manages to calm her down. In her extended reply (191-290), which is characterized by Smith (n. 5), 68 as 'a rhetorically constructed speech of persuasion', she addresses him as in their first encounter with his proper name ('Αγχίση 192)²⁷ and reassures him that he runs no risk from her or any other god. His earlier wish for a son—expressed in his first speech to her in line 104—is now fulfilled, when the goddess foretells the birth of a son to be called Aeneias. The name is especially chosen by her as a reminder of the terrible anxiety (αἰνὸν ... ἄχος 198f.) her affair with a mortal has caused her. The phraseology of the announcement 'you will have a son' (σοὶ δ' ἔσται φίλος υἱός 196) shows that she is not yet prepared to acknowledge her motherhood. Only after the three *excursus* on Ganymede, Tithonus and the Nymphs will she call Aeneias her own son: ἐμὸν ... υἱόν (273).

Before announcing her refusal to take Anchises with her Aphrodite relates the story of two members of Anchises' generation (i.e. descended from Tros) who enjoyed close contact with gods: Ganymede and Tithonus. The former was carried off by Zeus to be cup bearer to the gods. For him, however, Zeus was forced to pay a ransom²⁸ (ἄποινα) to his father in order to stop him mourning for the loss of his son, and to promise to make him immortal and ever-young. As regards the latter, Eos did beg Zeus for Tithonus' immortality, but forgot to ask also for eternal youth for him. As a result, he grew so old that Eos lost all interest in him and locked him away in a chamber to wait for ever.

The position of these two stories in the hymn has puzzled many scholars and a number of interpretations have been offered.²⁹ I suggest that they are intended

²⁷ Cf. line 108. Although the two lines (192 and 108) are almost the same, they are spoken by a different Aphrodite and in a different context: the former by the superior and calm goddess, and the latter by the mortal and supplicant Aphrodite. The role of the poet is, unfortunately, undermined in studies which examine the formulaic structure of the hymn without taking into consideration the meaning of each formula within its context and conclude that the poem is the product of oral composition 'where invention and originality consist mainly in selecting and combining the elements of a traditional style and diction': Preziosi (n. 3) 172. Such studies forget, however, that even an orally composed poem can be as deliberate in its management of narrative detail as a written one.

²⁸ See n. 15.

²⁹ For instance Eck and Ben have emphasized respectively the paederastic elements and the general role of Ganymede among immortals: J. van Eck, "The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*: Introduction, Commentary and Appendices", Ph.D. thesis, Utrecht 1978, quoted in Ben (n. 13), 24. The latter in particular sees behind the fact that Zeus made Ganymede immortal and ever young an implication that 'quod licet Iovi non licet Veneri': Ben (n. 13), 24f. On the other hand, Smith (n. 5), 71-77 analyzes the position of Ganymede at Olympus, but not the role of Zeus in the whole affair. Smith correctly notes that 'the actions

to justify the goddess's subsequent refusal to take Anchises with her. For me, they are — like all the other *excursus* — significant parts of the hymn, and not a supplementary embellishment of the epic narrative, simply the goddess's reflective reminiscence of two more descendants of Tros in addition to Anchises and Aeneias.³⁰

This I shall now try to show. Aphrodite's long speech deals — at least in externals — with two main themes: Anchises and his future, and the birth and upbringing of his son Aeneias. The father is reassured that his life is in no danger, and that he will live to die of old age, provided he conceals the identity of Aeneias' mother. The son — when born — will be nourished by the Nymphs and then taken to stay with his father. To describe both topics the poet appears to follow his normal practice of illustrating his themes in stages, with the gradual addition of further information and other details. Up to this point in her speech, Aphrodite has spoken of the protection of Anchises by gods (a), and then foretold Aeneias' birth (b). After the two episodes, she first announces her decision not to take Anchises with her (c), then refers to Aeneias' upbringing by the Nymphs (d), and closes her speech with a section referring to both mortals (e), when she warns the father to hide the identity of his son's mother. In the entire speech then the two themes appear in alternate order: Anchises in sections a, c, e and Aeneias in b, d, e.

