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An Erotic *Aristeia*

*The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and its Relation to the Iliadic Tradition*¹

Pascale Brillet-Dubois

To Jenny Clay

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* celebrates the power of the love goddess by recounting her seduction of the mortal Anchises. Scholarship on this delightful piece has been discussing for two centuries its complex relationship with the other *Hymn* of the collection as well as other epic poetry, most of all the *Iliad* with which the *Hymn* shares a number of formulae, verses, and thematic sequences.² Debates have so far focused on three main questions: 1) When was the *Hymn* composed?³ The *communis opinio* that the poem's diction and language—as they appear in the text that we have—are later than the *Iliad*'s and older than most of the other *Hymns*' is now grounded in

¹ This chapter is a considerably reworked version of Brillet-Dubois (2006) and of my contribution to the Oslo Symposium on 'Relative Chronology in Greek Epic' organized in 2006 by O. Andersen, D. Haug, and A. Maravela-Solbakk. I thank all the colleagues who discussed my ideas and helped me to bring them to maturity. S. Schein and A. Faulkner deserve special mention for their constant support and challenging critique.

² The union of Aphrodite and Anchises is mentioned in the *Iliad* (2. 820–1; 5. 311–13) and the *Theogony* (1008–10).

³ Discussion of the different hypotheses in Janko (1982), 151, Faulkner (2008), 47–9, and in this volume Introduction (p. 000).

thorough statistical analyses,⁴ but no certainty can be reached about absolute dating. 2) Is the *Hymn to Aphrodite* imitating the *Iliad*? During the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the extensive use of Homeric formulae and vocabulary in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* was considered proof of conscious imitation of Homer by the *Hymn* poet.⁵ With the rise of oral studies following Milman Parry's work, new interpretations were made of those similarities: they could indicate that the poet was drawing from the same traditional stock of formulae as Homer⁶ and that the *Hymn* was primarily an oral composition.⁷ The debate on the originality of the poet has not been resolved to this day, as appears clearly in Faulkner's introduction to his commentary on *Aphrodite*: although he states in a very cautious way that 'it is impossible to be certain of direct influence',⁸ he believes that some sort of imitation, whether between stable oral poems or written texts, is likely and lists parallels to Homer and Hesiod under the label 'imitatio'.⁹ To put things simply, such obvious parallels between two hexameter poems as the ones connecting the *Hymn to Aphrodite* to the *Iliad* now receive two main types of explanations: independant composition within the same tradition, or conscious interaction with either the other poem or a common source. Oralists often challenge the idea that the poems are quoting or alluding to each other. They insist that, although the poets have been trained to use certain common formulae, typical scenes and myths, the poems have been composed in different performances and their meaning develops independently.¹⁰ On the side of interaction,

⁴ Hoekstra (1969), Janko (1982). Notable exceptions: Reinhardt (1961) and Heitsch (1965) who respectively suggest that the same poet composed the *Il.* and *Aphr.*, or the *Hymn* and an interpolated *Iliad* 20; Freed and Bentman (1955) believe the poem to be Hellenistic.

⁵ Discussion of the meaning of these parallels has been overshadowed by the endless and disproportionate debate about the existence of *Aineiadaí* as patrons of one or both texts; see Faulkner (2008), 3–18. I agree with the many scholars who, especially since the survey of the evidence by Smith (1981b), consider the testimonies concerning the historical existence of *Aineiadaí* in Troad to be inconclusive and believe that the hypothesis of one or two poets composing the *Hymn* and *Il.* 20 to praise them is unnecessary to explain the prophecies about Aeneas' descendance.

⁶ Porter (1949), 266–7.

⁷ Notopoulos (1962), followed by Preziosi (1966).

⁸ Faulkner (2008), 31, 23–5.

⁹ Faulkner (2008), 31, 35.

¹⁰ Nagy (1979), 267, on *Il.* and *Aphr.*; Burgess (2001), 134. On this issue, cf. Introduction (pp. 000–000).

imitatio as a derivative relation between the great Homeric and Hesiodic poems and later, minor, or ‘sub-epic’ hexameter poems is giving way to more complex (and stimulating) analyses of epic poetry. These combine the assumption that the poems are traditional and orally derived with the neo-analyst search for traces of reference to pre-existing works. Poems, defined not as texts but as products of poetic traditions, *can* allude to each other in a dynamic way and reference to other extant traditions *can* be used to convey meaning to an informed audience.¹¹ This does not imply anymore that the *exemplum* is a written text,¹² though it is hardly conceivable without the poem or the poetic tradition it belongs to having reached a form, be it oral or written, that is stable enough for an audience to identify it. In other words, the genealogical model of the relation between the poems is now being supplemented by a dialogic or even agonistic one.

3) Questions about the hymnic genre also appear central to the interpretative debate on the *Hymn to Aphrodite*. While *Aphrodite* seems to share the other *Homeric Hymns*’ compositional characteristics,¹³ it also stands as the least cultic of all the longer *Hymns*: the conventional mention of Aphrodite’s temple in Paphos and Anchises’ promise of offerings (100–2) could hardly be interpreted as an aetiology for an extant cult.¹⁴ In the analysis of the relationship between the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and non-hymnic epics, the problem of genre was first raised as a means to define the hymn’s originality and specific poetics: Porter, Podbielski, and Lenz insisted that for all its parallels in heroic poetry, the poem makes use of traditional material that is subordinated to the celebration of Aphrodite’s power. But the poem as a hymn also met with great interest among scholars who, following upon Vernant’s groundbreaking work on Hesiod, developed anthropological readings of early Greek poetry. That trend of studies culminated with J. Clay’s major book *The Politics of Olympus*, which examines the cosmogonic aspects of Aphrodite’s story in relation mainly to the *Theogony* and the other *Homeric Hymns*, but also in relation to the *Catalogue of Women*, the *Cypria* and the *Iliad*.¹⁵ Clay thus sums up her arguments: ‘while the theogonies outlined the

¹¹ See Rousseau (2001), Currie (2006), Burgess (2009), 56–71. Currie (forthcoming) makes excellent comments on *Dem.* from this perspective.

¹² On intertextuality, see Pucci (1995), and critique in Burgess (2001), 133–4.

¹³ Janko (1981), Lenz (1975). See in this volume Calame (Ch. 14).

¹⁴ Faulkner (2008) and, in this volume, Introduction (pp. 000–000).

¹⁵ Clay (1989), Rudhardt (1991).

genesis of the cosmos and the gods and Homeric epic recounted the exploits of the heroes, the [longer narrative] Hymns narrated critical moments in the evolution of the Olympian order and thus filled the gap between the two other genres of *epos*.¹⁶ The love affair of Aphrodite and Anchises, just as the abduction of Persephone and the foundation of Eleusis or the birth and establishment of Hermes and Apollo in the other major *Hymns*, constitutes an epoch-making moment in the history of Zeus' reign. For it was to be, according to Zeus' plan, the last union between a mortal and a god.¹⁷ The *Hymn*'s emphasis on the relation between mortals and immortals had been elucidated previously,¹⁸ but Clay places it in the context of a global, consistent, and Panhellenic representation of cosmogonic history. Without clearly addressing the question of epic interaction, her argumentation postulates that the audience of the *Hymn* and of Greek *epos* in general was aware of that cosmogonic background and that the poem's significance was to be constructed in relation to that shared knowledge.

The following interpretation is an attempt to supplement Clay's work and reflect on the relationship between the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and the *Iliad* by being more specific about the way the *Hymn* defines its own place in relation to theogonic and heroic traditions. I hope to contribute to the understanding of *Aphrodite* by showing that it not only refers to general traditional motifs (bathing and dressing, encounter with a stranger, epiphany) as all epics do,¹⁹ but more specifically that its narrative structure as a whole links the tale of Aphrodite's seduction of Anchises to the Achillean *aristeia*, and that this dialogue with the Iliadic tradition (which, however subtle, I assume could be identified by at least some members of the audience) is a key element of the *Hymn*'s poetics and meaning. The experience of the immortal goddess mirrors that of the mortal hero and is thus revealed as an exploit paradigmatic of the goddess' works²⁰—an *ergon* both parallel to and other than the heroic one.

¹⁶ In the new preface to the reprint of Clay (1989) in 2006, vi.