If the scheme I have suggested is correct, then the two mythical episodes are expected either to relate to the preceding theme of Aeneias' birth, or the one following, of Anchises' fate. In my view they cannot relate to the former theme, particularly since they are separated from it by the addition of two lines (200-201), which form the preamble of the two episodes.³¹ Instead, they are used to illustrate the topic of Anchises' future by offering a justification for the goddess's subsequent decision not to take him with her. In other words, Anchises will stay on earth and she will have no further anxieties caused by feelings of shame at seeing him among the immortals. He would obviously be a constant reminder to her of her own fall into the same trap she used to enjoy setting for the rest of the gods. Having had an affair with a mortal, she will no longer be able to boast of her successful deceptions among the gods. The worst of all her mishaps is that she

and feelings of Tros are given more weight than the fate of Ganymede himself (p. 77), but fails to see that it is Zeus they undermine and not Ganymede.

³⁰ Smith (n. 5), 4.

³¹ I think that the couplet is meant to express a general remark that mortals who live in close contact with gods (ἄγγιθεοι) always come from Anchises' family (i.e. from Tros). The statement is then illustrated with the two examples of Ganymede and Tithonus. To achieve this meaning a full stop is needed at the end of line 199 instead of a semicolon. The existing punctuation has misled some to interpret the episodes as an unnecessary reflection by the goddess after she mentioned Aeneias' future reign among the Trojans: Smith (n. 5), 69 and Ben (n. 13), 25. As I shall explain further on, the couplet, and the two episodes which follow it, will mislead also Anchises into thinking that he too will take his place near the gods and become ἄγγιθεος.

will have a mortal son. If she cannot boast, can she at least keep her title as a love goddess? That is what is left to her to fight for.

As I have argued, Aphrodite refers to the two *exempla* in order to support her decision not to take Anchises with her. By this decision she differentiates herself from the other two gods: Zeus and Eos. In taking with them their respective lovers each had to pay something in compensation: Zeus paid a ransom to Ganymede's father, and Eos had much turmoil failing to secure her lover's eternal youth. Unlike them, Aphrodite will not pay anything, as she will not take Anchises with her. The two *exempla*, therefore, do not emphasize the fate of the two mortals in order to show what fate awaits Anchises, as some believe, but differentiate Aphrodite's status from that of the other two gods.³²

This can be further supported by the fact that one of them is Zeus himself. By referring to him Aphrodite appears — consciously or not — to counter-attack in response to his revenge³³ and, in a way, to be released from the oppressive feelings she was filled with after her mishap. Another aspect favouring this interpretation is found in line 239, the first to follow after the narration of the two *exempla*. Here, the emphasis is on the subject of the sentence, ἐγώ γε,³⁴ and not on its object, σέ, which denotes Anchises; in other words on the contrast between Aphrodite's decision and that of Zeus and Eos. Had the poet intended to differentiate Anchises from the two mortals, he should have rephrased the sentence to have *him* as the subject.

Aphrodite's decision to relate the two stories before explaining why she is doing so, has also a counter effect on Anchises, misleading him to interpret them as reaffirming his eager wish to follow her. On hearing that all descendants of Tros have been in close contact with gods (ἀγγιθεοί³⁵ 200), he too expects a similar destiny. Also, while hearing of the fate of Ganymede and Tithonus, he must be further reassured that he too will follow his divine lover. Unfortunately, by tragic irony the two episodes are used to justify exactly the opposite: the goddess's refusal to fulfil his wish. This is another technique of the poet to take his heroes by surprise. The reversal of Anchises' expectations is prepared gradually in the narrative of the two stories: Ganymede may have had a success in

³² Smith (n. 5), *passim*. Clay, however, takes only the example of Tithonus as serving to justify the goddess's decision not to make Anchises her consort, but for her the Ganymede story explains the gods' love for Anchises and is interpreted as an example of apotheosis: Clay (n. 6), 185-189.

³³ The poet presents Aphrodite knowing that she has been deceived (ἀπεπλάγχθη νόοιο 254), but does not state clearly that Zeus is to be blamed for this.

³⁴ The particle γε (with which Aphrodite differentiates herself from the two gods) serves, in my view, as an adversary connective of line 239 with the previous section, unlike Smith's view of the absence of any connection between the two: Smith (n. 5), 87. On the quasi-connective use of γε see J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, 1934, 144f.

³⁵ The word —following the etymological explanation of Aeneias' name— may be another intended word play to explain Anchises' name and thus to add to his misunderstanding of the goddess's intentions.

maintaining for ever his position among gods (by his acquired immortality and eternal youth), but not so Tithonus. What status of divine closeness will Anchises have? His certainty at the beginning of the narrative gradually changes to an agonizing uncertainty, until finally the goddess surprises him with her total refusal.

Aphrodite's decision cannot be welcome news for Anchises and hence she is cautious not to cause him excessive disappointment. This she manages first by stating her decision as mildly as possible (239-240);³⁶ and secondly by explaining it with recourse to indirect or suggestive expressions and conditional phrases (241-243).³⁷ In her wording she avoids calling Anchises her husband (242), as

³⁶ She does not simply and harshly say 'I shall not take you with me', but 'I [in opposition to Zeus and Eos: ἐγὼ γὰρ, n. 34] would not take you for myself to be such a one [i.e. like Ganymede] among immortals and to be immortal and live for ever [i.e. like Tithonus]'. This interpretation is based upon two assumptions: firstly, that ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν, placed between τοῖον and ἐλοίμην, may qualify both words, in which case τοῖον ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν must recall the example of Ganymede who was taken to live among immortals (cf. 203-5), unlike Tithonus (cf. 227); and secondly, that line 240 refers to Tithonus as does 221. Aphrodite's reply in 239-40 appears to be intended to correspond verbally with Anchises' request μή με ... ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἑάσῃς (188) and thus to underline that in whichever condition (of simple immortality, or also of eternal youth) Anchises is *not* to be taken among the immortals - emphasis being on the negatives μή, οὐκ at the beginning of each line (188, 239), and on the antithesis between ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν and ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν, both ending in the same *sedes*.

³⁷ After the adversary ἀλλ' of line 241 (which follows οὐκ ἂν of 239) an opposite meaning from that of 239-240 would have been expected producing something like: 'I shall not take you with me, but shall leave you on earth and henceforth I will have no anxiety [which could be produced if I *do* take you with me]'. Instead, Aphrodite uses the conditional expression εἰ μὲν ... ζώοις, ... οὐκ ἂν ... ἀμφικαλύπτει in the sense 'if you might continue to live just as you are in form and body, and might come to be called my husband, then, no anxiety would enfold my shrewd mind'. I take τοιοῦτος ἐὼν εἰδός τε δέμας τε to be intended as a contrast to the idea of immortality (the common characteristic of Ganymede and Tithonus in 239-240) and hence, to underline first Anchises' mortality (rather than the superlative degree of his present handsomeness and youth, as opposed to his future aging), and then his stay on earth (the place of mortality): in the former sense corresponding with ἀθάνατον (240) and in the latter with ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν (239). I also think that Aphrodite's conditional ἄχος need not be seen as denoting (in the light of the Tithonus episode) her distress at seeing an aging Anchises, but rather the discomfort and constant reminiscence of her imposed affair which Anchises' presence would cause her. Nor would the possibility of Anchises' being called her husband add to her ἄχος, so long as he keeps away from her. In the end, Aphrodite's decision is so cleverly worded, that not only is Anchises expected not to be disappointed with it, but he is also made to want to remain mortal and stay on earth in order to free his divine lover from her anxieties.

he too previously avoided naming her his wife (148).³⁸ The antithetical interconnection of the two lines (242, 148) is yet another illustration of the poet's compositorial technique of interweaving various sections with similar themes recurring in them.

After line 243 there should be a pause in the goddess's speech to allow her and her interlocutor to reflect on the meaning of her decision.³⁹ Resuming her speech she analyzes the consequences of her decision for herself and Anchises (244-255).⁴⁰ On the one hand, he will grow old and die and on the other, she will constantly feel ashamed of her relation with him. Their affair will prevent her ever after from boasting among the gods of her achievements in mixing them with mortals, particularly since a mortal son will result from it. This last is the worst of her miseries.