¹⁷ Clay (1989), 169–70. See also Brillet-Dubois (2001).

¹⁸ Segal (1974), Smith (1981a).

¹⁹ See Graziosi and Haubold (2005). Faulkner (2008) is a precious source for these parallels.

²⁰ On the repetition of *ἔργα* ('works', 7 occurrences in 21 lines), see AHS 349, Porter (1949), 251–54, Podbielski (1971), 18–21, Càssola 249, Faulkner (2008), 72–3.

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The hymn's *pars epica* combines the following traditional scenes: 1) Divine motivation: Zeus inspires Aphrodite with the love of Anchises (53–7). 2) Preparation: the goddess goes to Cyprus where the Graces bathe, anoint and dress her (58–65). 3) Journey: she travels to Mount Ida (66–9); wild beasts follow in her wake (69–72); she inspires them with the desire to mate (72–4). 4) Encounter: she stands before Anchises (75–83) who wonders at her appearance (description of the shining clothes and jewelry, 84–90). He greets her as a goddess (91–106); she pretends to be a mortal sent by the gods to wed him (107–43). 5) Intercourse: he gives in to desire, takes her to bed, and undresses her (144–66); they have intercourse and he falls asleep (167–71). 6) Aftermath: Aphrodite awakens Anchises and reveals herself in her true form (171–80); he reacts with fear (181–90); the goddess comforts him, predicts the birth of Aeneas, announces that she will never boast again about her power over the gods (191–290). Having ended her speech, she departs to the sky (291).

On a primary level, this sequence is a typical 'seduction' or 'allurement' narrative with known parallels in Greek epic that we will examine shortly. Yet one can already notice that the sequence closely follows that of the Iliadic *aristeia* in which the hero 1) is inflamed with the desire to fight, 2) arms himself, 3) moves towards the front-line, 4) meets his opponent, 5) fights him, and 6) reflects upon his victory.²¹ The main difference lies in the central action: sexual intercourse on the one hand, martial conflict on the other. There are a number of traditional symbolic and formulaic links between the two.²² It is on these grounds, I will argue, that the hymn-poet progressively develops the narrative of a love *aristeia*.

Aphrodite's action begins with a preparation scene which is very similar to two famous Homeric passages: Hera preparing herself before seducing Zeus in *Iliad* 14, and Aphrodite bathing after having been caught in bed with Ares in *Odyssey* 8. The text of the *Hymn* was long thought to be a combination of the Homeric lines.²³ It is now more generally assumed that the three poems drew independently,

²¹ See Fenik (1968), Janko (1994).

²² Monsacré (1984), 41–94.

²³ *Aphr.* 59 ~ *Od.* 8. 362; 60 ~ *Il.* 14. 169; 61–2 ~ *Od.* 8. 364–5; 63 ~ *Il.* 14. 172. *Aphr.* 64–5, which concern Aphrodite's dressing, are parallel in content but not in wording to *Od.* 8. 366 and to *Il.* 14. 178–85. AHS 357, speak of 'the writer who combined the passages in X and q'; cf. Lenz (1975), 118–22.

with different generic agendas, on the same traditional material.²⁴ The hypothesis of a typical preparation scene is strengthened by two other poems. Fragments 4 and 5 (Bernabé) of the *Cypria* describe the clothing and adornment of Aphrodite. Fr. 4 focuses on Aphrodite dressing in the clothes made by the Horai and the Charites and places specific emphasis on the fragrant flowers used to dye the clothes. In fr. 5, Aphrodite is singing on Mount Ida among the Nymphs and Charites; they have crowned themselves with garlands made of flowers. The purpose of the scene, though, is probably other than to describe their preparation—the main verb is missing and the adornment is described with a circumstantial participle. Given that fr. 5 is set on Mount Ida and that, according to Athenaeus, fr. 4 belongs in the first book of the *Cypria*, it is more than likely that Aphrodite's preparation scene precedes the Judgement of Paris.²⁵ *Hymn 6* also presents a comparable scene. The poem celebrates Aphrodite as the sovereign of Cyprus and recalls her arrival on the island. She was first carried there by the wind and the waves (3–5) and was welcomed by the Horai who dressed her and adorned her with golden jewelry (5–14). Then she was introduced to the immortals who greeted her gracefully, and the sight of her inspired the gods with the desire to wed her (15–18).

In all cases but the *Odyssey*, the preparation scene precedes an erotic encounter: Aphrodite exerts her charm on Anchises (*Aphr.*), the Olympian gods (*Hy. 6*) and very probably Paris (*Cypria*), while Hera seduces Zeus (*Il. 14*). It seems reasonable to think that the dressing motif, followed by journey and encounter, is part of a typical seduction sequence, just as the arming-motif is part of a fighting sequence. In our examples, seduction might end in intercourse only indirectly or implicitly: in the *Cypria*, Aphrodite substitutes Helen for herself as Paris' lover,²⁶ while *Hymn 6* ends before any of the gods is designated to become her husband.

One noticeable feature of our series is that, apart from the *Iliad*, all sequences involve Aphrodite. A close examination of the Hera scene

²⁴ Porter (1949), 268–9, Janko (1994), 171. Faulkner (2008), 142 does not exclude *imitatio*.

²⁵ See the beginning of Proclus' summary. Cf. also E. *Hel.* 676–8 (bath of the goddesses precedes the Judgement), *IA* 1294–8 (judgement takes place next to the springs of the Nymphs where the goddesses pick up flowers). On Euripides and the *Cypria*, see Jouan (1966).

²⁶ See Brillet-Dubois (2001), 258–9.

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confirms that, among the many possible tales of seduction, there existed a traditionally Aphroditean one, for the *Iliad* includes elements pointing to a consciously ironic transference of the motif.²⁷ Once Hera has bathed, anointed, and clothed her body, her preparation appears to be still incomplete. The episode then expands to tell of her visit to Aphrodite: as if her personal seduction were not enough, she needs to borrow the girdle in which the love-goddess keeps all of the charms (*θελκτῆρια*, 14. 215) which constitute her prerogatives and power over all creatures.²⁸ Using lies that her victim, though familiar with beguiling persuasion, paradoxically does not detect,²⁹ Hera talks smiling Aphrodite (*φιλομμειδῆς*, 14. 211) into lending her the garment which is her exclusive property; it allows her to become herself a triumphantly smiling goddess (*μείδησεν*, 222; *μειδήσασα*, 223) and ensures the success of her erotic trickery against Zeus. It also signals in a humorous metapoetic way to an ‘epically informed’ audience the transference of a traditional Aphroditean theme. Therefore, the fact that the narrative seems to wander off an expected course is in itself meaningful and draws the attention to the substitution of Hera for Aphrodite.³⁰ That the girdle is not mentioned elsewhere is another proof that it is only necessary in this case of (poetic and mythological) transfer of prerogatives. Finally, given that Hera, using Aphrodite’s weapons, overcomes Zeus on Mount Ida in order to prevent a Trojan victory, the re-use of the sequence can be interpreted as a Homeric integration of the cyclic tradition, and as an inverted replica of the Judgement of Paris.³¹ This illuminates the second digression of the *Dios Apate* episode: Hera’s visit to Sleep and her promise to give him one of the Graces to wed.³² Just as Aphrodite bribed Paris by promising the love of Helen, Hera uses as bait a typically Aphroditean character, which again points to transference.³³ In both narratives, the whole seduction sequence is

²⁷ For theoretical discussions, see Danek (1998), Burgess (2006), Burgess (2009), Currie (2006).

²⁸ Compare *Th.* 201–6.

²⁹ Janko (1994), 179.

³⁰ Janko (1994), 178–9.

³¹ See Burgess (2001), (2009), 65–6.

³² See in this volume West (Ch. 2) on the connection of this episode to the myth of Hephaestus’ binding of Hera.

³³ Conversely, it seems significant that Athena, Hera’s ally in war since the Judgement, should be substituted for the Graces in the making of her clothing (14. 178–9).

motivated less by intercourse itself than by the victory at stake. Having been defeated by Aphrodite in the *krisis*, Hera now ironically has her contribute to the success of Paris' opponents. The interaction here is rather between Iliadic and Cyprian traditions than between the *Iliad* and *Aphrodite*.

Let us turn back to the Aphroditean seduction sequence. Variations from the pattern point to meaningful poetic choices. In *Hymn* 6, the bath is replaced by the motif of Aphrodite floating on the sea, 'in soft foam' (*ἀφρῶ ἐνι μαλακῶ*, 5).³⁴ The poet thus pointedly chooses the Hesiodic version of Aphrodite's birth and sets his description in a theogonic rather than an erotic perspective. The emphasis on the goddess's golden jewelry serves as an aetiology of her epithet 'golden-crowned' (*χρυσοστέφανος*, 1)³⁵ and manifests her divine nature, while her preparation leads to her introduction into the society of gods.³⁶ Although the effect she produces on the Olympians is erotic (they all wish to wed her),³⁷ this aspect of the Aphroditean scene is subordinate to the characteristically hymnic representation of her admission among the immortals.³⁸

Departure from the traditional sequence is also visible in *Odyssey* 8, where the Aphroditean preparation-scene is placed *after* sexual intercourse instead of before. Aphrodite's return to Cyprus is usually interpreted as a 'natural'³⁹ closure for the episode. After the humiliation she just experienced, the goddess is supposed to seek the comfort of her familiar dwelling.⁴⁰ Instead of this moral interpretation, I would rather suggest that by moving the scene, which traditionally indicates preparation for love, to the end of the episode, Demodocus provides an ironical close to his humorous poem: far from being tamed by humiliation, the goddess is replying by getting provokingly ready for another round.

³⁴ Same pun on *aphros/Aphrodite* in *Th.* 191.

³⁵ Compounds of *χρυσός* ('gold') appear in lines 1, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12; mention of a golden crown in 7–8.

³⁶ Compare *Apoll.* 186–8.

³⁷ The effect of Aphrodite on the male gods of Olympus might be traditional. Compare the salacious jokes shared by the gods in *Od.* 8. 333–43; also Pandora's presentation to the gods at *Th.* 588.

³⁸ See Lenz (1975), 16–21.

³⁹ See *OC* i. 371; De Jong (2001), 209.

⁴⁰ Porter (1949), 267.

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As for the preparation-scene of the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, Porter convincingly argued that it develops traditional themes in its own way and gives special force to the mentions of fragrance.⁴¹ From a narrative perspective, the specific treatment of the traditional sequence in the *Hymn* consists in separating the description of clothes and jewelry from the preparation motif (58–64, 81–90). This choice allows a very interesting shift in focalization, since it is not the primary narrator who describes the effect that Aphrodite produces once she has bathed and dressed. Rather, it is Anchises, her victim, who mentally surveys her when she appears:

Ἀγχίσις δ' ὀρώων ἐφράζετο θαύμαινέν τε
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε καὶ εἴματα σιγαλόεντα.
πέπλον μὲν γὰρ ἔεστο φαεινότερον πυρός αὐγῆς,
εἶχε δ' ἐπιγναμπτὰς ἔλικας κάλυκας τε φαεινάς,
ὄρμοι δ' ἀμφ' ἀπαλῇ δειρῇ περικαλλέες ἦσαν,
καλοὶ, χρύσειοι, παμποίκιλου ὡς δὲ σελήνη
στήθεσιν ἀμφ' ἀπαλοῖσιν ἐλάμπετο, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι.
Ἀγχίσις δ' ἔρος εἶλεν (*Aphr.* 84–91)

Anchises gazed and took stock of her, wondering at her appearance, her stature and her gleaming garments; for she wore a dress brighter than firelight, and she had twisted bracelets and shining earbuds. Round her tender neck there were splendid necklaces of gold, most elaborate, and about her tender breasts it shone like the moon, a wonder to behold. Anchises was seized by desire.⁴²

The pattern is further modified as the *Hymn* reduplicates that description when Anchises undresses the goddess:

κόσμον μὲν οἱ πρῶτον ἀπὸ χροός εἶλε φαεινόν,
πόρπας τε γναμπτὰς θ' ἔλικας κάλυκας τε καὶ ὄρμους.
λύσε δέ οἱ ζώνην ἰδὲ εἴματα σιγαλόεντα
ἔκδυε καὶ κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ θρόνου ἀργυροῦλου
Ἀγχίσις. (*Aphr.* 162–6)

He first removed the shining adornment from her body, the pins and twisted bracelets and earbuds and necklaces; he undid her girdle, and divested her of her gleaming garments and laid them on a silver-riveted chair—he, Anchises.

⁴¹ Porter (1949), 267–9.

⁴² Translations of *Aphr.* are adapted from WL.

Emphasis is thus put not only on Anchises' reaction to the sight of Aphrodite but also—for the action has no parallel in the other Aphroditic seduction-sequences—on the stripping of her body. These features, I believe, are meant to underline the relation between the *Hymn*'s sequence and the Achillean *aristeia*. For if Aphrodite's dress which is 'brighter than firelight' (*φαειώτερον πυρὸς ἀγῆς*, 86) is thematically similar to Hera's sunbright veil (*Il.* 14. 185), lines 86 and 87 share their diction not with her preparation-scene but with lines of *Iliad* 18 describing the objects forged by Hephaistos. The hemistich *φαειώτερον πυρὸς ἀγῆς* (86) qualifies Achilles's corslet in the *Iliad* (18. 610), while line 87 (reduplicated at 163), is a variation of the formula at *Il.* 18. 400–1:

Τῆσι παρ' εἰνάετες χάλκεον δαίδαλα πολλά,
πόρπας τε γναμπτάς θ' ἔλικας κάλυκας τε καὶ ὄρμους

I [Hephaistos] spent nine years in the company of [Thetis and Eurynome] forging many cunning objects, pins and twisted bracelets and earbuds and necklaces.

When the formula first occurs in *Aphrodite* at line 87, the replacement of *ὄρμους* at the end of the verse by the adjective *φαεινός* ('shining') qualifying *κάλυκας* ('earrings') allows the *Hymn* poet both an insistence on the metallic glow and an extended description of the *ὄρμοι* ('bracelets'); of their richness, variety, and moonlike brilliance, which recall the flare of Achilles' divine weapons in his arming-scene.⁴³ This emphasis on Aphrodite's glowing finery results from a choice comparable to that of *Hymn* 6, but very different from that of frs. 4 and 5 of the *Cypria*, where the use of natural flowers is what characterizes her beauty. Among the possible traditional representations of the goddess, the description in *Aphrodite* selects the one that allows the poem to take on a heroic flavour and through diction turns the jewelry into a set of weapons comparable to Achilles' armour. From this perspective, it is striking that when shining Aphrodite appears before Anchises, she is not only intent on seducing him but anxious *not to frighten* him (*μή μιν ταραβήσειεν*, 83). Fright, as we know, is the reaction of the Trojan soldiers, then of Priam, Hecuba, and Hector, to the sinister reappearance of Achilles surrounded by the light of his bright new armour.⁴⁴ Both poems make

⁴³ *Il.* 19. 369–83. See Armstrong (1958), 351–2.

⁴⁴ *Il.* 20. 44–6; 22. 35–91, 131–6.

it clear that it is the perception of divine power symbolized by an unnatural aura that causes fear, whether it reveals Achilles' outstanding yet temporary superiority or actual divinity: Aphrodite softens the shock she might cause to Anchises by taking the stature and appearance of a young girl,⁴⁵ but as soon as she reveals herself as a goddess, he is terrified (*τάρβησεν*, 182). There is more to it, I think, than the traditional expression of the awe that seizes men when confronted with the divine: the negative formulation of Aphrodite's precaution, combined with the Achillean description of her adornment, are discreet signals that the narrative model transferred here is the heroic *aristeia*.⁴⁶

As for the undressing scene, I said earlier that it had no parallel in the Aphroditean seduction sequences. Yet it does have two masculine counterparts. The first one belongs to a masculine seduction scene: at *Odyssey* 11. 245 Poseidon loosens the girdle of Tyro, a mortal maiden (*λύσε δὲ παρθενίην ζώνην*). The story shares other elements with the tale of Anchises and Aphrodite: it recounts the union of a god and a mortal, and the prediction that Poseidon makes to Tyro after intercourse, promising a splendid offspring, is clearly related to the one Aphrodite makes to her lover. The undressing motif, therefore, might very well be part of traditional (not exclusively Aphroditean) seduction scenes. Nevertheless, the only known parallel to *Aphrodite's* elaborate narrative structure, in which Aphrodite's dressing scene is counterbalanced by her undressing and the loosening of her belt (*λύσε δὲ οἱ ζώνην*, 164), features in *Iliad* 16 where Patroclus' arming scene (16. 130–44) is pointedly echoed by a disarming scene (16. 793–804). As Apollo strikes him, his helmet rolls to the ground, his spear breaks into his hands, his shield falls from his shoulders; finally, the god loosens his corslet (*λύσε δὲ οἱ θώρηκα*, 804).⁴⁷ This parallel defines the erotic encounter in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* in sharp contrast to single combat: what follows for Patroclus is ultimate defeat and death, while the stripping of Aphrodite suggests her utter victory as a seducer and reveals the true nature of her sexual power. Whereas Iliadic heroes strive to overcome their enemies and

⁴⁵ See Faulkner (2008), 164–5, on this half-successful transformation.