The third section reveals Aphrodite's disappointment and great sorrow for her mishap. Her psychological condition is gradually stated in an ascending tone with the words ἄχος, ὄνειδος, and ἀάσθην (243, 247, 253). From her ἄχος, she can be cured completely, if she does not take Anchises with her;⁴¹ from the other two, however, only partially. To achieve the latter partial cure she will forbid Anchises to boast of their affair by publicizing to humans the motherhood of his son. Instead he is forced to lie by claiming a Nymph as his son's mother. So with this arrangement Anchises is expected to be content, exchanging his immortality for a son; and Aphrodite regains her status as a love goddess, even if she may no longer boast about it.

Before coming to this, she announces her intention to give Aeneias, soon after his birth, to the Nymphs to be raised before he eventually meets his father. The *excursus* on the Nymphs (257-72) in hymn form (the fifth in the poem) with its happy note of their dancing activities and erotic adventures seems to help Aphrodite cheer herself up and forget her own depressed feelings. Speaking

³⁸ Note the symmetry of the two expressions: ἐμὴ δ' ἄλοχος κεκλήσεται ἡματα πάντα 148, and ἡμέτερός τε πόσις κεκλημένος εἷς 242. Aphrodite's more noble ἡμέτερος is used for Anchises' plain ἐμὴ, and what he expressed in the form of an *apodosis* to a combination of four present and past conditions (εἰ ... ἐσσί ... γείνατο ... ἐστί ... ἰκάνεις ~ κεκλήσεται) takes the place of one of the two *protases* of a future condition in Aphrodite's speech (εἰ ... ζώοις ... κεκλημένος εἷς ~ ἂν ... ἀμφικαλύπτει). Also, the two words which denote their respective marital status (ἄλοχος, πόσις) are used by the two lovers to refer directly to themselves only in these lines.

³⁹ And, one would say, to turn from the imaginary (conditional) situation to reality, as is attested in the contrast between εἰ μὲν ... ἔπειτα and νῦν δέ which is repeated in 252 to stress that not only does the present reality differ from the imaginary, but also from the past (πρίν 249) when the goddess was boasting freely and openly of her achievements.

⁴⁰ I see no 'logical ellipsis' between lines 243 and 244, such as Smith (n. 5), 89 and Clay (n. 6), 190 both suggest.

⁴¹ Her regained self-confidence is, I think, the reason for her decision not to take Anchises with her rather than that she cannot ask Zeus to make him immortal and deathless: Clay (n. 6), 190f.

of the Nymphs, she focuses her attention away from her own affairs. The special reference to the Nymphs also prepares for the importance they will take in the closing section of her speech, when Aphrodite warns Anchises to avoid boasting foolishly of his intercourse with her. Instead, he is told to provide for one of the Nymphs to be Aeneias's mother.

Her sanction against Anchises' disobedience is the threat of punishment by Zeus' thunderbolt (281-90). It is needless to note that the same god who delivered her to mortal hands is now called on to defend her divine dignity by conspiring with her in the suppression of the truth. In the final part of the poem, then, the two rival gods appear reconciled, the one having succeeded in his revenge against the other, and the other having secured his valuable help against any exploitation of her slip with Anchises. In this way, the two major sections (B and C) are joined in content and run parallel for a while. With their final collocation, both gods can continue in their respective places among immortals: he as their leader, and she as their love goddess. The poet has managed to illustrate that if for a while the gods oppose one another, in the end concord and mutuality prevail.

I hope that I have illustrated the hymn's tripartite division consisting of sections that conflict in meaning with one another; and that I have indicated that the role of the two gods interchanges when, on the one hand, Zeus receives Aphrodite's attack, but fights back using similar weapons; and, on the other, Aphrodite changes from the dominant goddess of the first and third major sections to the hypnotized marionette of the second, using against herself all her own deceits (appearance, transfiguration, false story) and, in her lies, unwillingly telling the truth about her compulsion to have a relationship with Anchises. Zeus's direct involvement in the myth is further supported by a string of indirect interferences when, for instance, he is recalled to assist Aphrodite's argument, or in Anchises' request for his life to be spared.

As regards her state of mind, before her love affair Aphrodite is conscious of her ability to deceive gods and boasts laughingly of her successes; during it, however, she unconsciously deceives herself and when the veil of hypnotism is removed and she returns to reality, her joy is replaced by shame and extreme depression.