⁴⁶ The episode of Hera's seduction in the *Iliad* is also an *aristeia*, but the use of the heroic model turns her action into a feminine act of war, whereas I intend to show that in *Aphr.* erotic power is praised *instead of* heroic virtue.

⁴⁷ The only other occurrence of this formula is at *Il.* 4. 215 (Machaon loosens the corslet of an injured Menelaos).

to lay a hand on their spoils, her own feminine, paradoxical heroism aims at intercourse and lies in her ability to induce her masculine victim to strip *her*.⁴⁸

Focusing on the way the *Hymn to Aphrodite* disrupts the traditional order of the seduction sequence has led us to look ahead in the course of the narrative and we must take a few steps back. Once prepared, Aphrodite moves to Mount Ida which is to be her battlefield. There she is first joined by ‘grey wolves and fierce-eyed lions, bears and swift leopards insatiable for deer’ (πολιοί τε λύκοι χαροποί τε λέοντες | ἄρκτοι παρδάλιές τε θοαὶ προκάδων ἀκόρητοι, 70–1); upon seeing them, she rejoices and casts desire in their breast (72–3). It has been suggested that the motif of the wild animals following in Aphrodite’s wake might have Asiatic connotations or origin, while other scholars prefer to underline that the episode illustrates the goddess’s power as it has been earlier defined (Aphrodite is said to reign over all creatures including animals, 4–5).⁴⁹ Neither explanation is incompatible with the fact that it also occurs at the point where, in the structure of a heroic *aristeia*, the audience could expect a catalogue of minor victims,⁵⁰ and if the contrast between the ferocious nature of the beasts and their sexual activity enhances the overwhelming strength of desire, these predators also evoke in a humorous way the heroes who are repeatedly compared with them in Iliadic similes.

Aphrodite then moves on to her great duel with a most challenging opponent, one who matches her excellence, ‘the hero Anchises who has his beauty from the gods’ (Ἀγχίστην ἥρωα θεῶν ἄπο κάλλος ἔχοντα, 77). The Trojan prince is not only a man whose heroic virtue manifests itself in great beauty, like Achilles or Hector: his beauty is what *makes* him a hero in this erotic encounter. His bucolic environment, suggestive of a prosperity based on breeding, and his activity, playing the cithara (80), liken him to Paris and similarly characterize him as belonging to the Aphroditean world.⁵¹ In order not to cause him fear, as we have seen, Aphrodite takes the appearance of an

⁴⁸ See Schein (forthcoming). Sowa (1984), 47, 74–6, 79–81, sees in the removal of Aphrodite’s clothes the symbol of the fertility-goddess’s death in her ritual marriage to a mortal. Although suggestive, the comparative perspective of Sowa’s work and its definition of tradition seem to me too broad to be utterly convincing.

⁴⁹ See Faulkner (2008), 152–3.

⁵⁰ See Fenik (1968), Krischer (1971), 13–89.

⁵¹ *Il.* 3. 54. See Faulkner (2008), 160.

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inexperienced maiden (*παρθένος ἀδμήης*, 82). The disguise is appropriate in all respects: it allows the goddess to develop the lie about her being a mortal sent to Anchises to wed him; it puts her in an inferior position in front of Anchises and motivates her apparent reluctance to have intercourse with him—a very strong incentive indeed for male desire;⁵² there also seems to be a traditional association between young girls and sweet conversation (*ἄρορος* or *ἄριστός*),⁵³ which is part of Aphrodite's *timai* along with beguiling persuasion. Thus the form and content of the trickery are paradigmatic of the goddess's prerogatives as well as the love (*ἔρος*, 91, 144) and lust (*ἕμερος*, 143) they produce. But they also reverse the traditional formulas comparing a hero to Ares,⁵⁴ a god whose *ergon* is markedly opposed to Aphrodite's in the *Hymn* (10). Here a goddess disguises herself as a mortal, there epic diction confers a divine *persona* upon mortals.

The subsequent dialogue is first of all typical of allurement scenes in the epic tradition⁵⁵ and in itself a splendid illustration of the verbal aspects of Aphrodite's *erga*. Yet it is also strongly linked to the part of an *aristeia* where heroes, before engaging in fight, question each other about their identity and make genealogical claims. 'Who are you among mortals?' ask Diomedes to Glaucus and Achilles to Asteropeios in the *Iliad* (6. 123 and 21. 150). Diomedes' more elaborate speech in *Iliad* 6 anticipates the possibility that Glaucus might be an immortal, in which case he would renounce the duel in fear of divine anger (6. 128–9). But, says he, if his opponent is a mortal, then they must proceed to fight. Similarly, Anchises, delaying the satisfaction of the *eros* that has seized him, first asks 'Who are you among goddesses?', saluting Aphrodite in a hymnic way (92–9). As will become apparent at the time of Aphrodite's epiphany, he is aware, just as Diomedes, of what dangers threaten the mortal who interacts with an immortal. But when the goddess has convinced him that she is a mortal, he immediately proceeds to take her to bed (145–50). Scholars debate about the sincerity of Anchises' address:⁵⁶ has he recognized a

⁵² Compare Hera's feigned reluctance at *Il.* 14. 329–40.

⁵³ See *Il.* 14. 216; *Th.* 205. Also *Il.* 22, 127–8.

⁵⁴ The most common one is *θεῶν ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηϊ*, 'equal to swift Ares' (eleven occurrences in the *Il.*); also *βροτολογιῶ ἴσος Ἄρηϊ*, 'equal to man-destroying Ares' (six occurrences).

⁵⁵ See Forsyth (1979), Sowa (1984). A. Faulkner kindly let me read his forthcoming study 'Les rencontres érotiques dans l'épopée grecque' (forthcoming, 4).

⁵⁶ See Faulkner (2008), 173–4.

deity in disguise and is he acting as a pious mortal, or is he trying to flatter the girl by pretending to think she is a goddess, thus displaying an ability to deceive that matches hers? I would emphasize that this ambiguity is a fundamental element of the scene's humour. The introductory line (*Ἀγχίσην δ' ἔρος εἶλεν, ἔπος δέ μιν ἀντίον ἠΰδα*, 'Love seized Anchises, and he replied to her', 91) inscribes Anchises' speech in his erotic strategy but leaves the nature of his words undefined, as opposed to the line introducing his supplication after the goddess's epiphany (*καί μιν λισσόμενος ἔφα πτερόεντα προσήυδα*, 'and in prayer he said these winged words to her', 184). The parallel to the dialogues preceding heroic fights might support the second reading. In these exchanges, the fighters boast about their superiority while challenging the worth of their opponent. If the heroic model applies here, it is reversed to fit the 'erotic conquest of the stronger by the weaker'⁵⁷ and the lovers must not only appear as inferior but make a claim about it in order to impress their adversary. Anchises assumes a submissive position, praising the girl he hopes to seduce as if she were divine, promising offerings, praying to her. She in turn replies with a flattering tale that puts her back in his power, substituting for the man's reverence towards the goddess an attitude of maidenly shyness towards a male. She subtly answers at least part of his prayer by suggesting that, if he weds her, he will gain prestige and father superb children (127). Then, mirroring the dynamics of his speech, Aphrodite voices a supplication (131–8) and promises a dowry (140).

In the light of this battle of persuasion and of the poem's allusive art, I think it is not too far-fetched to interpret as metapoetic the way in which Aphrodite, after defining her identity, makes the strange claim that she can speak Anchises' language as well as her own. She starts with details on her genealogy and Phrygian origin which can evoke other narratives than the *Hymn*'s. The adjective *ὀνομακλυτός* ('famous', 111) applied to Otreus, her alleged father, combined with the remark that follows the mention of his name, *εἴ ποῦ ἀκούεις* ('if you ever heard of him', 11), point to his *kleos* and to the (epic) words that are conveying it. They are addressed both to the internal and external audience.⁵⁸ It is possible, though unprovable, that the epithet

⁵⁷ Clay (1989) and (2006), 173.

⁵⁸ Nagy (1979), 265–75, commenting on the speeches of Achilles and Aeneas before their duel, interprets in this metapoetic way the mention by Aeneas of the

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would have sounded ironic to the the *Hymn*'s listeners: Otreus is mentioned only once in passing in what is left of Greek hexameter poetry.⁵⁹ Aphrodite then gives Anchises this puzzling reassurance that she knows his language, which is, as the text explains immediately, the Trojan language. Commentators are uncomfortable with this unique allusion to bilingualism: they relate it to the mention of different languages in the Iliadic catalogue of the Trojans' allies,⁶⁰ but do not convincingly explain why the two characters should not conventionally speak the same language, as in the *Iliad* the Trojans and Lycians or the Phrygian Asios and his nephew Hector do.⁶¹ I think Aphrodite's remark can receive simultaneously different interpretations. On the internal narratological level, it is not motivated by any reaction of Anchises concerning her language, yet as part of the seduction speech, it could be aimed at emphasizing that the Phrygian stranger makes a perfect match for the Trojan prince.⁶² It might also signify that Aphrodite is capable of adopting the same kind of flattering and seductive speech as Anchises. Her utterance could be transposing the heroic claim made by Aeneas and Hector in the *Iliad* that they share the language of blame with Achilles: when replying to Achilles' provocative boasts, both answer him that they are not to be frightened as if they were children, for they 'very well know, just as he does, how to speak mocking and unseemly words' (ἐπεὶ σάφα οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς | ἤμην κερτομίας ἢδ' αἴσυλα μωθήσασθαι, *Il.* 20. 200–2, 20. 431–3). The diction is close but not identical: σάφα οἶδα occurs at the end of line 113 of *Aphrodite*, while the claim of the heroes has the hemistich ἐπεὶ σάφα οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς. Finally, on a metapoetic level, the singer of the *Hymn* is signalling that he knows very well of other songs than his, songs about Troy of which the *Iliad* is an example, and that he has learned to master them. While remaining (at least during the performance of the *Hymn*) an Aphroditean poet, he is pointedly borrowing the diction and patterns of the heroic *epos*.

Heroes, after delighting in threatening taunts and noble claims, in the end reject speech impatiently to engage in combat with their

πρόκλυτα... ἔπεα ('well-known words or songs', 20. 203–9) that have brought his half-divine birth to the knowledge of his opponent.

⁵⁹ *Il.* 3. 186.

⁶⁰ See Faulkner (2008), 190.

⁶¹ *Il.* 16. 717–18.

⁶² Faulkner (2008), 190, also links Aphrodite's deceptive use of a foreign language to Odysseus' Cretan lies.

enemy; they feel that words, however stimulating, are impeding action.⁶³ Persuasion, on the contrary, is an essential part of the erotic confrontation. Just as the sight of Aphrodite was a first love-blow, her beguiling words hit and wound (143), and Anchises acknowledges that the urge he feels to make love with Aphrodite derives from her words (145–54).

This brings us back to the undressing scene. It is, at first sight, as we have said earlier, the prelude to Aphrodite's sexual victory. Yet the contrast with Patroclus' defeat is about to disappear as her success reveals itself to be a delusion planned by Zeus. This reversal is prepared in several ways. The poet first lingers on the description of Anchises' bed, which is covered with the hides of the bears and lions he has hunted (157–60). Faulkner synthetizes the multiple degrees of significance of those details:⁶⁴ they symbolize Anchises' manliness, balancing Aphrodite's feminine attributes and beauty; by contrasting the effect of Aphrodite's presence among the wild beasts, they 'underline [her] own loss of power in the face of Anchises' momentary strength'. Her set of clothes and jewels become another hide, turning her into another hunted animal just about to be killed. It should be added that the description brings Anchises closer to the world of heroes than when Aphrodite first met him playing the cithara, for hunting is not only a peace-time occupation appropriate to warriors but also the principal activity to which fighting and slaying are compared in heroic similes.

As Aphrodite lets the mortal undress her and lead her to bed, the reference to the Iliadic *aristeia* takes on a more sinister ring, as if Aphrodite could not be pictured as a hero without having, ultimately, to face the reality that lies at the core of heroism: death itself.⁶⁵ The image of a fatally wounded warrior is thus being subtly superimposed on that of the goddess, and her intercourse with Anchises becomes an even more intimate connection to mortality as the poet transfers to her a diction normally appropriate to a dying man. Goddess and hero lay side by side 'by the will of gods' (*θεῶν ἰότητι*, 166), a formula used once in the *Iliad*, precisely about the death of Patroclus (*Il.* 19. 9). At this crucial moment, Aphrodite not only sexually but poetically mingles with a mortal.

⁶³ See e.g. 20. 244–55, 20. 367–70, 22. 126–8, 22. 282.

⁶⁴ Faulkner (2008), 227. See also Schein (forthcoming).

⁶⁵ See Schein (1984).

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Sexual intercourse is not deathly and goddesses do not die, though in a way Aphrodite's mortal *persona* does as she recovers her divine appearance.⁶⁶ At the same time, the pastoral Aphroditic atmosphere is restored: mention of the flocks and of their flowery pastures (168–9) serve to dissipate the gloomy shadow cast on the scene by Anchises' hides and hunting skills. The goddess also regains her superiority over Anchises. Her unmistakable divinity causes him to tremble and recoil: now he is the one shyly averting his gaze (182–3).⁶⁷ Yet the epiphany does not immediately disentangle Aphrodite from mortality or from heroic poetics. Before she departs, the two lovers engage in a dialogue that, despite significant inversions, parallels the last exchange between a victor and his expiring victim. Instead of voicing triumphant taunts as heroes do when their opponent falls to the ground, revealing his vulnerability,⁶⁸ Anchises, at the epiphany of the immortal, assumes again (this time without any ambiguity) the position of a supplicant. Whereas heroic victors boast (*εὐχομαι*, *ἐπεύχομαι*) at the sight of their defeated enemy, Anchises takes no responsibility and places it instead on Aphrodite who deceived him (186). He does not rejoice at having erotically overcome a goddess for he knows it to be a dangerous situation: a man might consequently suffer the loss of his *menos* and be condemned to renounce a flourishing life (188–90). Following Smith⁶⁹, I rely on internal narrative and language to interpret Anchises' fears as related to his wish for a *θαλερὸν γόνον* ('a flourishing offspring', 104) and thus primarily expressing the idea that he might lose sexual potency and reproductive power. At least this is how Aphrodite understands *menos*: when she invites her lover not to be afraid, she soothes his worries by announcing that he will have a son (193–6). Later on, she calls this son a *θάλος* ('offspring', 278). That in Homer *menos* has a less specific definition and designates the energy of a hero's body during fight, or that deprivation of *menos* indicates death is but another signal that Aphroditic features are being markedly defined in relation to and contrast with the heroic epic.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ On the epiphany, see Podbielski (1971), 59–64, Lenz (1975), Richardson (1974), 208–10.

⁶⁷ Cf. 156, 182.

⁶⁸ For Hector and Achilles, see *Il.* 16. 829, 22. 330, but this kind of boasting appears constantly in the battle-scenes.

⁶⁹ Smith (1981a), 66.

⁷⁰ See Giacomelli (1980), Faulkner (2008), 248–51.