In the two gods' rivalry, Anchises moves from being the apple of Aphrodite's eye to being the scapegoat. In their encounter, he first treats her in a suppliant mode as a real goddess, but soon after he is deceived, he gladly yields to her passion and, with the gods' permission, asserts his dominant masculinity over her unreal mortal femininity. In the full realization of his affair, his earlier joy becomes fear for his life, fear from which he can be delivered not by the gift of immortality, but by his own silence. In the last analysis, in the entire poem Anchises has been but a cypher with no volition of his own.

The myth is enriched with five sections in hymn form, two *exempla* and other smaller *excursus*, whether to illustrate or exemplify secondary themes with the addition of further information (mating scene, description of bed), or to add an effect of suspense, or again to create a well-interwoven poem with the techniques of flashback and flashforward, or even to operate, by tragic irony, contrary to An-

chises' expectations. Details of various themes (e.g. the goddess's beauty, her love for Anchises, and his for her) are added gradually and in stages. For instance, Aphrodite's status as love goddess is gradually lost first by her failure with the three virgin goddesses, then by her colourless success with Zeus, and finally by her own love affair. Likewise, it is gradually regained, first with her refusal to take Anchises with her and then with her enforcement of silence upon him. The poem's wording, even in its details, is most carefully chosen to serve its general frame work when, for instance, the two lovers avoid using marital terms, or the goddess denies her son's motherhood.

The poem closes, as it starts, with the goddess returning to heaven free from any binding attachment to mortality, which she has left behind on earth. The whole affair has been a minor episode in the goddess's life and is already forgotten by the poet who is eager to please her by moving to compose another hymn as skilled as the present one.

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DIAGRAM OF THE HOMERIC HYMN TO APHRODITE

Main Parts	Sections	Subsections	Main theme(s)	Idea(s)	Aphrodite-Zeus-Anchises
I.	Call to the Muse to sing Aphrodite's achievements		ἔργα	Typical theme of hymns	Aphrodite as a Goddess
II.A	1. Aphrodite's achievements in general 2-6 [+]	1. Gods with gods 2. Men with men 3. Animals with animals	1. γλυκύν ἡμερον ὥρε 2 method 1 (lawful) 2. ἐδαμάσσατο 3 (method 2) 3. (ἐδαμάσσατο) 4 (»)	Love for similar <+> groups 1, 2, 3	Capable Aphrodite [+] (active and dominant)
2-44	2. Negative exemplification 7-33 [-]	Method 1 + 3 (lawful + deceitful) 1. Athena (hymn 1) 2. Artemis (hymn 2) 3. Hestia (hymn 3)	οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ' ἀπατήσῃ 7, 33 οὐ γὰρ οἱ εὐαδῆς ἔργα 9 οὐδὲ δάμναται 16-7 οὐδὲ ἄδεν ἔργα 21 (Poseidon, Apollon)	Love for similar <+> group 1 (god with god)	Incapable Aphrodite [-] (three goddesses>Aphrodite)
	3. Positive exemplification 34-44 [+]	Zeus' love for unnamed mortal women (in just 4 lines)	1. Ζηνὸς ... φρένας ἐξαπαφούσα 38 2. συνέμιξε κατανητηῆσι γυναιξίν 39	Method 3 (deceitful) love for dissimilar <-> (god with mortals)	Active Aphrodite Aphrodite > Zeus [deceiver - deceived] [+]
II.B	1. Zeus' achievement 45-57	Love of Aphrodite for: 1. an unnamed mortal: 2. Anchises before seeing him 3. Anchises after seeing him	γλυκύν ἡμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ (45, 53) 1. ἀνδρὶ κατανητῷ μιχθήμεναι 46 2. Ἀγχισίῳ 53 3. ἡράσατ' ... κατὰ φρένας ἡμερος εἶλεν 57	Method 1 Love for dissimilar <-> (god with mortals)	Active Zeus <love of Aphrodite for Anchises> [Zeus > Aphrodite] [-]
[123 lines long]	2. Preparation and Arrival at the hut 58-75	1. Dressing up in Cyprus 58-65 2. Trip to Ida 66-69 3. Excursus: Mating of animals 69-75	Stage 1 in her description ἐν στῆθεσσι βάλλ' ἡμερον 73 method 1	Step 1 (appearance) exemplification of group 3 (cf. A.1.3)	Reactivated Aphrodite
	3. Meeting with Anchises 76-91	1. Anchises is alone 76-80 2. Excursus: Stage 2 in her description 81-90 3. Effect on Anchises 91	παρθένῳ ἀδμήτη ... ὁμοίη 82 Ἀγχισίων ἔρος εἶλεν 91	Step 2 (transfiguration) Stage 1 of Anchises' love	Transfigured Aphrodite (human) and active Anchises <love of Anchises for Aphrodite>
	4. Dialogue I Anchises and Aphrodite 92-154	1. Anchises' greeting 92-106 (hymn 4) 2. 1. Aphrodite's long response 107-142 2. its effect 143-144 3. Anchises' response 145-154	1. Takes her as a goddess 2. Asks for personal prosperity among men 3. Asks for a son 1. She is mortal 2. She is led to him by Hermes 3. She is ordered to marry him γλυκύν ἡμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ 143 1. ἐμὴ ἀλογος κεκλήσεται 148 2. σὴ φιλότῃτι μιγῆναι αὐτίκα νῦν 150f.	Step 3 (false story) Stage 2 of Anchises' love 1. Aphrodite nods 2. Stage 3 of Anchises' love: persuasion	