Aphrodite replies to Anchises with a long speech. Clay thus sums up its triple function: ‘Addressed to Anchises, the goddess’ words simultaneously comfort and warn her mortal lover. At the same time, she gives voice to reflections concerning the relations between the human and the divine that spring from her forced contact with mortality and her recognition of the complicity of Zeus. Finally, while she refers prophetically to the future, of whose ultimate contours she is only dimly aware, she invites our participation and understanding of its evolution and necessity’.⁷¹ Consideration of Aphrodite’s discourse in the light of heroic epic will lead me to reassess or reinforce Clay’s reading in several ways. Though pronounced with the undisguised authority of the goddess, the speech still belongs to the *aristeia*, at least to the most complete and elaborate pattern of the Achillean *aristeia*,⁷² for it mirrors Patroclus’ and Hector’s last words.

Both heroes, as they meet their death, experience a moment of re- and pre-cognition. They suddenly find themselves capable of recognizing the gods who brought about their defeat (*Il.* 16. 844–7, 22. 296–303). As for Aphrodite, she does not explicitly acknowledge Zeus’ role in her own misfortune, though she reveals that she is aware of it by assuring Anchises that the gods love him and by alluding to Zeus’ central function in the stories of Ganymedes and Tithonus. Lenz has already suggested that, in the hymnic structure of the poem, Aphrodite’s speech replaced an epilogue in a divine setting concluding the plan of Zeus.⁷³ We can now add another structural argument to his: in the course of Aphrodite’s *aristeia*, this would be the moment for the goddess to name Zeus as the agent of her defeat. Her reluctance to do so is a sign of her great shame (μέγ’ ὄνειδος, 247), of her ‘unutterable’ delusion (οὐκ ὀνομαστόν, 254), but I see it also, if compared to her characterization in *Iliad* 5, where she is paternally rebuked by Zeus, as participating in the poem’s humour: Aphrodite is something of a capricious child forced to submit to her father’s authority but refusing to admit it.

The second important feature of Patroclus’ and Hector’s final words is pre-cognition, which takes the form of a warning addressed

⁷¹ Clay (1989), 183–4.

⁷² On this aspect of the Achillean *aristeia*, see Janko (1994), 417–21, Richardson (1993), 139–44.

⁷³ Lenz (1975), 24–5.

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to their victorious opponent: death of the triumphant hero will inevitably and soon follow his victim's. Patroclus foresees Achilles' revenge over Hector (16. 852–4), while Hector predicts that Achilles will in turn provoke the wrath of the gods and be killed by Paris and Apollo (22. 358–60). Now, it is a remarkable lacuna in the goddess' speech that she does not explain why she rejects the possibility of immortalizing Anchises.⁷⁴ After all, Zeus has turned his own lover Ganymedes into an Olympian, and Aphrodite has no reason to reproduce the mistake of Eos. Instead, she voices regrets:

ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν τοιοῦτος ἔων εἰδός τε δέμας τε
ζώοις ἡμέτερός τε πόσις κεκλημένος εἴης,
οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτά μ' ἄχος πυκνὰς φρένας ἀμφικαλύπτει.
νῦν δέ σε μὲν τάχα γῆρας ὁμοίον ἀμφικαλύψει
νηλειές, τό τ' ἔπειτα παρίσταται ἀνθρώποισιν,
οὐλόμενον καματηρόν, ὃ τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ. (*Aphr.* 241–6)

If you could go on living as you are now in appearance and build, and be known as my husband, sorrow would not then enfold my subtle mind. But as it is, you will soon be enfolded by hostile, merciless old age, which attends men in the time to come, accursed, wearisome, abhorred by the gods.

The optatives followed by *νῦν δέ* ('but as it is') express an unfulfilled condition, but there is nothing explicit to justify why Aphrodite considers that condition impossible. Clay postulates 'on the ground of both dramatic and narrative logic' that 'Aphrodite knows that her request for Anchises' immortality would meet with scornful rejection on the part of Zeus, who intended from the first to teach her a lesson'.⁷⁵ The structural argument derived from the *aristeia* pattern again supports her view, for the defeated goddess's prediction reveals Anchises' humanity—symbolized, as is shown in the generalizing relative clause of 245, by ageing—to be the ineluctable consequence of his victory.

That said, this passage of *Aphrodite*, however closely framed in heroic diction,⁷⁶ manages a remarkable displacement of focus. The erotic duel is a matter of life, not death. Aphrodite is an immortal and cannot be fatally wounded. Anchises will suffer in old age but does

⁷⁴ See discussion by Clay (1989), 189–91.

⁷⁵ Clay (1989), 190.

⁷⁶ See Faulkner (2008), 278, and his remark on line 243.

not risk death, unless—and Aphrodite is explicit about it—he should assume the posture of an actual warrior: should Anchises boast about his adventure (*ἐξείπης καὶ ἐπέύξαι*, 286), she predicts divine wrath and death at the hands of Zeus, uttering a truly heroic warning, very similar to Hector's.⁷⁷ But Anchises has not claimed victory and the hymnic narrative has taken another path.

Aphrodite's grief (*ἄχος*) can now be safely interpreted as the inevitable outcome of her own boasting. Let us turn back to the justification of Zeus' plan given earlier in the *Hymn*:

ὄφρα τάχιστα
μηδ' αὐτὴ βροτέης εὐνής ἀποεργμένη εἶη,
καί ποτ' ἐπευξαμένη εἶπη μετὰ πᾶσι θεοῖσιν
ἦδὺ γελοίησασα, φιλομμειδῆς Ἀφροδίτη,
ὥς ῥα θεοὺς συνέμειξε καταθνητῆσι γυναιξίν,
καί τε καταθνητοὺς υἱεῖς τέκον ἀθανάτοισιν,
ὥς τε θεὰς ἀνέμειξε καταθνητοῖς ἀνθρώποις. (*Aphr.* 46–52)

He wanted to bring it about as soon as possible that not even she was set apart from a mortal bed, to boast among the assembled gods with a merry laugh how she had coupled gods with mortal women, and they had borne mortal sons to immortal fathers, and how she had coupled goddesses with mortal men.

The association of the boasting (quest for individual superiority)⁷⁸ and of the 'hitter hit' motif (experience of a shared vulnerability) is at the heart of the heroic experience.⁷⁹ It is in this constant reversal from god-like victor to expiring victim that the hero—Achilles more than any other—learns about the limitations of his nature, but also discovers an individual way to transcend them: the conquest of *kleos* in beautiful death (Vernant's *belle mort*).⁸⁰ Similarly, Zeus forces Aphrodite to acknowledge the limitations of divine nature by having her share the dire grief she imposed on other deities.⁸¹ Excessive proximity with mortals will cause her to suffer anxieties that will alter her divine felicity, for she will have to face the inevitable deaths of her lover and son, a situation that the *Iliad* presents as a threat to cosmic

⁷⁷ Compare *Aphr.* 286–90 and *Il.* 22. 358.

⁷⁸ See Muellner (1976).

⁷⁹ See Schein (1984), 128–67, esp. 148–9.

⁸⁰ See Vernant (1992).

⁸¹ See Schein (forthcoming).

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stability.⁸² The lesson she is being taught is thus that the superiority she exerted on the other gods was temporary and partly illusory; her universal power did not exclude her from the community of the immortals nor allow her to escape the law of cosmic order. As her *aristeia* ends with a speech assimilating her to expiring heroes, finally tamed by a fate that makes all men equal, she appears to be definitively forced to respect the boundaries separating the divine from the human. After the closure of the *Hymn's* narrative, she will never again engage in coupling immortals and mortals, just as the dead Hector will no longer engage in fighting. Thus we come, though from another perspective, to the same conclusion as Clay: Zeus' purpose is cosmogonic and aims at preventing unseemly erotic contacts between gods and humans.⁸³ I see no other way to understand these much disputed lines from Aphrodite's long speech to Anchises:

*αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ μέγ' ὄνειδος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν
ἔσσεται ἤματα πάντα διαμπερές εἵνεκα σείο,
οἱ πρὶν ἐμοὺς δάρους καὶ μήτιας, αἷς ποτε πάντας
ἀθανάτους συνέμειξα καταθηγηῆσι γυναιξίν,
τάρβεσκον: πάντας γὰρ ἐμὸν δάμνασκε νόημα.
νῦν δὲ δὴ οὐκέτι μοι στόμα χεῖσεται ἐξονομήναι
τοῦτο μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν (Aphr. 247–53)*

I shall suffer great reproach among the gods evermore on your account. Formerly they used to be afraid of my whisperings and wiles, with which at one time or another I have coupled all the immortals with mortal women, for my will would overcome them all. But now my mouth will no longer open wide enough to mention this among the immortals.