	5. Coition 155-167	1. <i>Excursus</i> : Description of bed 155-161	Anchises kills animals { - }	Aphrodite preserves them by mating { + } [cf. A.1.3]	Anchises > Aphrodite [male - female]
		2. Undressing of Aphrodite 162-166	Stage 3 in her description		
		3. Act 166-167	θεῶν λότηι καὶ αἴση ἀθανάτη παρέλεκτο θεὰ βροτῶς, οὐ σάφα εἰδώς 165f.	Gods' revenge is fulfilled Both lovers are deceived	
II. C Aphrodite's response 168-290 [123 lines long]	1. Waking up of Anchises 168-176	1. Anchises is asleep	1. Ἀγχίστην ... ὕπνον ἔχεν 170		Aphrodite resumes divinity and takes an energetic role
		2. Aphrodite gets dressed and resumes her divinity	2. ἔννοτο εἴματα καλά 171		
	2. Dialogue 2: Aphrodite and Anchises [reverse order] 177-290	3. She wakes him up	3. ἔξ ὕπνου τ' ἀνέγειρεν 176		Aphrodite > Anchises [goddess - human]
		1. Aphrodite's 1st speech 177-179	- Δαρδανίῳ - ὄρουο, φράσαι	She uses imperative tone	
		2. Anchises wakes up 180-184 and responds 185-190	τάρβησεν 182	Anchises is afraid	
			1. I knew you were a god		
			2. You lied		
			3. Do not leave me here, as I am in danger [+]		
		3. Aphrodite's 2nd speech (long response: 191-290) [cf. B.4.2]	1. You are not in danger 191-195 [-]	Ἀγχίστην, ... οὐ παθεῖν κακόν (cf. C. 2.2.3.b)	
			2. You shall have a son 196-201	She refuses to call Aeneias her son (cf. B.4.1.3)	
			3.1 Two <i>exempla</i> to justify her decision: 1. Ganymede 202-217 2. Tithonus 218-238	Aphrodite differentiates herself from: 1. Zeus 2. Eos	A depressed goddess Aphrodite cheers herself up
			3.2 Decision: I shall not take you with me 239-243		
			3.3 Consequence of her decision 244-255	She will have no further troubles	
			4. Upbringing of Aeneias 256-280 Excursus: Nymphs 257-72	νύμφαι θρέψουσιν 257 (hymn 5) cf. C.2.3.5	
			5. Warning to Anchises to hide the identity of Aeneias' mother 281-290	Punishment by Zeus Ζεὺς σε βαλέει κεραυνῷ (288)	Aphrodite is reconciled with Zeus Aphrodite + Zeus > Anchises
	3. Aphrodite's departure 291		Separation of Aphrodite and Anchises	Aphrodite in heaven Anchises on earth	
III. Close 292-293	Farewell and promise for another hymn	The hymn begins and ends with reference to Cyprus	Κύπριδος (2) and Κύπριον μεδέουσα (292)	Circular composition	