Again, the parallel with Hector can shed light on the implications of the fear once provoked by Aphrodite. When the Trojan hero expires, the Achaeans, once terrified by his power, now gather to hit and mock his dead body, in a shocking but pathetic gesture betraying the extent of their relief (*Il.* 22. 369–75). Until this point, Hector represented for them the greatest threat of all; but the time when he set fire to the ships is over.⁸⁴ Similarly the immortals will stop dreading Aphrodite's

⁸² See Brilllet-Dubois (2001), 254–5.

⁸³ See discussion in Faulkner (2008), 10–18, who reads the passage differently than Clay.

⁸⁴ Compare the fear of the Achaeans when Hector sets fire to their ships at *Il.* 15. 623–8.

power because she will not be a threat anymore. And she will never claim victory again over the gods because her will shall never again overcome them all, as she claims happened in the past (251). However difficult the text of line 252,⁸⁵ I take ἐξονομήναι ('to mention' or 'clearly name') to refer to the boasts in which Aphrodite would name herself as being responsible for the coupling of gods and mortals, just as μηδ' ὀνόμαυε ('do not mention or name', 290) refers to the boast Anchises could make about seducing Aphrodite. I also take τοῦτο ('this', 253) to refer to the whole sentence πάντας γὰρ ἐμὸν δάμνασκε νόημα ('for my will would overcome them all', 251). Fear of the victims and boasting of the victor both cease as Aphrodite experiences ultimate defeat at the hands of Zeus. The birth of Aeneas guarantees that she will never forget the grief that it caused her:

τῶ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ' ἔσσειται, οὔνεκα μ' αἰνὸν
 ἔσχεν ἄχος, ἔνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνή (Aphr. 198–9)

His name shall be Aeneas, for an *ainon* (terrible) sorrow took me, because I fell into a mortal's bed.

In these lines, the enjambment of 199 and the unusual separation of the formula αἰνὸν ἄχος⁸⁶ obviously put heavy emphasis on the pun between Αἰνείας and αἰνόν ('terrible') at line-end, but also on ἄχος ('grief') which is moved to the following line and stands at the caesura. Had Aphrodite expressed the causal relation in the reverse order, starting with the acknowledgement of her feeling to explain subsequently her son's name, we would have expected her to come up with a name beginning with *akh*—but *Achilles* was already taken. Aeneas is thus introduced as another Achilles (his divine mother Thetis is a paradigm of Aphrodite's grieving victims),⁸⁷ but also as other than Achilles.

For, that Aphrodite shall from now on submit to Zeus and refrain from uniting beings who should not be matched (mortals and immortals) is only part of the lesson;⁸⁸ this does not mean she has to

⁸⁵ The manuscripts read *στοναχῆσεται* which makes no sense. See discussion of the conjectures in Faulkner (2008), 282–3. I follow West (2003) in reading *χεῖσεται* ('open wide').

⁸⁶ The only two displacements of the formula in the *Iliad* occur in speeches uttered by Achilles: *Il.* 16. 55, 19. 307.

⁸⁷ See *Il.* 18. 50 ff. On Aphrodite and Thetis, see Schein (forthcoming).

⁸⁸ Contrast the way Hera's greatness and wisdom match Zeus' in lines 36–44.

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renounce superiority altogether. An *aristeia* is first and foremost a language of praise which here meets and serves the hymnic celebration of the goddess. Before she finds herself tamed by Anchises and Zeus, Aphrodite demonstrates her erotic excellence. And even as she falls, Zeus' plan also reveals the proper way for her to exert her unique power, just as the heroes' individual glory balances their inevitable death. While she can no longer bring mortals close to immortals in sexual intercourse, she can still liken them to the gods by granting them a specifically Aphroditic compensation for their mortality: virtually eternal reproduction.⁸⁹ She is now bearing one of the ἀγλαὰ τέκνα ('splendid children') that she promised to Anchises when she was in disguise (127). Aeneas and his flourishing descendants will be the eternal reminders not only of Aphrodite's delusion, but also of her erotic accomplishments:

σοὶ δ' ἔσται φίλος υἱός, ὃς ἐν Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει
καὶ παῖδες παιδεσσι διαμπερὲς ἐκγεγόνται (*Aphr.* 196–7)

You are to have a dear son who will rule among the Trojans, and children to his children always shall be born.

This prophecy has long been at the heart of the discussion of the relationship between the *Iliad* and *Aphrodite* for it echoes the prediction made by Poseidon in *Iliad* 20:

νῦν δὲ δὴ Αἰνείαιο βίη Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει
καὶ παίδων παῖδες, τοί κεν μετόπισθε γένωνται. (*Il.* 20. 307–8)

The mighty Aeneas shall rule among the Trojans, he and his children's children that shall be born hereafter.

I will limit the scope of my comparison to the perspective of competing Aphroditic and Iliadic poetics. Significant differences between the two prophecies point to two contrasted uses of a common tradition concerning Aeneas' offspring. The lines of the *Hymn* contain a *hapax*, the verbal form ἐκγεγόνται, which, following P. Chantraine,⁹⁰ I consider as a future based on a perfective stem. Because this is 'post-Homeric coinage', Hoekstra, though generally reluctant to postulate borrowings from one epic to another, exceptionally assumes that the *Hymn* is here both imitating and modifying the

⁸⁹ See Smith (1981a), 47–8.

⁹⁰ Chantraine (1935).

Iliad.⁹¹ Lamberterie, who suspects the form because of its uniqueness, suggests that the problematic final *-ονται* of the form was influenced by the Iliadic *γένονται* and points to an erroneous quotation.⁹² I agree that the *Hymn*'s version of the prophecy implies the existence of the Iliadic diction, but instead of being tempted, as Lamberterie or West, to correct the text of the manuscripts and replace *ἐκγεγάονται* by a participle (*ἐκγεγάοντες* or the more formulaic *ἐκγεγαῶτες*), so as to subordinate the mention of the offspring to the announcement of Aeneas's rule, I would suggest that the version in *Aphrodite* is a conscious assessment of erotic values in reference to and against the Iliadic definition of heroism. The strange verbal form chosen (maybe even invented) by the hymn poet is meant to emphasize the differences between the two poetical perspectives. These differences lie in the syntactical and thus thematic priority that the *Iliad* gives to the reigning status of Aeneas and his offspring and that the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, adjusting to its addressee, symmetrically gives to the everlasting fertility of the lineage.⁹³ Aphrodite's prophecy answers the wish voiced earlier by Anchises to the divine-looking girl who materialized before his eyes:

δός με μετὰ Τρώεσσιν ἀριπρεπέ' ἔμμεναι ἄνδρα,
ποίει δ' εἰσοπίσω θαλερὸν γόνον, αὐτὰρ ἔμ' αὐτὸν
δηρὸν ἐὺ ζῶειν καὶ ὄραν φάος ἡελίοιο
ὄλβιον ἐν λαοῖς καὶ γήραος οὐδὸν ἰκέσθαι. (*Aphr.* 103–6)

Grant that I may become a man outstanding among the Trojans, and give me flourishing offspring for the time to come. Grant me myself to live long and well, seeing the light of the sun, and enjoying good fortune among the people, and to reach the doorstep of old age.

Anchises's words also echo a famous Iliadic passage, Hector's prayer for his son (6. 476–81), in which the Trojan hero asks the gods that Astyanax be 'outstanding among the Trojans' (*ἀριπρεπέα Τρώεσσιν*, 477) and that he may prove himself as excellent a warrior and king as his father. In comparison to the Iliadic passages, the same shift of focus appears in the mortal's wish as in Aphrodite's prophecy. What

⁹¹ Hoekstra (1969), 39–40.

⁹² In a conference given at the Université Lumière-Lyon 2 in 2004.

⁹³ See Lenz (1975), 114–15: he explains the difference by the fact that *Iliad* 20 does not refer to Aphrodite, whereas the hymnic praise of the goddess logically brings the topic of her fertility. Podbielski (1971), 74, suspected without elaborating that the hymn-poet was adopting 'une attitude polémique envers l'épopée héroïque'.

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Anchises asks for in order to ensure himself an outstanding (*ἀριπρεπής*, 103) position in Trojan society is not royal status, nor strength, nor bloody victory as Hector does, but the privilege of a flourishing offspring. The parallel is completed at lines 278–9: Aphrodite says that when Anchises first sees his son, ‘[he] will rejoice as [he] look[s] on him, for he will be quite godlike’ (*τὸν μὲν ἐπὶν δὴ πρῶτον ἴδης θάλος ὀφθαλμοῖσιν, | γηθήσεις ὀρόων· μάλα γὰρ θεοείκελος ἔσται*); that is to say that Aeneas will be as handsome as his father who ‘had his beauty from the gods’ (*θεῶν ἄπο κάλλος ἔχοντα*, 77). In other words, what Anchises hopes to be granted, what he and his son do obtain, is erotic excellence. Beauty, seduction, fertility are the qualities that define Aphroditean heroism and constitute not only the goddess’s *timē*, but also her lover’s and son’s. This is how the *Hymn* achieves its programme, stated in the first line of the poem, of celebrating the ‘deeds’ of golden Aphrodite (*ἔργα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης*). It might be significant here that the *Hymn to Aphrodite* does not end with a prayer as other *Hymn* do. The one that Anchises expressed has been successfully answered and the whole poem, in a way, invites Aphrodite to repeat her gift by exerting her power over all humans.

As the goddess returns to Olympus (291) and leaves Anchises to his human world, the poem abruptly abandons heroic diction to regain its hymnic form with the characteristic *χαίρε θεά* (‘farewell, goddess’, 292).⁹⁴ Aphrodite is saluted as the benevolent but distant goddess she will now forever be.

In order to clarify the relationship between *Aphrodite* and the Iliadic tradition, I will now turn quickly to the *Iliad* and indicate a few examples of the way the heroic poem, in turn, integrates elements present in *Aphrodite* to define by contrast its own thematic and poetics. At *Iliad* 5, Aphrodite in person is expelled from the battlefield by Diomedes. The primary narrator, the hero and Zeus all voice the idea that she does not belong there,⁹⁵ for hers are not the works of war but the works of marriage. Following the same pattern as in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*’s priamel (7–33), her prerogatives are opposed to Athena’s.⁹⁶ As for the Aphroditean heroes, Anchises, Paris, Aeneas, they serve as foils to the truly heroic Diomedes, Menelaus and Achilles.

⁹⁴ On this features of the *Hymns*, cf. in this volume Calame (p. 000).

⁹⁵ *Il.* 5. 331–3, 5. 348–51, 5. 428–30.

⁹⁶ *Il.* 5. 428–9. Compare *Aphr.* 9–11.

The only narrative involving Anchises, apart from the short mentions of his union with Aphrodite, recounts how he manages, in secret, to mate his mares with Laomedon's divine horses so that he might breed extraordinary colts. The story, told by Diomedes (5. 263–71), enhances his own heroic way of conquering Aeneas' horses in fighting instead of using the means of reproduction for greatness. Paris and Aeneas, even as they accept the single combat with Menelaus and Diomedes, are rescued and taken away from the battlefield by Aphrodite (3. 373–82, 5. 311–17). On a metapoetic level, it is as if we were witnessing the conflict between Aphroditean and Iliadic traditions about who belongs in what poem. I will not dwell on the case of Paris, for it is related more to the *Cypria* than to the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and its examination would take me too far. But a few more words are needed to examine Aeneas' position in the *Iliad*.

Nagy suggests the existence of a traditional *Aineid* presenting strong thematic parallels with Achilles' story.⁹⁷ His argumentation rests primarily on a passage of *Iliad* 13 that shows an angered Aeneas withdrawing from battle because Priam does not honour him (13. 461). The pattern of frustration of *timē*, wrath, and withdrawal is recognizably Achillean. Another detail of the episode reveals that this representation of Aeneas is in fact competing with the hymnic one, for Deiphobus, exhorting Aeneas to join in the fight and defend Alcatous, his brother-in-law, reminds him of the time when he was a child raised in Alcatous' house. In this version, it is a hero, not the Nymphs, who nurses the young son of Aphrodite. Whereas the transition of Aeneas from the divine to the mortal world in the *Hymn* is aptly symbolized by the nymphs, who are moreover traditional *kourotrophoi*,⁹⁸ there is nothing in the *Iliad* to motivate the entrusting of the care of Aeneas to a male relative so that the motif appears as displaced and secondary compared to the *Hymn's* version. Besides, Priam's attitude towards Aeneas also contrasts with the way he honours Hector above all men, likening him to the son of a god (24. 258–9). Hector is the only Trojan warrior matching Achilles in the *Iliad* and not Aeneas, despite his being actually, not metaphorically, the son of a goddess.⁹⁹ But Hector's intimate connection to

⁹⁷ Nagy (1979), 265–6.

⁹⁸ Faulkner (2008), 284–5.

⁹⁹ On the structural opposition between Hector and Aeneas in the *Iliad*, see Brillet-Dubois (1998).

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Achilles originates in the common fate that awaits them: death and glory. The *Iliad*, though integrating Aphrodite's son into the heroic epic and even adjusting his characterization to its own purpose, finally markedly rejects him as unsuited to its narrative. In an extraordinary reversal of the *Hymn's* poetics, Poseidon suffers ἄχος ('grief') at the thought that Achilles might kill Aeneas (he associates ἄχος with Aeneas' name at 20. 293) and regrets that he should, innocent and pious as he is, experience pain, 'vainly grieving because of the deeds of others' (μὰψ ἔνεκ' ἀλλοτρίων ἀχέων, *Il.* 20. 298).¹⁰⁰ By motivating in these terms his rescue of Aeneas, Poseidon is clearly assuming the role that Aphrodite, threatened by the grief of mourning her *protégés*, assumes elsewhere in the *Iliad*. But he is also repeating, as a powerful fighter among the gods, the earlier exclusion of Aphrodite. However brave (the courage he demonstrates in book twenty's duel is unambiguous) Aeneas does not belong in the world of ἄχος, he does not belong as Achilles' foe. His *moira*, his share of fate but also his assigned role in epic traditions,¹⁰¹ is to overcome mortality by surviving and fathering a long lineage, and not to conquer Iliadic glory (he will not reappear in the *Iliad* after this). In other words, he is sent back to poems like the *Hymn to Aphrodite*. Therefore I do not think it is necessary, as Nagy does, to postulate the existence of a heroic *Aineid*: the characterization of Aeneas as another Achilles seems to be the result of his integration into the Achillean tradition, just as the erotic nature of Aphrodite's *aristeia* results from its transposition into a song about love.

It appears finally that, while the *Hymn to Aphrodite* adapts the narrative structure of the Achillean *aristeia* to construct its meaning and enhance its cosmogonic and laudatory purposes, the transference of Aphroditic elements seems at the same time to be part of the *Iliad's* 'poetic strategies'.¹⁰² This strongly suggests that creative and subtle interaction existed between well-established Aphroditic and Iliadic traditions. The transposition of the prophecy concerning Aeneas, of Hector's wish for his son, of Patrocles' disarming, all point to the borrowing of dictional elements firmly related to specific contexts, themselves included in an elaborate narrative, which makes it difficult to exclude allusion from a strict oralist perspective. That the diction of

¹⁰⁰ I take here ἀχέων as a participle.

¹⁰¹ See Nagy (1979), 268; also 40.

¹⁰² Burgess (2009), 69.

our *Hymn to Aphrodite* can be considered in places to be secondary to our *Iliad*'s might prove that the *Hymn* was composed or written down later than the *Iliad*. It does not in any respect disprove that the hymnic and the heroic traditions developed simultaneously in a fruitful dialogue, defining their themes and poetics in relation to each other. It is very tempting to suppose that the same poets could adopt alternately Aphroditean or Achillean perspectives, that is, according to the occasion or the mood of the audience, sing in turn tales of war or tales of love, glorify the mortal hero or celebrate the works of the smiling goddess.